

2.7 liters, 430 lb-feet

Small powerplant is highly potent. by Joe Sage

A \$70,000-plus top trim full-size 4x4 pickup is always great, but there's something to be said for hopping in without a care about muddy boots, wet dogs or a loose bale of hay. The Chevrolet Silverado 1500 lineup starts at \$34,600 for a single-cab standard-bed rear-drive WT with just one engine choice—their surprising 2.7L turbo-four. Here, we have the LT, fourth up among ten trims, \$44,900 base with the same 2.7-liter (or a 5.3L V8 and 3.0L turbo diesel six are also offered on LT; and

a 6.2L V8 is also available on some other models).

New in 2019, Silverado has a major refresh for 2022, upgraded and restyled inside and out, with a new premium interior from LT grade on up.

Ten trims, four engines and a variety of cabs and beds provide a great many build possibilities (see info at lower right). Some models may be required for specific needs—load or tow, 4WD or extreme off-roading. Even those, along with other style, convenience or general pampering options, may simply be must-haves for individual tastes.

An extensive range of packages can build upon the base LT, for expanded trailering, off-roading and more, that can help it start to overlap other models. Our truck was fairly light on options, a good way to

experience the pure model, with column shift, no remote start, manual tilt/telescope, no seat memory, many of little concern for an owner who sets the basics once and is done. Mirrors, seats and locks are all power, and climate control is comprehensive. It's fully featured—any absence of power or luxury is not absence of function itself.

Belying its cylinder count, the magical 2.7-liter EcoTec3 delivers almost as much torque (430 lb-ft) as a 6.2L V8 or diesel (both 460), with the best fuel economy of the three gasoline engines (though the diesel is higher). Tow capacity is its only lesser specification, at under 10,000 pounds in any LT build.

For fast-paced daily duty around town, depending how much you're used to a V8, you won't give

the strong and capable 2.7-liter a second thought.

We took ours for a hearty run up I-17 through Black Canyon, where things get very tight, steep and winding, with semis and tow rigs jockeying to maintain full pace on just two lanes. Here, you can easily get boxed in if short on power, but this engine and drivetrain really shine. If you jump on the pedal to regain uphill momentum, the high-torque turbo and 8-speed (other engines have a 10-speed) respond immediately and impressively.

The 2.7-liter Silverado has AutoTrac automatic all-wheel drive, with selectable 2HI and 4HI, and a Terrain Mode for more low-speed ability. (Other specialized off-road trims offer more ground clearance and a more complex transfer case including 4LO.) We took ours on an unpaved drive in the high country—no bouldering, just gravel and dirt roads—and it did great in any mode, even 2HI.

We didn't do formal testing, but anecdotally, fuel economy was great for a full-size 4x4. We drove just under 200 miles on less than half a tank, all aggressively, suggesting we easily hit its estimated 20 MPG highway or 18 combined. And as a bonus, the 2.7L runs on regular unleaded. With fuel prices currently almost three times what they were a year ago, this is the gift that keeps giving.

Whether you need more luxury than an LT, or a more powerful engine than this turbo, may depend upon specific needs, budget or just personal preferences. The 2.7L's torque and tow capacity are almost as high as the bigger V8 and the diesel. Its fuel economy is highest of the three gasoline engines. It's the least expensive. It's the lightest. All in all, it is surely the most surprising. This build is a casebook example of why just throwing money at the priciest solution is not always necessary. ■

COMING in fall 2023 as a 2024 model will be the first all-electric Silverado, new from the ground up, on GM's Ultium EV platform, with prices expected to range from the upper \$30s to over \$100 grand.



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY.....	Fort Wayne Assembly, Indiana
ENGINE / TRANSMISSION	USA / USA
PARTS CONTENT	42% US / 44% Mexico
BUILD	crew cab / short bed
ENGINE.....	2.7L I-4 turbo DOHC VVT DI w Active Fuel Management & stop/start
HP/TORQUE	310 hp / 430 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.0:1
TRANSMISSION	Hydra-Matic 8-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN	4x4
TRANSFER CASE	2-spd AutoTrac
AXLE RATIO	3.42
SUSPENSION	F: independent coil-over shock w twin-tube shocks; R: solid axle w semi-elliptic, variable-rate, two-stage multileaf springs (incl composite 2nd stage springs on LT), splayed twin-tube shocks
STEERING.....	elec pwr-assist rack & pinion
BRAKES.....	F: 13x1.18; R: 13.6x0.79
WHEELS.....	20x9 alum w grazen paint pockets
TIRES	P275/60R20 A/T (or A/S)
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	(cc/sb) 231.9 / 147.4 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	8.1 in
APPR / BRKVR / DEPART	19.3 / 19.3 / 23.5°
TURNING CIRCLE	na
HEADROOM (F/R).....	43.0 / 40.1 in
LEGGROOM (F/R).....	44.5 / 43.4 in
BED LENGTH	(short box) 69.9 in (5.8 ft)
BASE CURB WEIGHT	(cc/sb/4x4) 4815 lb
MAX GVWR.....	7000 lb
MAX PAYLOAD.....	2185 lb
TOW CAPACITY	(cc/sb/4x4) 9000 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	premium unl / 24 gal
MPG	17/20/18 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$48,300
WHEELS: 20-in aluminum w/ grazen	1100
CONVENIENCE PKG II: universal home remote, rear power sliding window, hitch guidance w hitch view, trailer brake controller, trailering app.....	840
BED PROTECTION PKG: ChevyTec spray-on bed-liner.....	685
PAINT: Cherry Red Tintcoat	495
MULTIFLEX TAILGATE.....	445
REAR 60/40 FOLDING BENCH SEAT	225
FLOOR LINERS.....	210
ALL-TERRAIN TIRES	200
-CREDIT: not equipped w heated steering wheel (to be retrofitted later).....	(25)
-CREDIT: not equipped w front heated seats (to be retrofitted later).....	(50)
-CREDIT: not equipped w rear wheelhouse liners.....	(140)
DESTINATION CHARGE.....	1695
-CREDIT: 2.7L Turbo High-Output engine...(1500)	
TOTAL	\$52,480

KEY BUILD VARIABLES

TRIMS.....WT, Custom, Custom Trail Boss, LT, RST, LT Trail Boss, LTD, LTZ, High Country, ZR2 (new)

ENGINES / TRANSMISSIONS
2.7L turbo-4 / 8-spd auto;
5.3L, 6.2L V8, 3.0L turbo-diesel / 10-spd auto
CABS / BEDS