

4x2 perspective BY JOE SAGE

Have you ever noticed? Despite being the single best-selling vehicle in America, each Ford F-150—work fleets aside—is typically distinctively different. Ours here is in top-level Limited trim, well above a \$28k base F-150, even some \$12k above Platinum, with a wealth of features—massaging leather seats, Sync3, power running boards—that take the trend of pickup as daily driver to country club cruiser level. It's the biggest of three cabs, Supercrew. Its EcoBoost V6 (the engines that have quickly become F-150's most popular) is the 450-hp 510-lbft High Output, tops of six available engines (even the diesel) on both specs. And it's a 4x2, in a world where about three-quarters of full-size pickups are 4x4. This sample has a trailer tow package, tow-haul mode, backup-hookup technology and trailer monitoring, and its configuration—cab, wheelbase, bed length, engine, drivetrain and rear end—gives it a tow capacity above 12,000 lb.

Ford's updated styling sees the grilles and headlights finally take full advantage of the shapes afforded by aluminum build, and this Limited in particular is one handsome truck. We had this 2WD truck for Overland Expo West week and wondered: could that prove awkward, or would anybody even notice? In decades prior, a stock 4x4's high stance was immediately recognizable. Now the difference is just 6/10ths of an inch.

We headed north toward Flagstaff, a migration

where I-17's curves, grades and widely varying speeds among fellow travelers often get the best of lane-keeping and smart cruise control systems, but the F-150 blessedly deferred to our human input. The beefy EcoBoost offered king of the road command. (Next time, we'd like to try that 12,000-lb trailer, too.) Arriving at Expo, we were directed into a rugged basically 4x4 parking spot, where the truck's healthy ground clearance and traction rendered our largely invisible difference moot.

Heading back south, we pulled off at Schnebly Hill Road. The sign says, "recommended for trucks and off-road vehicles." Trucks! That's us! Nothing about 4WD. (When conditions are bad enough, they just close the road, anyway; they don't fine-tune the qualifications.) Within a couple of miles, the road gets rougher and rockier, but that didn't faze our 2WD Ford. We wanted to return on I-17, so we didn't drive all the way to Sedona. Our three-point turnaround could have dropped two wheels off the deep end, where 4WD would have been vital, so we took care there, our only concession.

Full-size pickups, the biggest category, increasingly live in the middle, with booms in both bigger 2500/3500 HD and smaller midsize trucks. And here we found perspective. While smaller trucks may need 4x4 drivetrains to maximally achieve, some bigger ones may have the stuff to prove they can conquer just as much even without it. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

BUILD	high-strength steel frame, aluminum cab & bed
ENGINE	High Output 3.5L EcoBoost v6 alum block/heads, twin-turbo, intercooled, DOHC
DRIVETRAIN	4X2 (rear-wheel drive)
HP/TORQUE	450 hp / 510 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	elec hydr 10-spd auto w tow mode
SUSPENSION	F: indep dbl-wishbone w coil-over HD gas shocks, stamped lower control arm; R: leaf spring, solid axle, HD gas shocks
STEERING	electric power assist
BRAKES	pwr ABS vented disc, iron: F: 350x34mm, 2x54 sliding caliper; R: 336x24mm, 1x54 sliding cal; electronic parking brake
WHEELS / TIRES	22" pol alum / P275/45 R22 BSW AS
LENGTH / WB (SuperCrew 5'5" bed).....	231.9 / 145.0 in
APPROACH / BRKOVER / DEP	25.5 / 21.0 / 26.0°
GROUND CLEARANCE	(4x4 9.4 in) 4x2 8.8 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	40.8 / 43.9 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	40.4 / 43.6 in
GVWR / PAYLOAD (per this spec).....	7000 / 2030 lb
TOW CAPACITY (per this spec, 3.55 rear).....	12,100 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	23 or 36 gal
MPG	17/22/19 (city/hwy/comb)

INCLUDES: LED box lighting, LED quad beam headlights, LED side-mirror spotlights, power slide rear window w defrost & privacy tint, remote tailgate release, power running boards, LED taillamps, twin-panel moonroof, 100V 400W outlet, heated-vented front seats, 2nd row heated seats, 8" productivity screen, SYNC@3 8" touchscreen, adaptive cruise, memory pedal adjust, ambient lighting, wood accents, leather-wrap st wheel, multicontour seats w active motion, 360° camera, B&O prem audio, blind spot w cross traffic alert, FordPass™ Connect 4G wifi hotspot modem, keyless entry-start, lane keep, pre-collision assist w auto emergency brake, reverse sensing, voice activ nav, more.

BASE PRICE	\$67,135
INDIV OPTIONS: tray style floor liner (160), trailer tow pkg (995), tailgate step (375), spray-in bedliner (595).....	2125
DESTINATION CHARGE	1495
TOTAL	\$70,755

