

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

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2021 Ram 1500 TRX

VEHICLES • EQUIPMENT • TECHNOLOGY • PEOPLE • EVENTS • DESTINATIONS • ATTRACTIONS



Apex predator

Much has been noted about FCA's enviable scores in this year's JD Power Initial Quality Study, with Dodge tied for number one (a first for Detroit) and Ram tied for second-highest score (third place, given the first-place tie). An oft-stated reason is that they've kept proven fundamentals in place for longer than average, fine-tuning and perfecting with resources left over to upgrade interiors and technology. This also gives product developers elbow room to tweak things, in response to competition, just on a whim (or both). Much tweaking at FCA has been in areas the company has long dominated—performance and

off-roading. Tweaking comes by the bucketful here, hitting new highs for performance and off-roading in the new Ram 1500 TRX pickup.

This is truly a golden age for pickup trucks, performance trucks, off-roaders, luxury trucks, luxury performance off-road trucks—when a whole segment is on fire, engineers and market planners some places get very free rein.

As stewards of off-road standard-bearers Ram 2500 Power Wagon and Ram 1500 Rebel, as well as huge HEMI V8 and EcoDiesel powerplants, and with corporate cousins Dodge and Jeep both applying 700-plus-horsepower modified HEMIs ever more broadly, it's just

natural to fold together all of the above.

Some folks have rocks to crawl. Some seek to conquer sand at speed. Some have snow to tackle and loads to tow. All of the above like a great cabin and truly useful high technology. It all comes together in the new TRX.

The new build starts with power—702 hp from a supercharged 6.2L HEMI® V8. Best of all is how this power is applied, optimized for both strength and speed. This 650-lb.ft engine provides grunt for tackling trails, sitting atop extreme off-road suspension with unprecedented articulation, riding on 35-inch Goodyear Wrangler Territory tires developed specifically for Ram TRX with extreme traction, long wear and reduced road noise.

Ram TRX deviates from other maximum rock and dirt chasers by also pushing the limits on

pavement. The supercharged HEMI, fed through a high-torque eight-speed automatic and full-time active transfer case, delivers quick-shifting acceleration and speed, with a zero-to-60 time of just 4.5 seconds (100 mph in 10.5) and a quarter-mile in 12.9 seconds at 108 mph. (Top speed is 118 mph, limited only by off-road-prioritization of the tires.)

TRX optimizes sand and rock-conquering with a track almost six inches wider than a standard Ram 1500 pickup. Its wider stance, accommodating not just the big off-road tires but also a completely purpose-built frame and suspension, was the perfect invitation to take Ram's well developed body and pump it up further, with muscular bulges around all four wheels, adding more than eight inches of

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POWERTRAIN

ENGINE

- 6.2L HEMI® supercharged V8
- Dual-path air induction system, largest air filter in segment (by 4x), w dual elements
- 702 hp, 650 lb-ft of torque
- 0-to-60 in 4.5 sec, 0-to-100 in 10.5 sec
- Quarter-mile 12.9 sec at 108 mph
- Top speed 118 mph (tire-limited)

TRANSMISSION

- Torqueflite 8HP95 8-spd automatic
- Manumatic / paddle shifters
- TRX-unique drive modes: Sport, Snow, Tow, Mud, Baja, Auto
- Final drive ratio 2.62
- Axle ratios 3.55

TRANSFER CASE

- BW 48-13 full-time 2-spd electric
- 4 auto, 4 hi, locked, neutral, 4 lo, locked
- Torque split (F/R): variable 40/60 auto, 45/55 snow, 45/55 tow, 30/70 sport, 25/75 baja, 45/55 mud/sand, 50/50 rock (in 4L)
- Low range ratio 2.64

BUILD / SUSPENSION / CHASSIS

- Sterling Heights Assembly, Michigan
- Ladder-type frame, steel cab, double-wall steel pickup box
- Crew Cab, 5'7" bed
- Electric power steering
- Front suspension: independent high-strength forged aluminum upper & lower A-arms, coils, 2.5" Bilstein Black Hawk e2 active performance shock, active damping, special caster & camber cycle engineering
- Rear suspension: five-link w track bar, coils, 2.5" Bilstein Black Hawk e2 active damp twin-tube shocks, Dana 60 solid rear axle, 3.55 ratio, w full-floating hubs & axle-hop damper; electronic locking rear differential
- Purpose-built 18x9" aluminum wheels, available standard or beadlock-capable, and 325/65/R18 35" all-terrain tires
- Brakes: dual-rate tandem diaphragm vacuum power assist. Front 12x1.2" inverted hat outboard vent rotors w 2.2" two-piston pin-slider caliper. Rear 15x0.87" disc w 2.2" single-piston pin-slider caliper. ABS

CAPABILITY / OFF-ROAD / TOW

- Approach 30.2 degrees
- Departure 23.5 degrees
- Breakover 21.9 degrees
- Ground clearance w skid plate 11.8 in
- Front/rear axle clearance 9.4 / 8.0 in
- Water fording 32 in
- Payload 1310 lb
- Tow capacity 8100 lb
- Trailer brake
- Trailer Reverse Steer Control available
- Fuel tank 33 gallons

width via composite front fender flares and TRX-only steel skin for the bed. Engineers and stylists had an advantage in being able to develop this truck from both ends—the chassis suggested styling and design direction for the body, while the body lends itself to all that lies beneath.

The TRX sits atop a new frame with low torsion thanks to extensive use of high-strength steel, increasing both drive stability and long-term durability. All-new active damping suspension, strong and durable for desert off-road racing, is TRX-specific: independent front suspension with forged aluminum upper and lower control arms with a focus on caster and camber during suspension cycling; five-link rear coil suspension; a Dana 60 solid rear axle with 3.55 ratio, full-floating hubs and axle-hop damper for improved traction and control on rough surfaces; a standard electronic locking rear differential; and new front and rear 2.5-inch Bilstein

Black Hawk e2 adaptive performance shocks engineered

specifically for TRX for fast reaction time, perfect damping and improved heat dissipation in harsh terrain at speeds over 100 mph. The system provides wheel travel of more than 13 inches at all four corners, an over 40 percent increase compared to others in the Ram 1500 lineup.

Style equally meets function in a dramatic hood scoop, which, in combination with the grille, provides a dual-path volume of highly filtered air to the powerful HEMI (this dual-filter system leads the segment—by four-fold). We're always suckers for running lights, and the LED trio inside the hood scoop plus two where the bumper meets the fender flares define TRX well, both subtle and bold.

The toughest of tasks—whether heavy field work or hearty off-roading—do not preclude enjoyment of a fine cabin, and Ram has applied increasingly premium and luxury interiors to their range, with leathers, woods and metals applied in line with the personality of different models. TRX features a choice of seat materials, from premium

cloth and vinyl to hand-wrapped leather and suede.

A new console has expanded storage space and an all-new trick: rather than a column or rotary shifter, TRX's shifter is in the familiar form of a console shift, but, since electronic, can be folded down within the console to create more flat work space. This in turn frees space on the instrument panel where rotary shift might have been, for expanded transfer case, drive mode and Launch Control hard switches, while the 12-inch Uconnect 4C NAV (standard) touchscreen bears everything from advanced drive mode settings—including a Baja desert mode—and Off-Road Performance Pages to 900-watt, 19-speaker Harman Kardon audio.

The folks at Ram tell us they discussed over 200 names for the truck, but the legal process to secure a new one was going to take too long for their introduction schedule. FCA owns a great many tradenames already, so they dug to see what they already had in the can. Nothing was ringing their bell among past, concept or otherwise currently

unused vehicle names, until someone noticed TRX—used briefly once for an off-road package and still protected. It deviates from their other names, but that's fine for a truck that deviates from their other trucks. They also note that it evokes T-Rex—the apex predator of the thunder lizard kingdom—a dominating beast they remind us was bigger and stronger than a velociraptor. (We wouldn't be that surprised if the name evolved later.)

Bearing heritage of everything from the Dodge Lil' Red Express Truck of the '70s to the Dodge Ram SRT 10 performance pickup from the early 2000s, all folded into a new brew with the rock solid style and build of the modern Power Wagon and Rebel, with a new iteration of the 700-plus-hp HEMI powerplants used in the most potent Dodge//SRT and even Jeep track machines under the hood, the new 2021 Ram 1500 TRX brings quite a compelling recipe to the table. Can't wait to dig in. ■

