

2010 TRUCK KING COMPARRISION TOYOTA TUNDRA

The current Toyota Tundra is the second generation to sport that name – but it's the third attempt by Toyota to enter the full-size North American pickup market in a meaningful way. Who remembers the T-100? Well, success is really no longer a question – they have established a foothold in the market, now it's more a question of what will they do with it? Specifically the way I see the question is – When will they ramp up to offer what the others do?

To recap: The second generation Tundra launched as a 2007 model to much fanfare and managed to nearly double its sales from the previous version. Part of that success was because of a new engine – the snorting 5.7L V8 that with 381 hp outgunned its competition. But in a very real lesson of “timing is everything” that advantage turned out to be short-lived. With the upward trend in gas prices at the start of '08 and the subsequent collapse of the auto market (a 27% overall decline in pickup sales in 2008 alone) the Tundra (like all the trucks) went for a spill after its honeymoon debut.

As the '09 model year approached it brought a new generation of Ford and Dodge pickups. This event magnified the problem faced by the Tundra - a lack of engine choices. And while originally it offered the i-Force 4.7L that made 271 hp and 313 lb-ft of torque coupled to a five-speed automatic - this older engine had fallen behind its competitors and could only have been meant as a stop-gap measure. This observation makes even more sense when looking at the fuel economy ratings of the 4.7L which turned out to be poorer than the company's predictions for the new larger 5.7L.

Now, with the release of the 2010 Tundra they have fixed the problem. The 4.7L is gone in favour of a brand-new 4.6L V8 engine that is now the base model standard. Unlike the old 4.7 though, this new motor actually offers benefits for its smaller displacement. In addition Toyota has packaged two new versions of the Tundra around this engine. This new engine's performance is attributed to two technologies that are new to the Toyota Tundra. The first is a Cooled Exhaust Gas Recirculation (EGR) System which reduces smog-forming emissions and improves overall fuel efficiency. The second is an Acoustic Control Induction System (ACIS) that optimizes power and torque output. These technologies produce 310 hp and 327 lb-ft of torque while still offering a combined fuel consumption rating of 12.1 L/100 km (says Toyota). Versus the outgoing 4.7L engine this is a 12 per cent increase in hp and an 11 per cent increase in fuel economy.

For models, Toyota has created two full-size, work-ready pickup trucks built around this 4.6L V8. One is a 4x2 model the other a 4x4. Also this engine is now coupled to a six-speed automatic transmission instead of the old five-speed. So while this new powertrain combination is the key change for 2010, Toyota has also done a bit of housekeeping (so to speak) on the truck itself with some modest facia changes and added safety and standard features.

All 2010 Tundra's get a redesigned front grille and tail lamp design which is more of a nip and tuck treatment than major surgery though. Inside as new standard equipment all Tundra's will now include driver and front passenger knee airbags; also, the lower glove box gets a shelf to help organize things better.

As mentioned above, Toyota is fully aware that where they don't compete with the Big Three pickup builders in the number of choices they offer. But then it took GM, Ford and Dodge decades to build the portfolio of different components that could build unique trucks; unique to a customer's needs and geographic location. Toyota is now working on that – though perhaps not as quickly as they would if the economy were running a bit more normally. Still, adding to the standard equipment list are the following items - depending on package: adjustable headlamp levelling system; fog lamps as standard; more models with towing mirrors as standard; and an upgraded navigation system that responds to voice commands.

Convenience equipment this year includes: models with standard features such as map lamps, an auto dimming rear view mirror with integrated compass, an integrated garage door opener, and/or a fold down seatback table fitted to the front passenger seat.

Model choices for the '10 model year will cover a choice of three cabs: the three-passenger Regular Cab, five or six-passenger Double Cab and CrewMax cab while bed lengths will come as: 5.5-foot, 6.5-foot, or 8.1-foot. With the new engine factored in Toyota is now claiming a choice of 15 models – five 4x2 Tundra's and ten 4x4 models. Trim levels include “work truck” up to a new loaded Platinum 5.7L model.

As for how the new engine works; I had a chance to do several hundred kilometres on a run to Kingston, ON, and back to Brampton. My combined (average) fuel consumption (as shown on the instant readout in the truck) was 12.8L/100 km. Very reasonable considering the size of the truck and the fact that I don't concern myself with trying to save fuel. Mind you, this was empty. Power-wise I noted that the transmission works in concert with the engine (by downshifting two gears when called on) to build speed, yet at the high end it lopes along at minimal rpm – saving fuel even at 120 km-h.

Vehicle tested: 2010 Toyota Tundra Double Cab 4x4 Base Price: \$35,790.00

Optional Equipment: Upgrade Package: console mounted shift lever, gate type shifter, tilt & telescopic steering wheel, 275/65R18 18” aluminum alloy wheels, lock package, buckets, 8-way power adjustable driver seat, rear privacy glass, sliding rear window, integrated garage door opener, trip computer, auto-dimming rear view mirror with compass, fog lamps, map lamps, console box overhead, seat back pockets, front consol box with lid, under rear seat storage trays \$2,375.00
Rear bumper step: \$347.00

Price as tested at Head Lake, ON: \$38,859.00