

# Radical, responsive and ready to rock

by Joe Sage

The new 2023 Ford F-150 Raptor R delivers something Raptor fans have clamored for, for years—this mega-popular dune-running off-road supertruck is now available with a V8.

Fitting a V8 under the hood of a Ford F-Series is easy—you see it every day. But Ford Performance had reasons for building the original Raptor with a high output EcoBoost V6 for its prime directive. Anyone in Arizona knows it's some distance to the best-of-the-best dunes. Any dune-runner seeks the thrills of catching some air. And a day in the middle of nowhere can tend to drain a tank. All these factors were addressed by a lighter-weight V6.

Nonetheless, Raptor became immediately and

predictably popular as a top dog daily driver, and as a top dog, a V8 could only make it moreso.

Meet the F-150 Raptor R, revealed last summer, with production starting late last year. The entire truck required extensive reengineering, and it got it. The fastest and most powerful F-150 ever bears a new supercharged 5.2-liter V8 cranking out 700 hp and 640 lb-ft of torque—compared to 450 hp and 510 lb-ft in the twin-turbo 3.5L high output EcoBoost V6 Raptor. Upgrades also include electronically controlled long-travel FOX Live Valve shocks, specially tuned for the truck's added power, and 37-inch tires as standard, for best-in-class ground clearance. Style points include a beefy power dome on the hood, R-spe-

cific graphics, and a black premium interior bearing genuine carbon fiber streaked with signature Ford Performance Code Orange accents.

Derived from the Mustang Shelby GT500, the V8 is recalibrated and optimized for off-road performance, with increased low-end and mid-range torque; exhaust manifolds upgraded to cast stainless steel; oil cooler, filter and a deeper oil pan all model-specific; and air intake volume increased 66 percent via a wider intake and higher-flow filter. A new front axle has a higher-strength carrier cast-

ing and aluminum-ribbed structural cover to manage added torque, and the truck has its own large-diameter aluminum driveshaft. The transmission and torque converter are also upgraded, as is the exhaust—a dual system with true pass-through muffler and active valve system, with modes for Normal, Sport, Quiet and Baja. Five-link rear suspension has extra-long trailing arms to better maintain axle position on rough terrain, a Panhard rod and 24-inch coil springs, all optimized for stability in desert terrain at high speeds. Wheel travel is 13 inches in front, 14.1 in the rear.

All that, and the Raptor R is still nimble while jumping the dunes, about the only thing we didn't have an opportunity to try during our week.

When the truck was delivered to our offices, all

we were going to do was move it to a different parking spot, but one thing led to another, and we were soon in the high country, climbing at speed on four-lane highways, continuing on two-lanes through curves, hills and canyons, then heading into our first quick session in the dirt.

Once started, it's definitely hard to stop. Enjoyment of this truck hits you on every level.

Raptor R is powerful beast, clearly. It's highly capable, suited to its specialized duties, while also providing an edge in any routine use. It's a tall drink of water, set atop its 37-inchers (which first appeared on the V6 Raptor 37 Performance Package, which we drove a year ago, a factory adaptation that may sound like a straightforward wheel swap, but involved reengineering the frame and bed to the point that it has its own assembly line.

That build foreshadowed much of the Raptor R, as had our time spent with it, which echoed as we again did lots of Valley freeway time (both were

*(cont'd)*



**PICKUP TRUCK OF THE YEAR:** Ford F-150 Raptor R just won 2023 Pickup Truck of the Year at NWAPA (Northwest Automotive Press Association) "Mudfest," the NW Outdoor Activity Vehicle of the Year Awards (also in this issue). Our sample is in Carbonized Gray Metallic.

## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Dearborn Truck Plant, Michigan
ENGINE BUILD	Dearborn, Michigan
CAB / BED / WB	SuperCrew / 5.5-ft / 145-in
BUILD	high-strength aluminum frame, aluminum cab and bed
ENGINE	high-output 5.2L (315 cu.in.) supercharged, intercooled 90° OHC V8, cast alum block and head w plasma transfer wire arc cyl liners, DOHC 24v, port fuel inj w twin high-flow fuel pumps, twin indep var camshaft timing, forged alum pistons
BORE X STROKE	3.70 in x 3.66 in
ALTERNATOR	standard single 240A
IGNITION SYS	distributorless coil-on-plug
ENGINE CONTROL	Ford powertrain module
OIL	11.5 qt 5W/50 full synthetic w filter
COOLANT	12.0L engine + 1.3L supercharger
HP/TORQUE	700 hp / 640 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	9.5:1
TRANSMISSION	10-spd automatic, warm-up unit w thermostatic fin cooler
DRIVETRAIN	2-spd torque on-demand 4x4 w mech lock, electr rear diff w 4.10 axles
SUSPENSION	F: Indep dbl-wishbone w coil-over shock & cast alum lower control arm, high-output gas-press, electr contr contin variable compression damping FOX Racing Shox, 3.1-in damper, 1.0-in rod dia on Raptor R; R: five-link coil w Panhard rod, high-output gas-press, electr contr contin var compression damping FOX Racing Shox, 3.1-in damper, 0.875-in rod dia;
SUSP TRAV	w 37-in tires: F: 13.0-in; R: 14.1-in
STEERING	elec pwr-asst
BRAKES	power antilock vented disc, elect control brake boost, Nitro Tough iron: F: 350x34mm, 2x 51mm sliding caliper; R: 336x20mm, 1x 54mm sliding eiPB
WHEELS	17x8.5-in forged alum beadlock-capabl, Matte Black 10 painted w Magnetic painted ring, (Code Orange ring avail)
TIRES	L37x12.50R17LT BFGoodrich All-Terrain T/A K02 (full-size matching spare)
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	232.6 / 145.4 in
WIDTH	(w / w/o mirrors) 96.0 / 87.0 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	13.1 in
OPEN TAILGATE TO GROUND	37.8 in
APPRCH / DEPART / BRKVER	33.1 / 24.9 / 24.4°
TURNING CIRCLE	w 37-in tires: 50.0 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	40.8 / 40.4 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	43.9 / 43.6 in
BED LENGTH AT FLOOR	67.1 in
PAYLOAD	1400 lb
TOW CAPACITY	8700 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.91 prem unl / 36 gal
MPG	TBD

BASE PRICE (Raptor V6) .....\$76,775  
EQUIPMENT GROUP 802A .....incl

RAPTOR R EQUIPMENT GROUP:  
5.2L Supercharged V8, 17-in forged aluminum beadlock-capable wheels, Raptor R grille with "R" badge, Raptor R hood vent with "R" badge, Code Orange tow hooks, Raptor R badge on tailgate appliqué, Raptor R exterior graphics, black exterior accents, black alcantara suede and leather Recaro® seats, carbon fiber interior appliqué, Code Orange stitching on doors and instrument panel, Code Orange Raptor R interior badging .....\$30,575

PARTITIONED LOCKABLE STORAGE .....incl  
7450-LB GVWR PKG .....incl  
BEDLINER: ToughBed spray-in ACOY .....incl  
TOWING: Class IV hitch .....incl  
DESTINATION CHARGE .....1895

TOTAL .....\$109,245

(Per information available to date.)



with us for NASCAR race weekend commutes), similarly irresistible country highway runs, and more than an average amount of time off-pavement, in multiple sessions each.

And as with any best-of-the-best wheels, you just can't wait to get back in and go some more.

The interior is purpose-built, understated and luxurious, all in one—exemplified by everything from black alcantara suede and leather Recaro seats to Raptor's trademark red leather marker at top dead center of the steering wheel (stylish as well as useful in challenging maneuvers).

As on any F-Series, tech features abound, augmented by a thorough set of camera views (and the drive modes to take you where they're handy).

As with the 37-inch V6 Raptor, the Raptor R is 6.7 inches wider than a base F-150, filling the lane in town or on the freeway, yet always tracking true. And it's surprisingly maneuverable—we had to shake our heads at its stated 50-foot turning circle, as we easily handled tight spots in town.

On our off-highway trails, the truck proved so capable, we didn't even do the normal first step—putting it in four-wheel drive. We had it in 4Auto from the get-go, forgoing hand-selecting 2HI on the road or 4HI in the dirt. And in our extensive trials, including climbs, crawls and descents, we also never needed 4LO—as hard as we pushed it,

#### 2023 FORD F-150 LINEUP

	RWD	4X4
<b>XL</b> .....	\$34,445	39,600
<b>XLT</b> .....	42,800	44,550
<b>Lariat</b> .....	57,480	61,270
<b>King Ranch</b> .....	63,005	66,805
<b>Platinum</b> .....	64,695	68,490
<b>Limited</b> .....	---	84,910
<b>Tremor</b> .....	---	\$ 60,970
<b>Raptor</b> .....	---	76,775
<b>Raptor R</b> .....	---	▼ 107,350
<b>EV (Dual eMotor)</b>	Standard Range	Extended Range
<b>Lightning PRO</b> .....	\$55,974	---
<b>Lightning XLT</b> .....	63,474	80,974
<b>Lightning Lariat</b> .....	74,474	85,974
<b>Lightning Platinum</b> .....	---	96,874

there's still plenty more headroom. Equally welcome was the Raptor R's mastery of the narrowest, winding-est, cliff-hangingest dirt and gravel trails at speed. It is a dune-runner at its core, after all, but without the elbow room of a dune field, its accuracy and control are impressive.

When we're driving someone else's \$109,000 truck, we park it well away from the crowd (as we pretty much do with everything). Nonetheless, many curious enthusiasts came out of their way to see it at the far corner of the Phoenix Raceway lot, and we had many thumbs-ups on the streets and freeways. Whether knowledgeable fans full of anticipation for this truck, or those who just recognized it as extra cool, the Raptor R proved to be a real crowd-pleaser.

When you occupy the throne—as Ford F-Series has for decades—you're bound to keep upping your game. Humble roots of the 4x4 as a practical tool have in turn spawned the FX4, Raptor, Tremor, Raptor 37 Package and so on—each an expansion and tweak to the F-Series lineup, in several cases now also applied to their other trucks and SUVs, though never at the expense of the rest of the ever wider lineup. One thing for certain—Ford has been responsive to its buyers hopes and dreams.

We would likely upgrade its audio, which is nowhere near as intense as the truck itself (although this was a preproduction unit, while the whole industry is still battling computer chip supply constraints, so it may not have been final.)

If there's one thing anybody might change, but everybody knows you can't do much about if you want everything this truck is and does, it's the fuel mileage. We make no attempt to hypermile, certainly not in a vehicle like this, but couldn't miss the readout, staying right around 9.5 MPG through all our highly mixed usage. So yes, it's thirsty, but that's something you just happily live with.

Raptor R is a top dollar unit to purchase and to fuel, but this is an absolutely top notch truck in all circumstances and all regards. Handsome, too. All you need is the price of entry and care and feeding. If you get your hands on one, it's a keeper. ■

