

Multi-capability country clubber

BY JOE SAGE

GMC SIERRA is completely redesigned for 2019. We drove the new AT4 off-road version last fall at the Southwest Lifestyle Media comparo drive, on both pavement and a challenging dirt course. Key features that had caught our attention then, along with the AT4's off-road capabilities, are all part of a new six-function MultiPro Tailgate, which works as a conventional tailgate (but lightweight aluminum, both tough and easy to handle); a full-width half-gate drop for closer bed access; a full-width step for easier access to items within the bed; a standing workstation; or with two load-stop positions, one to hold building materials that would normally need a (now rare) eight-foot bed, and one with the full width half-closed for other long loads. This tailgate is standard on the top three—SLT, AT4 and Denali—of six trim levels total.

This time, we're driving the Denali, a premium trim level that can work hard or be a capable four-wheeler itself—with multiple terrain, towing and other modes—but forgoes the skid plates, mono-tube shocks and all-terrain tires of the AT4 for country club-caliber luxury style and features, plus highway-friendly low-profile wheels and tires (ours had optional 22-inchers). Denali also brings you an 8-inch binnacle display (with analog speedo and tach), a bit more device connectivity, upgraded and further upgradeable rear and surround vision, and of course leather (as also on SLT and AT4). Denali

not only has its own classier (though still rugged) styling, but also is the only trim with Adaptive Ride Control, a real-time system that reacts in milliseconds to road conditions and driver input, adjusting suspension damping for optimized body control and cabin isolation. (A solid, comfortable cruiser at speed, we found it a bit floaty in parking lots.)

Our sample's Ultimate package raised the price by more than ten percent. Of its features, we value its 22-inch wheels (at least if buying for mostly stylish city use) and enhanced heads-up display. Upgrades to already good cameras are a nice addition. Trailer tire pressure (perhaps an odd thing to bundle here) is certainly useful if needed. A sunroof is a mixed blessing in solar oven Arizona. The rest are electronic driver assist functions, of value to some buyers (who will dislike having to pay extra for them), disliked by others (who are forced to buy them for other features in the bundle, but will just turn them off). Ultimately, this package will come down to your own flip of a \$5850 coin.

The luxe truck is oddly simple on some details, such as a manual tilt-telescope steering wheel.

Denali has a standard 355-hp 5.3L V8 with 8-speed automatic, though ours upgrades for \$2495 to a 420-hp 6.2L V8 with 10-speed auto—18 percent more power and over 20 percent more torque, with just a one-point (five percent) drop in fuel mileage. That's an irresistible upgrade, to us.

Even with all its upgrades—crew cab, 4WD, Denali trim, V8—this truck weighs in remarkably at just a hair over two tons even. One key to this is the new Sierra's CarbonPro carbon fiber pickup box

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	alum block/heads dir inj 6.2L Ecotec3 V8
HP/TORQUE	420 hp / 460 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	10-speed automatic
DRIVETRAIN	4WD
AXLE RATIO	3.23 (or 3.42 w Max Trailering Pkg)
SUSPENSION	F: indep coil-over w twin-tube shocks, R: solid axle, semi-elliptic var-rate 2-stage multileaf springs, splayed twin-tube shocks; Autotrac auto transfer case; (other shocks/transfer case w other trims)
STEERING	elec power-assist rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 13.5" / R: 14.1"
WHEELS / TIRES	22x9 polished alum / P275/50R22 a/s
LENGTH / WB	(5'8 box; 6'6 avail) 231.7 / 147.5 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	43.0 / 40.1 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	44.5 / 43.4 in
WEIGHT / GVWR	(4WD) 4015 / 7100 lb
PAYLOAD / TOW CAPACITY	(4WD) 2070 / 12,100 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	24 gal
MPG	15/20/17 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE **\$58,000**

DENALI ULTIMATE PKG: HD surround vision, rear camera mirror, 3"x7" color heads-up display, forward collision alert, lane keep assist, lane departure warning, low speed fwd auto braking, front pedestrian braking, intellibeam headlights, following distance indicator, power sunroof, GMC Multipro power steps, 22" polished alum wheels w wheel locks, trailer tire pressure monitor.....5850

6.2L ECOTEC3 V8 with dynamic fuel management.....2495

DESTINATION CHARGE.....1495

TOTAL **\$67,840**

—lightweight, and dent-, scratch- and corrosion-resistant. Weight saved on the truck itself leaves more headroom for payload and towing—7100 pounds and 12,100 pounds, respectively.

We were almost tempted to skip photographing this truck, because GMC's own photos made the truck look so good. But we did do a shoot and quickly realized—it's the truck. The new GMC Sierra Denali 1500 is a handsome beast. ■

