

Stealthy

Seven-seat Dodge R/T by Joe Sage

Dodge Durango bears impressive DNA under its relatively unassuming skin. Built alongside Jeep Grand Cherokee, Durango shares much with this combination Rubicon Trail/country club champion. Developed in the waning days of the DaimlerChrysler partnership, Durango shares significant elements of chassis and drivetrain design with the twice-as-costly Mercedes-Benz GLS. And as a Dodge, it not only shares an impressive range of Pentastar and HEMI® engines, but in the case of our example here, an R/T badge and treatment, moving it into a space not covered by the others.

Put that all together, and you have a seven-seat utility with 360 well-mapped horses, 7400 pounds of towing, a base price just over \$40,000 and a persona that will give you an ear-to-ear grin while leaving the outside world oblivious, if you care to—or not—a package that's equal parts quiet but potent sleeper and head-turning competitor.

Yet through it all, this two-and-a-half-ton people hauler is also just cool. Batman cool.

Durango's tow capacity (7400 lb RWD, 7200 lb

AWD) gives it an edge against many competitors, which have ratings of 3500-5000 lb. Some others decided that 90 percent of people are covered at 5000 lb, and that fuel savings could make up for the rest. Durango R/T is still in the 20s for highway MPG, but can tow for those 90 percent and for the 10 percent who need to tow 50 percent more.

And when did anybody buying a Challenger or Charger R/T ever worry about the MPG-HP trade-off? Same here. There's a V6 Durango with 6200 lb tow capacity and 26 MPG if you prefer.

Our Durango R/T was thoroughly equipped, from 8.4-inch Uconnect® and Beats audio, to triple-zone climate with desirable roof outlets, to a rich red and black R/T-embossed, leather-trimmed interior.

There are a number of alternative shifters we don't like, but FCA's rotary we do—it's just tactile, easy and well positioned, and it won't let you turn off the vehicle if not in park—simple and effective.

By the way, if 360 hp is not enough for you, watch for the 2018 Dodge Durango SRT, with a rev-matching 475-hp 6.4L HEMI V8 and 4.4-sec-zero-to-60 acceleration time.

The bones of Grand Cherokee, GLS and Dodge Durango itself, with the spirit of Challenger R/T, all delivered in the \$40s. What's not to like. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	5.7L HEMI® MDS VVT V8
HP/TORQUE	360 hp / 390 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	8-spd auto w/ paddle shifters and electronically modulated torque converter clutch
DRIVETRAIN	RWD (AWD available)
BRAKES	F 13.8 vented 2-piston disc / R 13.0 solid disc
STEERING	rack & pinion, elec power assist
SUSPENSION	FR: Short- and long-arm (SLA) indep, coils, gas twin-tube coil-over shocks, steel upper & alum lower control arms, alum knuckle, stabilizer bar R: Multi-link rear, coils, twin tube shocks (w/ load leveling for tow), alum lower control arm, independent upper links (tension/camber) plus separate toe link
WHEELS	20x8 low-gloss granite crystal wheels
TIRES	265/50 R20 Pirelli Scorpion
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	201.2 in / 119.8 in
TURNING CIRCLE	37.1 ft
PASSENGERS	seven (2/2/3)
CARGO CAPACITY	17.2 / 47.7 / 84.5 cu.ft
WEIGHT / PAYLOAD / TOW	5133 / 1340 / 7400 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	24.6 gal
MPG	14/22/17 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$42,095
TECHNOLOGY GROUP: Adaptive cruise, advanced brake assist, blind spot/cross path detect, full speed fwd collision warning, lane depart warning plus	2295
REAR DVD ENTERTAINMENT PACKAGE: Blu-Ray compatible dual screen video	1995
SECOND ROW CAPTAIN'S CHAIRS: Ford/tumble, w 2nd row console, cupholders, armrests, 3rd row console	995
POWER SUNROOF	1195
DESTINATION CHARGE	1095
TOTAL	\$49,670

