

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

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TOYOTA TUNDRA CREWMAX 4X4

TACKLING THE EXCEEDINGLY COMPETITIVE AMERICAN FULL-SIZE PICKUP MARKET



PLUS... TOYOTA VENZA REVISITED • FORD TRANSIT CONNECT
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FINDING OUT WHETHER MAX IS ENOUGH

In analyzing the Toyota Tundra, first there is the truck itself: its size, power, capabilities, options, style and price. But more than most vehicles, it does not live in a vacuum. You have to consider the dominance of domestic brands in the full-size pickup segment. And in the case of full-size pickups, maybe more than any other category, you have to consider not just the truck itself, but also buyers' emotional and even "patriotic" quotients.

DOMESTIC MARKET SHARE EVOLUTION

For years, the market went about evenly to Ford and GM, with just a few percentage points (5-6% or so) to Dodge. (Ford consistently comes out on top.)

With the Dodge Ram updated in 1994, its sales jumped from 100,000 a year to 240,000 in one year, peaking at just over 400,000 by 1999, when Ford and GM updated their own trucks. Updated again in 2002, the Dodge climbed to 450,000 units by 2003. Ford and GM climbed, too, but Dodge was approaching a 20% share, an incredible gain in nine years' time.

Ford's top-selling F-150 was updated again in 2004, the Nissan Titan entered the game, and the newest Toyota Tundra hit the market in 2007. By 2008, Dodge sales had slipped all the way back to 245,000, until an all-new Ram pickup was launched for 2009. But let's back up.

TOYOTA GETS BIGGER, BUT NOT A LOT

Toyota first entered the not-quite-full-size pickup market with its T100 in 1993. This was rightly thought of as a "7/8" size pickup (and it lacked a V8). The traditional small Toyota pickup was named the Tacoma in 1995, keeping Toyota strong in its traditional small-pickup range, while also offering the larger-but-not-large-enough T100. The T100 also remained in the marketplace until 1998, cannibalizing sales from, and/or losing sales to, the Tacoma, but seldom cannibalizing sales from Ford, GM or Dodge.

Enter the Toyota Tundra, introduced in

The Toyota Tundra CrewMax looks and feels comfortably large on the open road, but pulls forward into an urban parking space easily—no need to gyrate in backwards, as expected.

From freeways, to paved rollercoasters, to unpaved washboard, handling is excellent.

The Tundra appears much larger than domestic pickups, but in fact stacks up about the same.

2000 (initially known as the T150 concept). This first-generation Tundra was still perceived as too small and light, compared with Ford, GM and Dodge, yet it doubled its unit sales over the T100 (and was the largest volume seller in Toyota's history).

ALL-AMERICAN TOYOTA

Significantly, the Tundra was being built in Indiana, with 65% domestic content, and they added a V8—demonstrating that Toyota understood the challenge of competing with the domestic US champs, and that they were quite serious about it. Their new Indiana roots also allowed Toyota to achieve something that really made the earth move: in 2004, the Tundra was allowed to enter the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series. For Toyota fans, this was vindication and supersized endorsement; for detractors, it was blasphemy.

ALL-NEW TUNDRA EMERGES

Also in 2004, Toyota showed their FTX concept truck (see next page) at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit. By 2006, it had been fleshed out as a new, larger Tundra, introduced at the Chicago Auto Show, and brought to market for 2007. This is the Tundra of today.

New Fords and the new Dodge Ram for 2009 represented the best-ever pickups from both manufacturers, by a long shot. Chevy and GM have moved forward, as well, though not quite as dramatically. And Toyota? With the Tundra, they have not only moved their full-size pickup well ahead of its own Toyota predecessors, but they've advanced the product significantly in its position against Ford, GM and Dodge.

2010 TOYOTA TUNDRA

Quite a few standard and optional exterior, mechanical, safety and convenience features have been added to the Tundra lineup for 2010, as well as an all-new 4.6-liter i-FORCE V8

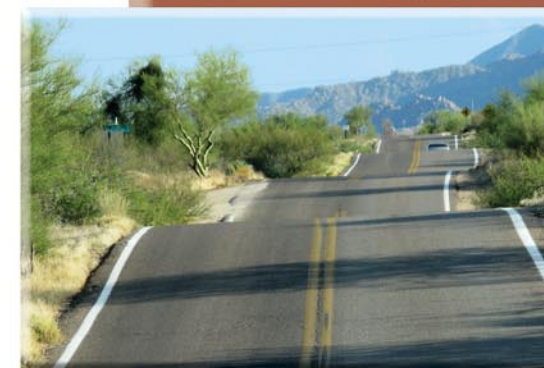
engine. For ordering simplicity, the 2010 lineup has been reduced from a three-grade to a two-grade strategy (Tundra—yes, a Tundra-grade Tundra—or Limited), trimming the total number of models from 45 to 38. Tundra grade is available on Regular Cab with V6 or V8 engines, and Double Cab or CrewMax with V8. Limited Grade is available on Double Cab and CrewMax V8. The SR5 grade has been discontinued, replaced by an SR5 Option Package. A TRD Off-Road Package has off-road tuned suspension, off-road tires on 17-inch wheels, fog lamps and graphics.

Two new packages for 2010 are the Tundra Platinum Package and Tundra Work Truck Package, both of which confirm that Toyota will leave no full-size pickup niche unchallenged. The Work Truck Package is aimed at commercial buyers or those who otherwise like a tough no-frills truck, with vinyl seats and rubber flooring. These come in Regular and Double Cab configurations with a V6 or either V8. At the high end, the Platinum Package is available on Tundra CrewMax Limited models equipped with the 5.7-liter V8 and Flex Fuel powertrains—our test truck. High-lux features in this package include heated and ventilated seats, sunroof and wood grain trim.

Our test truck was Tundra Limited grade, with the Platinum Package and the new 4.6-liter V8, in four-door CrewMax form.

All 2010 Tundra models have a redesigned front grille and taillights: The Tundra grade has a two-bar grille and the Limited grade a billet-style grille. Additional standard equipment on all Tundra models includes driver and front passenger knee airbags, height-adjustable headlamps, and a redesigned seven-pin towing hitch connector (above the hitch to help avoid dam-

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The Toyota FTX concept truck from NAIAS 2004 was clearly the basis for the new 2007 Tundra. Large side mirrors are a plus, and we are big fans of the backup camera display in the rearview. The Tundra interior outdoes most trucks and most sedans or SUVs. Storage options abound.

age during high departure angles). The new 4.6-liter V8 is available on all 2010 Tundras. It features a DOHC aluminum alloy head with dual independent Variable Valve Timing with intelligence (VVT-i), delivery 310 hp, 327 lb-ft. of torque and EPA fuel efficiency estimates of 15 mpg city and 20 mpg highway on 4x2 models—the best combination of power and fuel economy estimates of any standard V8 in the full-size pickup segment. Like Tundra's 5.7-liter i-FORCE V8, the new 4.6-liter V8 is mated with a six-speed automatic transmission. Engines also include a 236-hp DOHC 4.0-liter with 4-valve cylinder heads and VVT-i, teamed with a five-speed automatic featuring uphill/downhill shift logic. The new 4.6-liter V8 and a more powerful 381-hp 5.7-liter i-Force V8 with Dual VVT-i are available in every model configuration, teamed with a six-speed automatic. Both Tundra V8s meet Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicle (ULEV II) emissions certification. Wheelbases range from 126.8 inches for Regular Cab/standard bed models; to 145.7 inches for Regular Cab/long bed, Double Cab/standard bed and CrewMax models, and a massive 164.6 inches for Double Cab/long bed models (so if you need the four-door CrewMax, you're still almost 20" shorter than the longest truck—a key reason we found it so amazingly adept at parking). The Tundra has TripleTech full-boxed frame rails for the front portion, a reinforced C-channel under the cab and an open C-channel under the bed. Double A-arm front suspension uses coil-over spring shock units, and rear suspension uses staggered shocks outboard of the springs to improve dampening efficiency. Spring rates are tuned for a flat stance when fully loaded, while the rear frame section provides "toe-out" mounting points for the rear leaf springs, for confident towing under a full load.

The Tundra has standard four-wheel ventilated disc brakes (13.9" with four-piston calipers front, and 13.6" with two-piston calipers rear). Anti-lock brakes (ABS) with Electronic Brake-force Distribution (EBD) and Brake Assist (BA) are standard on all Tundra models. A standard Automatic Limited-Slip Differential (Auto-LSD) helps acceleration in deep sand or mud and on mixed friction surfaces. The combination of Auto-LSD and Vehicle Stability Control (VSC) standard equipment on every model is a first in the segment. Tundra's 4x4 trucks have a part-time, electronically-controlled system with 4x2, 4x4 Hi and 4x4 Lo ranges, selected via a dial on the dash. An available Tow Package on all Tundra i-Force V8 models increases towing capacity significantly, up to 10,800 pounds, depending on model and drivetrain. The Tundra can remain level even with 1,000 lbs. of tongue weight or payload. The Tow Package also upgrades Tundra's cooling and electrical systems, plus under-dash prewire for a third-party trailer brake controller and both seven- and a four-pin trailer brake connectors near the hitch. Optional telescoping towing mirrors are available on 5.7-liter V8 models. Tundra grade models have a dual-zone manual climate control system with seven-speed blower, sync-mode and a replaceable dust and pollen filter. Limited grade models have dual-zone automatic climate control. Interiors offer textured fabrics or deep-grain leathers in four colors. A manual tilt and telescoping steering wheel is standard, and Limited models offer an available power tilt and telescoping steering wheel. Standard High Solar Energy Absorbing (HSEA) glass helps filter solar heat and most UV (skin-sensitive) light energy entering the vehicle. There are five audio systems in the lineup, with variables including AM/FM/CD, integrated XM satellite radio, hands-free phone and stream-

ing music via Bluetooth®, auxiliary/USB inputs and up to six speakers, and some with navigation and backup camera monitor.

Many other features distinguish and/or run across the various grades, models, packages, and engine/cab/bed combinations. You'll want to study the brochure, or build your own at www.toyota.com.

MARKET SHARES TODAY

Year-to-date sales through June 2009 showed market shares of 33.8% for Ford, 29.2% Chevy, 18.4% Dodge, 9.8% GMC and 7.0% Toyota Tundra (down from 9.6% a year earlier). Nissan Titan brings up the rear at 1.7%. Great progress for Toyota, but are they winning hearts and minds?

OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

We asked veteran pickup owners—those with the Tundra, as well as those with Ford, GM and Dodge trucks—what it would take, or indeed what it had taken, for them to make the change to Toyota. Answers were short, sweet, somewhat predictable and fell into a few categories:

- It'll never happen.
- I compared all the features and made the change.
- I did compare features, but hey, I'm just a Ford (or GM or Dodge) guy.
- What do you mean? Why wouldn't I?

Little annoyances and oddities often get noted in our test drive voice memos, along with the usual ride, fit, comfort and controls. But it was interesting to look back and see that the Tundra got none of that. Here are the highlights:

"It has all the usual great Toyota stuff. Just step right in. (Power) steering wheel adjustments are easy to do while driving. In an aggressive corner, wheel hop is controlled very well. Love the rear-view camera, which displays in the lefthand portion of the rearview mirror. Storage galore: cupholders, trays, nooks and crannies in the console, before you even open it, then even more, then more in the overhead, and even more in the side pockets. Pretty sweet. Very manageable around town. Everything is well engineered and all works together really well."

There are a great many ways to build and order your own Tundra, starting at \$22,490 for a 4x2 Regular Cab V6. Our top-end test truck stickered at \$43,405. ■

