

Town first, and a champ in the dirt

BY JOE SAGE

Today's full-size Tundra pickup evolved from a "three-quarter-size" Tundra launched in 1999 as a 2000, which itself sprang from the T100 of the '90s, arguably making its birth take years. Sequoia arrived more immediately, a year after the three-quarter Tundra (in 2000 as a 2001), simply considered full-size, in a segment with far more variety.

Both achieved inarguable full-size status eight years later—Tundra for 2007, Sequoia for 2008, in what was just generation two for the SUV. And all these years later, we have gen three. This steady pace is welcomed by its fans, who have had little they would want to change on any of them along the way. Yet, as with any great such move, the need for and success of its replacement is immediately obvious, now that we see it and drive it.

Key to the new 2023 Sequoia's build and performance is the i-Force MAX powertrain—a complex hybrid system combining power from both its

3.5L twin-turbo V6 gasoline engine and an electric motor placed between engine and transmission, rather than trading power between them—resulting in 80 percent more horsepower and almost three times the torque of the larger 4.0L V6 in the smaller 4Runner (the midsize Tacoma's fraternal twin, also in this issue), as well as higher fuel mileage ratings across the board, while still running on 87-octane gas. All this is also achieved despite weighing 30 percent more than 4Runner (Sequoia is a spacious three-row) and towing 80 percent more.

You do pay about 43 percent more for this, base TRD Pro vs base TRD Pro. And Sequoia trims are all basically high-end; you can get into a lower trim 4Runner for considerably less. There are of course a number of other SUVs and crossovers in Toyota's lineup, but 4Runner and Sequoia stand alone as their body-on-frame pickup truck twins.

Sequoia also follows suit to Tundra with a new

Capstone trim, with top luxury interior, features and upgrades inside and out. While built atop the formerly top Platinum trim, which costs a little less than TRD Pro, Capstone sits above TRD Pro in price, the price of extra luxury, though while it has TRD Pro's Tow Tech Package, it does without the extra tough duty suspension of the TRD versions.

The i-Force MAX powertrain is so smooth and powerful, with a nice burly growl, you could easily take it for a V8—all the pleasures without the thirst. We dabbled in its normal, sport and eco modes, but they tend to revert to normal while parked, and there's so much power headroom anyway, we mostly left those alone.

We kept an eye on the weather forecast during our week, which was promising snow around Flagstaff, possibly Payson, probably the Grand Canyon. We plotted out a route to hedge our bets, aiming for Payson first, with fallbacks and back roads to

hit the others if need be, to catch the snow. We packed our winter gear, plus essentials for a potential overnight—and in the 20 minutes it took to do that and drive our first 10 miles or so, the forecast abruptly dropped any mention of snow, and skies cleared everywhere.

Nonetheless, we headed up the highway toward the high country. Our fuel mileage readout showed 12.1 MPG average to that point. We were just figuring on open road miles—when a sweet and nasty little trail caught our eye off to the side. Knowing Capstone is a more civilized build (notably bearing 22-inch wheels and tires with relatively shallow sidewalls, while TRD Pro has 18s), we were just going to see how it did from Point A to B, nothing extreme. The trail soon turned rough, rutted and rocky, with even some water fordings from recent rain, but the fancy Sequoia Capstone easily handled anything we threw at it.

Our fuel mileage at the end of our combined off-road and long highway drive time (at speed and with significant grades and curves) had now climbed to 13.5. With more emphasis on highway and perhaps more use of eco mode, you could add



a couple of more points, and on flatter, straighter highways in higher gears, a few more, approaching the rated figures if you apply yourself. (A fuel mileage gauge in the binnacle goes all the way to 60 MPG, which seems highly optimistic and a tad bit judgmental for most any normal user.)

Though aimed more at the country club, for anyone simply tackling tough weather, the trail to the cabin, a weekend fishing spot or even a reasonable off-road adventure, this build delivers a high degree of the best of both worlds. If you just live in one of those worlds or the other, the new gen-three Toyota Sequoia delivers the best of either. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ROWS / SEATS	.....three / seven
ASSEMBLY	.....San Antonio, Texas
ENGINE	.....i-FORCE MAX 3.5L V6 hybrid twin-turbo w water-cooled intercoolers, 24v DOHC chain drive, dual VVT-i
HP/TORQUE	.....437 hp / 583 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....10.4:1
ELECTRIC MOTOR	.....permanent magnet synch; parallel hybrid system w elec motor/generator btwn engine and trans
HP/TORQUE	.....48 hp / 184 lb-ft
CAPAC / VOLTAGE	.....1.87 kWh / 650 V max
TRANSMISSION	.....10-spd auto, electr contr w intelligence (ECT[-I]), sequential mode, uphill/downhill logic, tow/haul modes
DRIVETRAIN	.....4WDdemand part-time 4WD, electr contr 2-spd transfer case (2HI/4HI/4LO), auto limited-slip diff w parallel hybrid system btwn engine and transmission
TRANSFER CASE RATIO	.....(high/low) 1.0 / 2.64
SUSPENSION	.....F: indep dbl-wishbone w stblzr bar, twin-tube shocks; R: multi-link w coils, outboard-mtd twin-tube shocks. (Adaptive variable & load-level rear avail)
STEERING	.....electronic pwr-asst rack & pinion
BRAKES	.....F: 13.9 vented, opposed dual-piston; R: 13.6 vented, single piston
WHEELS	.....22-in dark-chrome alloy wheels
TIRES	.....P265/50R22
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....208.1 / 122.0 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....8.6 in
APPR / DEPARTURE	.....15 / 20°
OVERHANG (F/R)	.....38.0 / 48.0 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....40.2 ft
HEADROOM (F/2/3)	.....(pano) 39.2 / 37.5 / 35.6 in
LEGROOM (F/2/3)	.....41.2 / 39.2 / 28.1-33.7 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....11.5-22.3 / 49.0 / 86.9 cu.ft
CURB WEIGHT	.....6185 lb
PAYLOAD / GVWR	.....1375 / 7560 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....8980 lb
GROSS COMB WEIGHT RATING	.....15,600 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....87 oct reg unl / 22.5 gal
MPG	.....(4x4) 19/22/20 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	.....\$78,300
DASH CAM	.....499
BALL MOUNT	.....87
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1595
TOTAL	.....\$80,481

2023 TOYOTA SEQUOIA LINEUP

	.....RVWD	.....4X4
SR5 iForce MAX	.....\$58,300	.....\$61,300
Limited iForce MAX	.....64,700	.....67,700
Platinum iForce MAX	.....70,900	.....73,900
TRD Pro iForce MAX	.....76,000	
Capstone iForce MAX	.....75,300	.....78,300

Bonus: it turns out we had a friend shopping new or used Sequoias while we had this, and our research indicated these can be easily good for 300,000 miles or more.

