

GEAR & GADGETS



SADDLE UP The Tundra features leather upholstery, lots of chrome plus other upgrades to rival its urban-cowboy competitors.

TOYOTA MOTOR NORTH AMERICA

RUMBLE SEAT / DAN NEIL



A Heavy-Duty Toyota, Made Deep in the Heart of Texas

I HAD ABOUT a ton of debris in my yard—broken concrete, rotting landscape timbers, scrap metal—and an immaculate 2022 Toyota Tundra 1794 Edition CrewMax 4x4. I had misgivings about putting them together.

Toyota's redesigned-for-2022 pickup arrived wearing some of the fanciest duds in the company chifforobe: the 1794 Edition is a luxury trim package in honor of Texas self-love, featuring saddle-like upholstery, weathered wood trim, and lots of chrome—on bumpers, door handles and mirrors, window surrounds, lower door guards and that rodeo champion belt-buckle of a grille.

And again I found myself facing the first-scratch dilemma, the paradox of having a hugely capable pickup that's too nice to do anything with. Could I bring myself to huck that evil stuff into that pristine cargo box?

Yes, with some anguish. But here I discovered one of the best new features: the Tundra's aluminum reinforced, sheet-molded compound cargo box. This high-impact composite makes the cargo box pretty well impervious to routine gouging, denting, scratching and scuffing. I like it. Nice shooting, Tex.

Built in San Antonio, the new Tundra represents a third-generation reboot of Toyota's traditional pickup. The overhaul is full of keen details: No more V8 engines but a

2022 TOYOTA TUNDRA 1794 EDITION CREWMAX 4X4 I-FORCE



Base price \$61,020
Price, as tested \$66,240
Powertrain Twin-turbocharged and intercooled direct- and port-injected 3.5-liter DOHC V6 engine with variable valve timing; 10-speed automatic transmission with Tow/Haul modes; two-speed transfer case for automatic and on-demand 4WD; limited-slip rear differential.
Power/torque 389 hp at 5,200 rpm/479 lb-ft at 2,400 rpm
Length/wheelbase/width/height 245.6/157.7/80.2/78.0 inches
Curb weight 5,720 pounds
Towing/payload capacity 10,890/1,575 pounds
Gross combined-weight tow rating 17,250 pounds
EPA fuel economy 17/23/19 mpg, city/highway/combined

choice of twin-turbo 3.5-liter V6s, paired with a 10-speed transmission and rear-wheel drive or optional four-wheel drive. The non-hybrid V6 (SR5 package, 2WD) can tow up to 12,000 pounds or haul 1,940 pounds.

The Tundra also catches up to its urban-cowboy competitors with a more civilized multi-link independent rear suspension. With the trailering upgrade, the rear coil springs are swapped with air springs. Now you're talking. The air

suspension allows drivers to line up and then lower the trailer ball beneath the level of the trailer hitch, guided by feeds from a rear-facing camera and other sensors. Trailering newbies will be spared hours of embarrassment at the marina.

However, if you were hoping for Prius-like fuel economy from the hybridized Tundra, yeah, no. The non-hybrid 4x4 is rated at 19 mpg, combined; the hybrid version gets a whopping 2 mpg more (21 mpg). Virtually all of the hybrid over-

head is devoted to more power and torque (48 hp/104 lb-ft.)

Can you live without? Insert personal cost/benefit analysis here.

The standard twin-turbo V6 in our test vehicle presented well—strong, polished, easy to drive, eager to be driven. The 10-speed transmission is a bit shift-happy but that's not a surprise. With its more refined chassis bits, the Tundra's roadholding is also good—albeit better with a few hundred pounds of crapola in the bed. The cabin's UX is fresh and friendly, with a big central touch screen and an array of oversize rotary controls providing first-level functions for climate and audio, so users don't have to take off their gloves.

But my sense-memories of the Tundra are dominated by its worrying dimensions and general geometric effrontery. At 78.0 inches high and 80.2 inches wide (not counting mirrors) the Tundra forms a nearly perfect cube when seen head-on. All lit up at night, it looks like a Borg ship has you in its tractor beam.

Moreover, mirrors count. Our tester had the optional extending and folding trailering mirrors. With the mirrors in neutral position the Tundra measures 102.1 inches between the ears. Yikes.

One of the systems intended to help Tundra drivers stay in their lane—the Lane Tracing Assist—graphically illustrates the chal-

lenge of doing so, in the head-up display. This system uses cameras to follow the road and, should the driver get close to the lane markings, will send a warning through the HUD (the lane markings on either side of the little animated Tundra will flash). If the driver takes no action the system will gently and automatically nudge the vehicle toward the center.

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I have excellent lane discipline, thank you, but I could not avoid these virtual warning tracks. Keeping this thing dead-center on a twisting road takes the concentration of a Zen archer.

Here is where things get weird: This large truck has gotten smaller in some key dimensions. The cargo box walls are lower (20.9 vs. 22.2 inches) and the bed floor is narrower between the wheel wells (48.7 vs. 50.0 inches). For some reason—perhaps having to do with platform commonality with other new Toyota products—the CrewMax cabin provides a little less leg and shoulder room, front and rear.

Yet in one way the new Tundra drives bigger than ever: The turning diameter. With the same wheelbase as the 2021 model, the double-cab long-bed versions need 52 feet to pull a 180-degree turn, 3 more than the 2021. This is curious, since the biggest constraint to a vehicle's steering angle, the hard point, is typically the size of the engine between the front wheels. With a smaller engine, why can't the Tundra turn tighter? See above, re: platform commonality.

On my way back from the landfill, I stopped at my local big-box for a load of pressure-treated 4x6x16s and bags of concrete. Unlike past Tundras, our CrewMax tester was mated with a 6.5-foot long bed. But because the overall bed length, with tailgate down, is barely half the beams' 16-foot length, they wanted to tip out. Fiddle-dee-dee, I said (not exactly). All this truck and I still needed a bigger one.

I used the bags of concrete to hold the beams down. In doing so I discovered another misstep—or missing step. The rear bumper has no foothold, no place to step up into the cargo bed. Fancy models like ours, with optional auto-deploying/retracting side steps, get a powered step to help people get into the cargo bed. But without the powered accessories, users will have to hop onto the tailgate or climb up on the rear tire, which is hard to do in skintight Wranglers and ostrich-leather Tony Lamas. Texans could rip their britches.

MORE CLIMBING GYMS opened in 2021 than in any previous year, according to the industry publication Climbing Business Journal—and as the pursuit gains a stronger foothold, more novices than ever are walking through gym doors ready to scale seemingly sheer walls. You'll have a surprisingly rough time making your way up in Nikes, however.

People mistake climbing as an upper-body sport, said Emily Harrington, a five-time national sport climbing champion and athlete for the North Face. "Think of it more like gymnastics: There's a lot of balance, coordination, body awareness and creativity required," she said.

If you want to get serious, you need proper climbing shoes. Their essential traits: stiff toe caps like those on ballet pointe shoes, sticky soles that grip textured climbing holds and enough rigidity to give your foot a bit of extra power and support. The design is effective, but the first time you try to jam your wide, sockless feet into a pointy rubber shoe—for many, an extremely uncomfortable experience—you might not appreciate it. And like running sneakers, climbing shoes are often expensive.

Luckily, most gyms have plenty available for rent. But if you really want to send a route—i.e., successfully climb it from start to finish without falling—you'll eventually want to shed these rental versions designed to accommodate countless different feet for a pair that will mold to your unique soles.

It only took Boris Shirman, a director of photography in Brooklyn who started climbing in 2019, a few ses-

Why Do Climbing Shoes Look So Weird?

A guide to the strange sneakers you'll need to become a serious scaler



HIGH DESIGN The unique shape and construction of climbing shoes help you get up the wall more efficiently.

sions shod in gym rentals to decide he was ready for an upgrade. Once he did, "I got a better sense of how much I could trust my toes, how well the shoe would stick to the wall, and how well it could support me," the 24-year old said. "That feeling has only increased since I upgraded to more aggressive shoes."

For your first pair, look for a shoe with a neutral profile that lets your feet comfortably lie flat and a thick rubber platform to keep them from tiring too quickly, said Michael Genauer, product line manager for outdoor-footwear brand La Sportiva. While Velcro enclosures let you adjust the fit at two or three points on the

foot, laces can be cinched all the way down to the toe for a closer fit. "The idea is that you're trying to transfer power from your foot to the shoe to the wall, so you want a tight fit," said Mr. Genauer. The heel should be snug, and your toes should be touching the tip of the shoe but not scrunched. More ambitious scalers will find

shoes that are bent at the toe allow for more precise footwork.

New climbers, though, should prioritize relative comfort. "If your goal is to just learn how to climb, feet that hurt will be a major obstacle to that," said Lizzy Redlich, head instructor at the Cliffs at LIC in Queens, NY. "The best shoe for you is the one that feels good and makes you excited to climb."

1. For First Ascenders

Designed to offer beginners a higher degree of comfort, the La Sportiva Tarantula features a rounded forefoot and a toe box slightly wider than that of normal sneakers to give toes more wiggle room. Velcro enclosures make the shoe easy to get on and off between climbs as your feet adjust to the fit. \$95, [Sportiva.com](https://www.lasportiva.com)

2. For Regular Rock Jocks

The slightly downturned toe on Black Diamond Equipment's Aspect puts feet in a stronger position from which to push off the wall. Stiff enough to support you on smaller footholds, they're still sufficiently comfortable to let you walk around between climbs. \$160, [BlackDiamondEquipment.com](https://www.blackdiamondequipment.com)

3. For Confident Climbers

The Evolv Shaman shoe aggressively curves toward the big toe to give you more power during advanced moves. While navigating overhangs, for example, you can use it like a hook. The relative width of the rubber throughout the shoe is calibrated to reduce pressure and increase durability. \$170, [EvolvSports.com](https://www.evolvsports.com)

—Ashley Mateo