

Ready to rock

STORY AND PHOTOS: JOE SAGE



This is no ordinary Tundra. Toyota built it at a dealership, special. And special it is. With the help of Toyota Racing Development (TRD) parts, you can build yourself the same thing.

TRD is Toyota's performance arm, providing specialty factory vehicles, dealer option packages, and aftermarket parts. (TRD is often compared to everything from Audi quattro S/RS, BMW M and Mercedes-AMG, to Ford SHO and Nissan Nismo, to the third-party wonders developed and shown every year at SEMA.)

This Tundra TRD Supercharged pickup was built upon a 2008 single-cab short-box Tundra using TRD aftermarket components.



You won't be able to put this truck together at the toyota.com build-your-own site, but you can check the fundamentals. A single or Regular Cab truck like this, in two-wheel drive, starts at \$23,455, the extended or Double Cab at \$25,795 and the full four-door CrewMax at \$28,765. As with their American truck cousins, the options and prices are all over the charts from there.

In a world full of extended, double and crew cab pickups, this single was refreshing. More than refreshing, we found it highly desirable for, well, driving. Extended cabs have become so popular, we've noted that single-cab style and layout aren't all that well executed in many of the brands. And that's too bad, as it's really the fundamental pickup layout, plus it just might fit in your garage. So what do you lose by not having a larger cab? In this case, nothing, if you don't really need a back seat (or a half-baked hint of a back seat). The space behind the driver/passenger's seat is enormous. Since pickups often turn out to be paradoxically impractical for actually carrying much, other than items that really require an open bed, this space proves very appealing. Very large doors give ample access to that space. And although the doors are that wide, even if you don't need that storage access, you'll find they are very inviting simply for opening and entering. And that puts you in the driver's seat, where you'll enjoy side windows that give us the spacious feeling of an oceanfront picture window. We were at home in this cab from the start.

But that's ultimately all about a truck you can buy off the lot today. Let's take a better look at what makes this one so different.

At the core is a supercharger (\$5875 at build time), which boosts horsepower from a stock 381 at 5600 rpm, to a whopping 504 hp at 5500 rpm. Torque, already substantial at 401 lb-ft (3600 rpm) is now 550 (at 4000 rpm). The engine runs on 91 octane premium gasoline.

The add-ons are big, the add-ons are bold, and they do carry some costs but earn their keep. Compare the cost of this build-out with that of several extreme performance third-party custom Mustangs or Corvettes. You do find you've about doubled the cost of the base truck, but your untouchable TRD quasi-custom still sets you back no more than a factory-floor pickup with a larger cab and the typical list of options that end up on most



TUNDRA TRD LOGBOOK

- We really like the slim, trim form of the single cab. And it has tons of room behind the seats. You wouldn't need any more cab than this. The door's a little big when you go to close it for the first time; feels like it's back there a ways. But the side window is like a picture window on the Pacific Ocean (without the ocean)... nice. And we grew to like the big door more and more.
- Love the deep gauges on the instrument panel, love the simplicity of it all. Glad to see it minimal on the electronics and controls... real straightforward. Purpose-built.
- Glovebox paperwork shows it's been in for a recall with an accelerator plate put in.
- Minor odd design: 4 dials for HVAC, 3 in a row on the center stack, the 4th dealt with completely differently (to left of stack), and it's the fan... an odd design decision.
- Great view from the cab, looking out over the hood: a depression in the center and two bulges to the sides, rather than a bulge in the middle, good muscle look and feel.
- Console storage compartment is so big, we put a whole camera bag in it, with room for plenty of other stuff. 24-pack size?
- Started up in a neighborhood figuring we'd stay in first gear, real slow since this thing's so potent, yet going 15 mph it shifted into third gear in no time. Geared for fuel economy over torque, to a degree? Good decision: it has tons of torque, anyway.
- At the top of a freeway on-ramp, we punched it a little (not tire-smoking punch it, just normal)... transmission felt a hair sluggish in D, tried S next (and +/-). On the freeway, 65 mph or 70, we found D fine.
- There's a noticeable rumble under our butts, going 1800 rpm in D. Knocked it over to S, went to about 3000 rpm at the same speed. The higher RPMs of course produce a higher whine, and you can feel a difference, but again with 550 lb-ft of torque it may be superfluous. We noted several times that, despite the wonders of S and a manumatic, there is so much torque that sticking with more economical D is fine.
- Another freeway ramp, red light for left turn, outer lane or two. Inner lane: Tahoe, which easily had the power and pole position. We decided to nail it and holycow does it go... we were up that ramp like a bullet; the Tahoe wasn't even a factor.
- Tried a U-turn on a relatively wide but just two-lane road. Gave ourselves the latitude of a driveway on one side and probably JUST used a hair that... really nice turning circle. Liking the single cab.
- Noted "the only weak point" remains when you launch it, just normally from a red light or a stop sign, there's just a bit of lag in the transmission.

KEEP RIGHT >>

of them. And this is a very cool upgrade.

The TRD Supercharged pickup is 50-state emission-legal, by way of a California Air Resources Board (CARB) Executive Order, which qualifies this (in fact mandates it) as an aftermarket-level emission certification. This means the supercharger may not be installed on a new vehicle prior to sale, nor by prior arrangement at the time of sale, and it cannot be financed together with the new vehicle. No matter how much you may have premeditated this move, you will have to treat it as though it's your next great idea after purchase. The warranty on the supercharger is the same as the Toyota Powertrain Warranty on the truck: up to 5 years or 60,000 miles, or the remainder of the Powertrain Warranty at the time of installation when installed by a Toyota dealer.

While most of our test vehicles carry this or the next model year's date, we were surprised to receive a nominal 2008 in 2010. We checked with the Toyota fleet staff who delivered the truck to us, and they checked farther afield, but the exact build date was hard to pin down. But we do know what was put on the truck and the costs at that point in time. Head down to your Toyota dealer, and with their list of TRD aftermarket options and build-ons at hand, you'll be ready to create your own Tundra TRD Supercharged pickup. At the time this 4x2 Regular Cab truck with the 5.7-liter V8 was built, its base price was \$24,380 (it is now \$25,655). This specific truck added the following:

STOCK 2008 TUNDRA 4X2 REGULAR CAB 5.7-L V8	
MSRP	\$ 24,380
FACTORY OPTIONS	
50 states emissions	\$ 0
Cloth bucket seats, tilt/telescoping wheel, center console	\$ 45
Cold kit: HD battery, starter and front and rear mud guards.....	\$ 130
Power heated outside mirror	\$ 160
SR5 package: chrome bumper grille, power windows/door locks, cruise, remote keyless entry, engine skid plate, variable intermittent wipers, carpet flooring, SR5 fabric and badging.....	\$ 1,390
Front and rear clearance sonar	\$ 500
Front license plate bracket.....	\$ 13
Bed mat.....	\$ 127
Alarm.....	\$ 299
Factory Options Total	\$ 2,664
TRD GOODIES	
TRD dual exhaust.....	\$ 1,065
TRD super charger	\$ 5,875
TRD big brake kit	\$ 2,795
TRD lowering suspension	\$ 1,699
TRD rear anti-sway bar.....	\$ 299
Tonneau cover*	\$ 1,495
TRD 22" tires and wheels	\$ 4,699
TRD Goodies Total	\$ 17,927
<i>* Tonneau cover is not TRD, but was installed in that phase</i>	
MODIFIED 2008 TUNDRA TRD SUPERCHARGED	
Stock Truck Base MSRP.....	\$ 24,380
Factory Options Total	\$ 2,664
TRD Goodies Total	\$ 17,927
Deal Prep & Handling	\$ 685
TOTAL	\$ 45,656

We had a blast with this truck and would have been just as happy to have it never leave. Despite being a full-size pickup, it feels compact, light and quick. Its high driver position and ample power provide all the reserve (or active) dominance you could ever want in a street-legal daily-driving truck. And the red paint didn't hurt.

We found out quickly that this truck seems to attract other cool trucks. Quite a few times when we parked, despite parking in farther, more isolate spots, to protect that red paint, we would return to find another cooler than average truck—power jobs, suspension jobs—parked respectfully a few spaces away. There were many smiles and stares, and a dash down the freeway brought us a thumbs-up from the driver of an older (original "3/4-size") Tundra TRD. Despite this truck actually being Toyota's, after just our first 10-15 miles, we had noted in the logbook that we were already thinking: "our truck" is the coolest truck. We were bonding.

The logbook noted only two subjective downsides. We thought the transmission's shift points and shift action, especially in the first couple of gears, seemed a little awkward. Of course, this truck's strong point was never intended to be first and second gear. And the acoustics of its overall rumble could wear on us after awhile at constant speeds, though that's definitely part of the show. In other words, the only two downsides are both mitigated by the very nature of the beast.

We've often given ourselves a note of caution that using a voice recorder to make logbook memos tends to make you note a lot of things with irony, or negatives—we feel like Andy Rooney and try to balance them out. Given that, though, we notice we made very few notes at all about this Toyota TRD Supercharged pickup. From this, we conclude that it is just plain "good as is." ■

