

Outfitted by Joe Sage

Midsize, equipped with a high grunt diesel and off-road outfitted, this truck will strike some as the best of multiple worlds. Big pickup loyalists may note that no midsize can carry 4x8 building materials or tow 10,000 pounds. Fans will note that it can fit in more garages and parking spots and squeeze through more off-road challenges than a big 'un. Statisticians will note you can meet or beat this smaller truck's fuel economy—at least this XR2 with its off-road setup—even in a few full-size pickups, diesel or otherwise.

But the elements it bundles together are a win. The ZR2 has an aggressive stance, with tough suspension and ample clearance, plus subtle yet bold badge elements. You can meet or beat a ZR2 diesel's fuel mileage with several trims, though the diesel ZR2 beats a gasoline ZR2 by quite a margin. But you won't touch the diesel's torque, so strong you'll likely doublecheck its horsepower figure.

We took the ZR2 way off the beaten path, where it tackled two-track trails admirably and exhibited

great control on washboard and cliffhanging turns at speed along gravel roads—a tight little unit we could drive all day. On or off pavement, the truck was smooth and well planted, with an unusually good balance of firmness and connected road feel.

Ultimately, the ZR2 is a sport truck, not a ranch truck, not a construction truck, and this particular package applies that thinking to maximum effect.

This Dusk Special Edition package is tempting, though we'd prefer to be selective. A full-size spare is great off-road, but with its carrier you lose a big share of its small bed—and spend over \$4000.

Chevy Colorado goes up against Toyota Tacoma and Nissan Frontier, the ZR2 against TRD off-road-ers and Nissan PRO-4X. The Chevy has less shoulder and hip room than Tacoma, despite being two inches wider, but more headroom and legroom.

Market research obviously suggests heavy interest in this category, as a new Ford Ranger joins the fray about as you read this—and we'd be surprised if Ram isn't busily working on a new midsize truck, too, as auto show season looms.

Let's see where evolution takes things next. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	2.8L I-4 16v Duramax DOHC common rail dir inj turbo-diesel, cast iron block, cast alum heads
DRIVETRAIN	4WD
HP/TORQUE	186 hp / 369 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	Hydra-Matic 6L50 6-spd auto
FINAL DRIVE RATIO	3.42
STEERING	elec power-assist rack & pinion
SUSPENSION	F: indep coil-over-shock w Multimatic Dynamic Suspensions Spool Valve dampers, locking diff R: solid axle w semi-elliptic 2-stage multi-leaf springs, Multimatic DSSV dampers, locking diff
BRAKES	power-assist four-wheel disc w Duralife long-life rotors, ABS, hill-descent: F: 12.20"; R: 12.75"
WHEELS/TIRES	17x8 alum / P265/65R17
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	212.4 in / 128.5 in
TRACK (F/R)	65.9 in
SEATING CAPACITY	five
HEADROOM (F/R)	41.4 / 38.3 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	45.0 / 35.8 in
WEIGHT	5011 lb
MAX PAYLOAD	1100 lb
TOW CAPACITY	(Active Tow alignment incl) 5000 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	21 gal
FUEL / MPG	(diesel) 19/22/20 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE (gasoline)	\$42,000
2.8L DURAMAX 4-CYL TURBO DIESEL: trailer brake controller, exhaust brake, 6-spd auto trans	\$3,500
ZR2 DUSK SPECIAL EDITION PKG: 17" black alum wheels incl matching full-size spare, off-road light kit (dealer installed), off-road sport bar (dealer installed), black bowtie emblem pkg (dealer installed)	\$3,425
SPARE TIRE CARRIER, REAR (dealer installed)	\$615
PRICE: ZR2 DIESEL	\$49,540
CAJUN RED TINTCOAT	495
DESTINATION CHARGE	995
TOTAL	\$51,030

