

Formula Ford

by Joe Sage

Equal parts off-road extremist and performance pickup: shake and stir

Icon—it's an overused word, but Ford Raptor surely is one, holding a distinctive brand image among nominal half-ton pickups. Its engine performance, with zero-to-60 in just over six seconds, evokes the sleek rear-drive Ford SVT Lightning pickups of 15-25 years ago, while its huge tires, off-road suspension, skid plates and 4x4 bearing have always made it a different flavor of special.

Raptor was an SVT (Special Vehicles Team) build in its first generation. Gone for 2017 is the SVT name, now folded into the Ford Performance stable globally. Also gone are Raptor's prior 6.2L V8 engine and a considerable amount of weight.

For 2017, Raptor moves to the aluminum-intensive structure brought to the mainstream F-150 in 2015 and Super Duty trucks in 2017. The latter has adapted the same F-150 cab design to the heavy duty range for the first time in a couple of decades, though its underpinnings are completely different from the F-150. This was already Raptor's formula, though while F-250 and up are built for loads, Raptor is built for desert racing agility.

Raptor is available in SuperCrew (four-door) and SuperCab (with rear half-doors) form, with a 5.5-

foot bed on either, making SuperCrew's 134.2-inch wheelbase unique among F-150s. Aluminum uppers with a Raptor-specific high-strength steel box frame brings increased chassis strength and torsional rigidity while shedding some 500 pounds.

Raptor remains wider than the standard F-150, with a six-inch wider track and a bit more than that for the body, which has flared wheel arches and wider bumpers. The new Raptor has two inches more ground clearance than the first generation. Active grille shutters, functional hood and fender vents, and fine-tuning of body and underbody improve aerodynamics by five percent. New Raptor-specific FOX Shocks are 44 percent beefier, with hydraulic bump stops for the roughest terrain. Suspension travel is increased by almost an inch in front, almost two in back (now 13 and 13.9 inches, respectively, and comparing with 7.3 and 9.5 inches in an F-150 FX4 off-road package).

The new 3.5L EcoBoost V6 puts out 450 hp and 510 lb-ft of torque, beating the old V8's 411 and 434 while rating 18 mpg highway. To maximize efficiency further, Raptor runs these horses through a segment-first 10-speed automatic.

Fate put the Ford Raptor in our fleet for the week

that included Overland Expo West, near Flagstaff. This was nice timing, as Raptor just screams out "off-road," as does Overland Expo, plus we could drive the truck to Flag and back, a chance to see how it did on the grades and at altitude. However, Expo activities themselves would have us largely tied up for a couple of days, and a mileage cap meant we couldn't also dash to the Glamis Dunes just west of Yuma—the perfect place to drive the Raptor, about 500 miles roundtrip. Raptor's new EcoBoost V6 means it can get to Glamis and back on about \$100 worth of gas. There are areas near Safford or Willcox, over 400 miles roundtrip. Or of course Baja, the truck's patron saint terrain. Not to worry. We hit a good spot nearby—the Boulders OHV Area off Highway 74 west of Lake Pleasant, 50 miles away, home to ATV and single-track bike trails, enough to give the Raptor a workout.

The Raptor is comfortable—its cabin is a stunner and has ample storage—and inviting to drive even in traffic, unexpectedly so. The Raptor's extra girth is not particularly noticeable, and its shorter box proved surprisingly maneuverable in town.

Most our time in the Raptor was spent the way most people spend the majority of their time—cruising the highways and running around town. Returning from Flagstaff, we loaded up with two more colleagues and all our gear for a week, all of which fit easily in the cabin when we locked up for



dinner on the road. The next day, we did our rough roads, dirt, gravel, bumps, hills, thrills and chills.

The formula for the Ford Raptor is pretty simple, really. It ranges from zero to maybe ten percent more cumbersome than a regular F-150 for your around-town stuff. You'll feel the difference in suspension here and there. You may deal with the difference in width here and there. Possibly never for either, putting it near the zero end of that scale. But on its specific capability scale, as a dune-running outdoor enthusiast, it's surely a thousand percent ahead of an already very capable routine F-150.

We drove aggressively and we went places—two things anyone is very likely to do with the

Raptor. Our fuel mileage readout after all of the above was still an admirable 16 mpg.

A fully street-legal stock 2017 Ford F-150 Raptor ran the 49th SCORE Baja 1000 this past season (then drove back to Phoenix on the highway), as well as four Best in the Desert races. They use the same truck you can buy, modified only for regulations requiring a roll cage, light bar and fuel cell (plus minor shock changes to handle the weight of that added equipment). The race truck runs on the same BFGoodrich tires as the production vehicle.

Ford Raptor proves versatile, efficient and highly effective—it's a winning formula. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	.....3.3L High Output EcoBoost V6
HP/TORQUE	.....450 hp / 510 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....10-spd SelectShift auto with high-speed one-way clutch
DRIVETRAIN	...torque on demand 4WD/AWD, six-mode terrain management system, 4.10 electronic rear axle
BRAKES	.....power 4-wheel anti-lock
	FR: 13.8x1.33 vented disc, dual piston
	R: 13.7x1 vented disc, single piston
STEERING	.....elec w/ normal-sport-comfort
SHOCKS	.....High-output, on/off-road position-sensitive gas-pressurized FOX Racing Shox™
WHEELS	.....17-in cast aluminum
TIRES	.....LT315/70R17 BSW All-Terrain (A/T) full size spare with lock
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....220.0 in / 134.2 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....(SuperCab) 43.8 cu.ft
CARGO BOX VOLUME	.....(5.5 box) 52.8 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....(SuperCrew) 5518 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	.....26.0 gal
MPG	.....15/18/16 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE **\$48,325**

INCLUDES: Raptor front performance bumper, dual exhaust, dynamic hitch assist, BoxLink™, cast aluminum running boards, tow hooks, LED headlamps, tow package w/sway control, wheel lip moldings, 60/40 rear bench seat, one-touch windows, single zone manual climate control, compass, cruise, leather wrapped wheel, Raptor-specific center stack, paddle shifters, upfitter switches, curve control, electr 4x4 shift-on-fly, fail-safe cooling system, hill descent and off-road modes, hill start, MyKey, off-road shocks, reverse sensing, drive modes, skid plates, keyless keypad.

EQUIPMENT GROUP 802A: Raptor Series, power-slide rear window, Sync 3, Sync Connect, 4.10 front axle w/ Torsen differential, 360-degree camera, BLIS w/trailer tow monitor, Pro Trailer backup assist, electronic auto temp control, integrated trailer brake LED box lighting, LED side mirror spotlights, remote start, Sony single CD w/HD radio, voice-activated nav9345

EXTERIOR GRAPHICS PACKAGE	.....1075
TAILGATE STEP	.....375
17-INCH FORGED ALUMINUM WHEELS	.....1165
TAILGATE APPLIQUE	.....495
RAPTOR TECHNOLOGY PACKAGE	.....1950
SPRAY-IN BEDLINER	.....495
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1195

TOTAL **\$64,420**

