

Ready to rumble

BY
JOE
SAGE

Tackling America's traditionally hyper-loyal full-size pickup market has always seemed a quixotic quest. Toyota did not dive in head first with the Tundra: its 2000 introduction picked up on the earlier T100, a sort of 3/4- or 7/8-size pickup, after a few years' absence in the US. A true full-size arrived in 2007 and ten years in remains largely unchanged.

Many factors play into market share. Ford, Nissan and Ram are growing by healthy margins (with Ram now right on the heels of long-time number two Chevrolet). Nissan's full-size Titan has the sharp growth of an all-new entry. Midsize pickups have had strong increases, including Toyota Tacoma (though the venerable Nissan Frontier, the newest Honda Ridgeline and two new entries from GM keep Tacoma's share the same). Tundra reflects Tacoma, keeping about its same market share as the full-size segment grows overall.

Tundra is offered in a wide variety of models: 4.6L and 5.7L V8s, and 18 combinations of

trim level and cab format, in 4x2 or 4x4. All 4-bys have an electronic two-speed transfer case. Fuel mileage is within a point or two across the lineup. Tundra remains the only full-size pickup available only as a nominal half-ton, surely a big factor in its market share.

Our 4x4 sample is in medium-high trim with the biggest cab. Four packages and 17 individual options raise the price just 15 percent (but still lacking keyless entry and start). The lineup is built on just two wheelbases (as is typical, with varying cabs and beds). Ours was among the longest, yet its 44-foot turning circle felt nimble, and its steering and handling were precise. The 5.7L V8 has a nice rumble, worthy of windows-down listening even on a hot day.

Big truck interiors vary widely; Tundra's is quite neutral, with comfortable and utilitarian seats in a durable leather. Instruments are minimalist and easy to operate (thanks to a few key knobs). Ours had optional top audio, but that falls short. Cruise is via a stalk that rotates with the wheel, an awkward setup.

Tundra cleared its original hurdle, making a mark in the full-size pickup market. In the next generation, it will surely have to up its game. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	5.7L I-FORCE E85 flex fuel DOHC EFI V8 alum block, 32v alum alloy head w Dual VVT-i
DRIVETRAIN	4x4 demand system 2-spd electronically controlled transfer case
HP/TORQUE	381 hp / 401 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	6-speed auto overdrive
SUSPENSION	F: indep high-mount dbl-wishbone, 1.42" stblzr bar, low pressure nitrogen gas shocks R: live axle w trapezoid multi-leaf springs, out-board-mounted low pressure nitrogen gas shocks
STEERING	rack & pinion hydraulic pwr, fluid cooler
BRAKES	F: 13.9" 4-piston vented discs R: 13.6" single-piston vented discs
WHEELS/TIRES	20-in alum alloy / P275/55R20
LENGTH/WB/GRND CLEAR	228.9 / 145.7 / 10.6 in
APPROACH/DEPARTURE	26 / 16 degrees
LEGROOM (F/R) / BED LENGTH	42.5" / 42.3" / 5.5 ft
WEIGHT	5670 lb
TURNING CIRCLE	44.0 ft
TOW CAPACITY	9800 lb
FUEL	87 octane min / E85 capable / ULEV II
FUEL CAPACITY	38.0 gal
MPG	13/17/15 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$44,195
LIMITED PREMIUM PACKAGE:	driver assist tech1065
TRD OFF-ROAD PACKAGE:	wheel, tire, shock upgrades; skid plates; tow hooks; bed side decal100
ENTUNE PREM JBL AUDIO	w nav, apps, rear cam ...785
MOONROOF:	power tilt/slide, sliding sunshade850
OPTIONS:	Bed mat (139); "Tundra" tailgate insert (99); paint protection film (395); spare tire lock (75); first aid kit (30); tablet holder (99); TRD rear sway bar (299); console storage tray (85); TRD performance air filter (75); mini tie-downs w hooks set of 2 (45); remote engine start (499); TRD performance dual exhaust (1100); TRD shift knob (150); TRD skid plate (425); alloy wheel locks (80); all weather door sill liners (219); deck rail camera mount (56).....3870
DESTINATION CHARGE	1195
TOTAL	\$52,060

