

Packaging pays off

BY JOE SAGE

Among full-size pickups—America’s biggest-selling vehicle category—it’s simultaneously easy to develop favorites or to love ‘em all.

Toyota Tundra has a built-in comparative disadvantage against other full-size pickups, coming in nominal half-ton capacity only (comparable to the Americans’ 1500 or 150 trucks or the non-XD Nissan Titan). There is no Tundra 2500 or up model. It’s possible this can lead to Toyota being overlooked in certain mindsets and/or in some truck comparo and awards events where HD trucks are also included.

On the other hand, the Toyota Tacoma has long rocked the midsize segment (one that has just become exceptionally active and well-stocked), coming in fourth behind the Americans in sales (though at half the volume of number three). This gives us another way to look at Tundra in the Toyota lineup, apart from (or in addition to) its position in the greater full-size pickup market.

In particular, we thought about midsize Tacoma TRD Sport, TRD Off-Road and TRD Pro models (they currently offer all three) as we drove this full-size Tundra TRD Sport (an option package on the second-up SR5 trim).

In addition to the advanced suspension of the Tundra SR5’s TRD Sport Package, you gain style points that make a huge difference in the truck’s persona—20-inch wheels (as on top-dollar Limited, Platinum and 1794 Edition trucks), body-color-keyed grille surround (as on those and TRD Pro), and black chain-link grille. We’ve had manufactur-

ers tell us their focus groups always ask for more chrome, but they never asked us. We had no doubt that our red Tundra’s non-chrome face was a huge factor in its overall appeal.

Similarly to how the midsize Sport or Off-Road Tacoma TRDs cost five or nine grand more than an SR5, without running 15 grand more for a TRD Pro, the full-size Tundra SR5’s TRD Sport Package adds just \$3275, versus 15 grand more for a full-blown TRD Pro. Compare the two in detail, and you’re still likely to agree this is a sweet spot. Compare with the 50-thousand-plus luxe models, and (depending upon your taste, budget and purpose) you are likely to find the same. We also find great value in its SR5 Upgrade Package, with everything from a 38-gallon tank to power lumbar bucket seats for \$945.

We do wish we had had keyless entry and start, as well as power tilt-telescope wheel, but these don’t appear to be available at these trim levels (we dug deep, but you might want to dig deeper).

The Entune audio system (a dollar value, including touchscreen, nav and Bluetooth) is pretty basic on settings, but benefits from way above average speaker positioning and channel separation.

Note that TRD Pro has 18-inch wheels, so this package’s 20s are a trade-off, off-road; however, there is also a TRD Off-Road Package for the SR5, with 18-inchers. One other thing worth noting: you can get a Tundra SR5 with Double Cab (as opposed to the Crew Cab here) with that rarest of things, an 8.1-foot bed. Not available with the TRD Sport Package, it is available with a TRD Off-Road Package. All together (and setting aside the lack of a manual transmission option on any), this is a solid range of possibilities. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE5.7L iForce V8 DOHC 32v w dual indep VVT-i	
HP/TORQUE381 hp / 401 lb-ft	
TRANSMISSION6-speed electronic auto w sequential shift mode, uphill/downhill logic, tow/haul mode	
DRIVETRAIN4x4: 4WDemand part-time 4WD w electronically controlled transfer case, active traction control (A-TRAC) & automatic limited slip diff	
SUSPENSION F: indep high-mount dbl-wishbone w stblzr bar & low-pressure nitrogen shocks; R: live axle w trapezoid multi-leaf springs, outboard-mounted low-pressure nitrogen shocks.	
STEERINGrack & pinion hydraulic w/fluid cooler	
BRAKES F/R: 13.9" opposed 4-piston, vented disc 78.4 sq.in per side, total 156.8" per rotor	
WHEELS(std) 18" styled steel / (ours) 20" TRD Sport	
TIRES(std) P255/70R18 / (ours) P275/55R20	
LENGTH / WHEELBASE228.9 / 145.7 in	
TURNING CIRCLE44.0 ft	
GROUND CLEARANCE10.4 in	
APPROACH / DEPART26° / 17°	
SEATING CAPACITY6 or 5 (front bench or buckets)	
HEADROOM (F/R)39.7 / 38.9 in	
LEGROOM (F/R)42.5 / 42.3 in	
WEIGHT5640 lb	
BED LENGTH66.7 in (5.5 ft±)	
PAYLOAD / TOW CAPACITY1440-1560 / 9800 lb	
FUEL / CAPACITY87 reg or higher (E85 ok) / 38 gal	
MPG13/17/14 (city/hwy/comb)	
BASE PRICE \$40,145	
ENTUNE PREMIUM AUDIO: integrated nav & app suite, 7.0" touchscreen w backup camera, AM/FM/CD, hands-free Bluetooth phone/music, Siri eyes free, SiriusXM.....525	
TRD SPORT PKG: 20" 8-spoke TRD Sport alloy wheels, sport-tuned Bilstein shocks, TRD front/rear anti-sway bars, color-keyed accents (grille surround, mirrors, bumpers), LED headlights & fogs, TRD Sport floor mats, TRD shift knob, bedside TRD Sport decals, hood scoop3275	
SR5 UPGRADE PKG: 38-gallon tank upsize, front bucket seats w power driver incl power lumbar, front center console w floor-mount shift lever & knob, tilt-telescope wheel, 3 front cup holders, alarm & engine immobilizer945	
TRD SPORT CONVENIENCE PKG: front & rear park assist sonar, blind spot monitor, rear cross traffic alert1000	
SPRAY-IN BEDLINER579	
DESTINATION CHARGE1395	
TOTAL \$47,864	

