

# HEAVY HAULERS

"A HAMMER FOR EVERY JOB" BY JOE SAGE

Full-size pickups from the Detroit Three are the biggest-selling vehicles in America, with their lineups taking the top three spots. The sales breakdown within the lineups may remind you of your office or school—the nominal half-ton models (150/1500) are the most popular, while the heavy duty trucks (250/350 or 2500/3500 and up) do more of the dirty work.

Accordingly, we encounter the half-tons more often than the HD models in our work, too (one exception is the Ram 2500 Power Wagon, which never misses a truck or off-road comparo). We have, though, owned heavy pickups ourselves for years.

These are the pickups with the most horsepower, the most torque, the highest payloads and the heaviest tow capacity, by far. When things change in the lineup, it's always for the better. On the one hand, power and load specs continue to climb. And on the other, creature comforts, technology and style are all increasingly important, no matter how rugged the duty, following suit to build evolution and customer demand in the 1500 trucks.

We've crossed paths with the new 2019 Ram 1500 pickup—with its more powerful yet more fru-

gal powertrains, increased load capacity and ever-more-refined cabins—a number of times, from its launch drive here in Arizona a year ago, to weekly drives (as in this issue), to comparo drives, where the 1500 has picked up a great many top awards.

The new Ram HD lineup follows suit on all of the above—underneath, hitting new highs in horsepower and torque; out back, with highest-ever payload and tow capacities; and inside, with premium fitment, tech, creature comforts and utility. As with the 1500, it's all delivered in a stylish new package, but atop the most rugged of bones.

We took to the two-lane highways and dirt hills of southern Nevada in the new Ram 2500/3500 HD trucks, promptly after their Detroit auto show re-

veal, arriving between two rare heavy snowstorms, all the better for a rugged drive.

## DESIGN AND STYLING

The surface-apparent discipline of styling meshes with the strict missions of engineering in the comprehensive realm collectively known as design.

The goal of Ram HD exterior design manager Mike Gillam's team was to telegraph three key values of the new trucks—capability, confidence and comfort—via their visual impact. Big new grilles, for example, project not just a king of the road persona, but the massive new cooling capacity of the trucks. Outside dimensions include almost four more inches of width and up to about five more of height, both accommodating and telegraphing such attributes as wider front frame rails to push front suspension springs outboard for positive roll stiffness, or to provide more headroom in line with the

phenomenal front and rear legroom inside, which has grown along with cab length, as in the 1500s.

Headlights move up a bit, as on the 1500 trucks, making the new 2500/3500 HD pickups easy to spot, while making room for new headlights including halogen, full LED/reflector, and full LED/projector with adaptive front-lighting that casts its beam up to 15 degrees toward your direction of travel.

A significant change you may not even realize at first, since there has already been evolution in some trims, is that cross-hair grilles, a vestige from before Ram became independent of Dodge a decade earlier, are now gone from all models. All HD trucks now have the "RAM" name up front, with a highly chiseled Ram's head on most tailgates.

Another way to spot the new trucks, which you will appreciate at the car wash or in tight spots on the trail, is that the old mast antenna is gone, its functions now incorporated in the shark fin.

The new Ram Heavy Duty pickups have spent time in the gym—losing up to 143 pounds while getting stronger, now with 98.5-percent high-strength steel in the core structure, body (which also benefits from an aluminum hood) and frame (with six separate crossmembers, hydroformed main rails and fully boxed rear rails).

One more bonus from all this redesign is that aerodynamics have been improved by 80 percent.

## POWERTRAINS

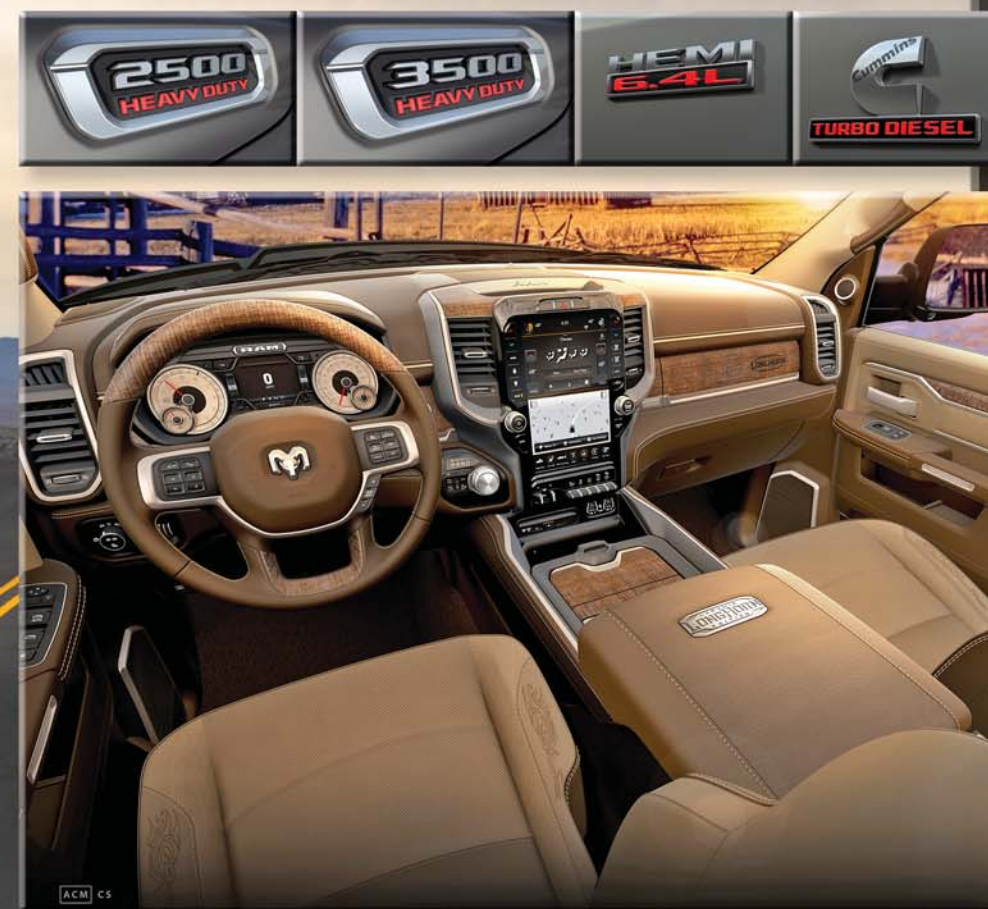
Significant advancements have been applied to both gasoline and diesel engines—all nominally the same sizes as before—as well as to transmissions and transfer cases. A new Cummins 6.7L inline-6 turbo diesel is 60 pounds lighter, yet boosts output to record levels—up to 400 hp and 1000 lb-ft of torque in the 3500 High Output version. All have upgraded cooling systems, as the grille promises.

The standard output diesel has a smoother upgraded six-speed, and the 6.4L Hemi V8 gasoline engine moves to a shift-by-wire eight-speed with over 40 shift maps for smooth action throughout, boosting both fuel economy and performance.

## LOAD AND TOW CAPACITY

BorgWarner 4x4 transfer cases offering electric or manual part-time shift vary by model and engine. The High Output turbo diesel's all-new unit handles payload up to 7,680 lb with tow capacity up to a new high of 35,100 lbs. New front and rear axles are more durable, handle heavier payloads and tow loads, save weight, and reduce noise-vibration-harshness. Notable on the 3500 HD is a big new 12-inch AAM rear axle.

Many a cowboy and cowgirl have bonded while



## ENGINES & POWERTRAINS

### 6.4L HEMI V8 (2500-3500 GASOLINE)

392 cu.in, 90° V-type, pushrod OH valves, 16v, eight de-activating, eight hydraulic, all w roller followers

HP/TORQUE	.....410 hp / 429 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....10.0:1
MAX ENGINE SPEED	.....5800 rpm
TRANSMISSION	.....ZF 8HP75 8-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN	.....2WD / 4WD
TRANSFER CASE	.....part-time elec or man shift 2WD, 4WD hi, neutral, 4WD lo
OIL / COOLANT	.....7.0 / 16.6 qt
FUEL	.....87 octane regular
2500: GVWR	.....9,900-10,000 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....14,000-17,580 lb
2500 POWER WAGON GVWR	.....8,565 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....10,620 lb
3500: GVWR	.....10,700-14,000 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....13,660-17,490 lb

### 6.7L CUMMINS TURBO DIESEL I-6 (2500-3500 STANDARD OUTPUT)

408 cu.in, inline, liquid-cooled, turbocharged, intercooled, pushrod OH valves, 24v, hydraulic lifters, electronic high-pressure common rail

HP/TORQUE	.....370 hp / 850 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....19.0:1
MAX HIGH-IDLE ENGINE SPEED	.....3200 rpm
TRANSMISSION	.....68RFE 6-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN	.....2WD / 4WD
TRANSFER CASE	.....part-time elec or man shift 2WD, 4WD hi, neutral, 4WD lo
OIL / COOLANT	.....12.0 / 23.8 qt
FUEL	.....ultra-low sulfur diesel
2500: GVWR	.....9,900-10,000 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....15,520-19,780 lb
3500: GVWR	.....10,700-14,000 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....13,660-22,220 lb

### 6.7L CUMMINS TURBO DIESEL I-6 (3500 HIGH OUTPUT)

(same description as 2500 Standard Output)

HP/TORQUE	.....400 hp / 1000 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....16.2:1
MAX HIGH-IDLE ENGINE SPEED	.....3200 rpm
TRANSMISSION	.....Aisin AS69RC 6-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN	.....2WD / 4WD
TRANSFER CASE	.....part-time elec or man shift 2WD, 4WD hi, neutral, 4WD lo
OIL / COOLANT	.....12.0 / 23.8 qt
FUEL	.....ultra-low sulfur diesel
3500: GVWR	.....11,800-14,000 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....24,490-35,100 lb

## A FEW MORE FUNDAMENTALS

**CABS:** Regular Cab, Crew Cab, Mega Cab  
**CONSTRUCTION:** Ladder-type frame, steel cab, double-wall steel pickup box  
**AXLES:** F (4x4): AAM 9.25" beam w center disconnect (locking diff on Power Wagon); R (2500/3500): AAM 11.5" beam, limited slip; R (2500 Power Wagon): same but locking diffs; R (3500 Max Tow): AAM 12.0" beam  
**SUSPENSION:**  
 2500: F: 2WD/4WD: three-link w track bar, coils, stblzr bar, solid axle; 4WD: add disconnecting sway bar, Power Wagon only.  
 R: 2WD/4WD: five-link w track bar, coils, stblzr bar, solid axle; 4WD: optional air bags  
 3500: F: 2WD/4WD: three-link w track bar, coils, stblzr bar, solid axle.  
 R: 2WD/4WD: two-stage longitudinal leaf (opt supplemental air bags), solid axle  
**FACTORY:** Saltillo Truck Assembly Plant, Coahuila, Mexico





# TRAVEL SITES TO BE SEEN



[sedona.net](http://sedona.net)  
[flagstaff.com](http://flagstaff.com)  
[prescott.com](http://prescott.com)  
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handling the intricacies of hooking up a trailer, but new technology in this area might force them to find other ways to share their personalities. The rear camera is now joined by available 360-degree multiple-angle views of your fifth wheel, both sides of a trailer and your progress with docking.

## INTERIOR

"I remember when luxury in a truck was a seat-belt," muses Jim Morrison, head of Ram Brand, FCA North America. Lighter trucks have been moving upscale for several years. Now, the hard-working crew in new Ram HD pickups receive the same—with premium cabins featuring spacious seats, leather, wood with antique stains, brushed metals and advanced electronics, including the available 12-inch Uconnect configurable screen (and 750-watt, 17-speaker Harman Kardon audio) that has proven so popular in the new 1500 trucks.

The inclusions are "unusual for the price point," says Ram chief interior designer Ryan Nagode.

Storage spots are beyond plentiful. The center console—Nagode calls it a "Swiss Army knife"—has 12 different configurations, a wireless charging dock and up to five USB ports, with optional dedicated/assignable switches also available. Total interior storage hits a segment-topping 258 liters of capacity in Mega Cab trucks.

Occupants also benefit from active noise cancellation, anti-vibration devices and acoustic glass to provide a peaceful and comfortable counterpoint to all the truck's hefty capability. An all-new HVAC system, quieter than ever, delivers 30 percent more airflow, including bigger defroster vents. Diesel owners get a warm cabin fast on a

cold day via supplemental electric heat. Climate has redundant controls, with very welcome beefy knobs you can use easily while wearing gloves.

## BEHIND THE WHEEL

While optimizing for heavy loads traditionally creates tradeoffs in empty ride characteristics, the new Ram HD trucks upgrade both hauling capacity and road behavior with new Frequency Response Damping (FRD) shocks all around. These function "like two shocks in one," says Ram HD chief engineer Rod Romain, with valves that automatically adjust for varying vertical wheel input, for what they call sports-car-like handling on the open road and better articulation off-road than leaf-spring architecture. Active-leveling rear air suspension is available on both 2500 and 3500 trucks, including a bed-lowering feature for easier trailer hookup.

We drove Las Vegas freeways and Nevada two-lanes south to Eldorado Canyon Mine in the Ram 2500 Laramie Longhorn, a popular Southwestern-themed premium trim known from the 1500 lineup, then breaking into towing and off-road sessions.

We have years of high country boat and horse towing experience, but none near the 35,000-plus-pound capacity of the Ram HD. We towed up to max payload, from horse trailers to house trailers to heavy equipment, to the Colorado River (within stone-skipping distance of Arizona). We demoed camera-assisted trailer hookup, an undeniably huge benefit. A fifth-wheel frame cross-member is built into all but Power Wagon, with a prep group available including mounting holes and covers and a bed-mounted seven-pin connector.

You can think of the Power Wagon as the most

off-road-ready version of the Ram 2500 or perhaps as a Ram 1500 Rebel on steroids. We took the Power Wagon on an off-road course arranged with a local rancher, challenged by rocks, climbs, and approach-breakover-departure angles providing occasional fully-engaged extreme three-wheeling. As always, the Power Wagon conquers all.

## MODELS AND PRICING

The new 2019 Ram 2500 and 3500 HD pickups come in six price classes, providing what Ryan Nagode calls "a hammer for every job." Tradesman is still the base trim. Next up is the versatile Big Horn (or with different styling cues Lone Star), then an increasingly premium stairstep through Laramie, Laramie Long Horn, and Limited. Number six is the Power Wagon, a model in its own parallel realm. And yes—you can still get a Tradesman with a Power Wagon package.

The new-for-2019 Ram 1500 lineup has spent a year winning customers and trophies everywhere it goes. Now everything that has motivated these responses has been applied to the Heavy Duty trucks—and then some.

New 2019 Ram 2500 and 3500 Heavy Duty pickups start at \$33,395 for a 2500 Tradesman regular cab 4x2 and run to \$61,300 before options, or \$67,050 for a Ram 3500 Limited Mega Cab 4x4 with 12-inch Uconnect 4C touchscreen. All are available as 4x2 or 4x4, except the Power Wagon, a 4x4 only, at \$52,900. The standard Cummins diesel engine runs \$9,100, the High Output version \$11,795. The new series of pickups, along with a new 3500, 4500 and 5500 Chassis Cab lineup, start arriving at dealers soon. ■

