

Ford pickups have legions of fans. The modern iteration of the midsize Ranger pickup has been a big hit. And everybody loves an Anything-Raptor. So this is the whole enchilada.

This Ranger Raptor is almost exactly like one we had two years ago, right down to the color, Shelter Green (see Sept-Oct 2024 online). One difference: that was a pre-production unit, and this is a final.

Its full name—2026 Ford Ranger Raptor SuperCrew 4X4 3.0L EcoBoost—includes cab type, drivetrain and engine, all of which are redundant, as all Ranger Raptors are built this way.

The full Ranger lineup has three different EcoBoost engines—a 270-hp 2.3L inline-four; a 315-hp 2.7L twin-turbo intercooled V6; and a 405-hp 3.0L twin-turbo intercooled V6. Raptor is the only one with that biggest, most powerful 3-liter (also the only one requiring 91-plus octane premium fuel).

Ranger Raptor has purpose-developed suspen-

sion (see sidebar), though not as complex as F-150 Raptor, which even modifies its frame and bed.

As noted two years ago, Ranger Raptor is considerably less expensive at base level, approaches the bigger Raptor's base power and weighs 500+ pounds less—a full formula of advantages—and its simpler build variables may also be welcome.

While a very special version, Ranger Raptor is roughly only about \$10K more than the next-down Lariat. (For perspective, F-150 Raptor is about \$20K more than Lariat, though there are three other trims in between, with Raptor about \$10K above the top of those and \$15K higher than F-150 Tremor, which is just \$5K more than Lariat.) An F-150 Raptor at \$79K is also just \$20K or so higher than the Ranger Raptor, which always surprises us, as F-150 Raptor has such a halo. You can add on to the F-150 Raptor from there, even significantly upgrading its already over-the-top fundamentals—or move to a Raptor R,

about \$115K. Ranger Raptor, meanwhile, has answered all your basic questions with its one build.

We took our highly sand-dirt-and-rock-capable Ranger Raptor out into sand, dirt, rocks, cliffs and climbs. We had also hoped to hit mud from some serious weather brewing in the general vicinity, but while we got dirty, we stayed dry. We hit a favorite cliffside two-track, and although nothing came the other way, it's a situation in which you realize the potential benefits of having a smaller truck.

Drivetrain settings and drive modes are intertwined, redundant to a degree, or doubly certain, i.e. popping modes into off-road puts you in 4HI, or popping the drivetrain into 4HI puts you in off-road mode, with other options for Baja, rock crawl, normal, sport, tow/haul, slippery and so on. You can take control, or it can handle some basics for you if, say, you're preoccupied with choosing your track.

That kind of specialized drive may be its forte,

by an edge. But while the big Raptor was born for dune-running duty, yet is a popular daily driver, the Ranger Raptor might be considered a little broader in its mission, popular even as a daily-first. And here, we found the ride faintly rough (not that we don't maybe favor that, nonetheless). And against others on always competitive freeway ramps, this is properly a beast, with a healthy roar and tons of power. But you don't buy an off-road truck to be a freeway beast. Or do you? Equal parts dune runner/freeway runner? This seems another benefit.

We logged some issues during our week, but overall, this midsize specialist has a big gotta-have-it factor. Put your foot on the pedal and you love it.

In a nutshell, you might say this. If you want a Ford Ranger, especially with dirt purpose in mind, look at this Raptor first. If you want a Raptor, with your particular degrees of both dirt purpose and budget in mind, you likely will check out the bigger ones, too. Even then, there are tradeoffs between sizes. But one thing for sure—if you choose this one, you get a Raptor for \$60 grand. ■

Mysterious behaviors: This is like a bad Valentine's card: I love you, but here's what you could do better. Our notes were lengthy, and we can't ignore it.

Maybe it was a fluke. Or two. But why? We had this truck and our 2024 both in early July, both in 115-120° temps, and none of this happened then.

[a] The truck arrived running extremely loud, like having a WWI biplane squadron under the hood. The explanation was that it just had a freeway run. But traffic was all running fast and hot, and nobody else was deafening like this. Gauges (coolant, oil and transmission temp) were all normal. A three-level exhaust noise control made no difference. It stayed very loud pretty much for the duration.

[b] Related or not, we were soon driving normally when it instantly became even louder and simultaneously blast furnace hot inside the cab. Had a hose burst? Nope. More likely, the ECU was confused. We got it parked. Tried many climate control variations—numbers vs LO, AC or Max AC, recirc—till it randomly recovered. This did not repeat. (Google away, as we did—many possibilities on both, and it seems to be not just us. We'll inquire with Ford engineers when we get the chance.)

The good news is, this midsize cabin does cool off quickly and effectively when all is on track. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Michigan Assembly Plant, Wayne, Michigan
ENGINE	3.0L EcoBoost 60° V6 twin-turbo, intercooled, DOHC, dir inj, roller finger follower, 4 main bearings, alum/alum
HP/TORQUE	405 hp / 430 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.5:1
TRANSMISSION	10-spd SelectShift auto, electronically controlled
DRIVETRAIN	advanced 4x4
TRANSFER CASE	automatic on-demand engagement (Raptor only); alum case
MAXIMUM CRAWL RATIO	67.88:1
SUSPENSION	F: short & long-arm indep w forged alum A-arms, coil-overs, gas-pressurized 2.5-in Fox Internal Bypass w Live Valve Tech; R: Watts-link w trailing arms, gas-pressurized Fox Internal Bypass w piggyback reservoirs & Live Valve Tech
STEERING	elec power asst
BRAKES	F: 341x34, 51mm floating caliper dual-piston; R: 332x24, 54mm floating caliper single-piston
WHEELS	17-in gray-paint, beadlock capable
TIRES	33-inch All-Terrain LT 285/70R17
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	210.9 / 128.7 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	41.0 / 38.3 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	43.2 / 34.6 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	10.7 in
APPR / DEP / BRKOVER	33.0 / 26.4 / 24.2°
TURNING CIRCLE	43.3 ft
BED LENGTH	59.6 in
BED WIDTH / AT WHEELHOUSE	62.4 / 48.2 in
MAX PAYLOAD	1373 lb
TOW CAPACITY	5510 lb
WEIGHT	5363 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	91+ oct prem / 20.3 gal
MPG	16/18/17 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$57,070
EQUIPMENT GROUP 800A: RAPTOR SERIES	incl
PAINT: Shelter Green	395
RAPTOR GRAPHIC	750
WHEELS: 17-in gray beadlock capable (w LT285/70R17 A/T tire)	1495
SIRIUSXM w 3-yr plan	300
BEDLINER: Toughbed spray-in	525
DESTINATION CHARGE	1895

TOTAL \$62,430
Sticker price above; current pricing see below.

2026 FORD RANGER LINEUP

	4X2	4X4
XL	\$33,550	\$37,050
XLT	35,970	39,470
Lariat	44,450	47,950
Raptor		57,665

Our truck in 2024 had been a pre-production example. While we don't think about that much, those may be wholly or partly hand-built, with finer points of engineering still being tweaked. That aside (or not), there are a handful of changes in published specs from 2024 to 2026—e.g. legroom is less (by half an inch front and a significant 3.7 inches rear), with emphasis on 33.9 cu.ft of cargo space behind folded front seats (a spec not yet stated in 2024). This may suggest accommodating two adults with more gear. It's fun to contemplate how many people are involved in such juggling and their various goals.

Purpose built

BY JOE SAGE

