Dodge Ram Mega Cab is the 7,400-pound gorilla

by Mark_Maynard

The diesel-powered Dodge Ram Mega Cab isn't just as forceful as a locomotive, it's the train, too. It has club car comfort in the biggest back seat of any pickup.

DODGE RAM MEGA CAB - The Dodge Ram Mega Cab has the biggest back seat of any pickup. CNS Photo courtesy of Dodge. This thing is huge - 20.6 feet long with a 52.5-foot turning circle. It's longer than a standard parking space. If you really need a full-size pickup and it has to do double duty as the commute vehicle and weekend toy hauler, then it's not likely an owner would outgrow a pickup with this much back seat room.

Limousines aren't as spacious.

The Mega Cab is exclusive to the Heavy Duty series of Ram trucks. The back doors are full-size, not the shorties used on the Quad Cab.

Its "short" 6.3-foot bed is still plenty big for hauling. But there's also as much cargo space in the back seat area as some trucks have in a 5-foot bed.

There are 44 inches of back seat legroom, 40.5 inches of headroom, a nearly flat floor and the seatbacks fold for an expansive flat space accessed by doors that open to 90 degrees with a 34.5-inch opening.

Those large boxed goods from Costco will fit back there without fear of theft or being blown out of an open bed. Or there's room to load saddles, fishing gear or to secure a dog kennel in air-conditioned comfort.

These heavy-duty trucks are the tow vehicles for work and recreation. Their gross vehicle weight rating puts them in a category that does not require EPA fuel mileage ratings. And at these curb weights, most users are more concerned with how well the truck performs rather than how many miles per gallon it gets - within reason, of course. There have been complaints from new Super Duty Power Stroke diesel owners that fuel mileage is low, about 6 mpg while towing.

The standard Mega Cab comes with a 345-horsepower, 5.7-liter Hemi V-8. It runs on 87 octane, which is currently more expensive than diesel.

The test truck came with the new 350-hp, 6.7-liter Cummins diesel, a $6,100 option. When paired with the new six-speed automatic transmission, the engine lies down 650 foot-pounds of torque at a low 1,500 rpm. Trucks equipped with the six-speed manual transmission are rated 610 foot-pounds of torque at 1,400 rpm.

The new diesel was updated to meet passenger-car emissions standards and to run on ultra-low-sulfur fuel. It uses the Bluetec system, which includes a particulate filter and storage catalyst for the oxides of nitrogen. Periodic burn-offs clear the filter, but no service of the filter will be necessary in the lifetime of the vehicle, Dodge spokesman Nick Cappa said. And it is the only passenger-truck diesel to meet 2010 emissions standards, three years ahead of the deadline.

The power difference between last year's 5.9-liter diesel engine (610 foot-pounds of torque) and the 6.7 isn't overwhelming. But what is significant is the upgrade from a four-speed automatic transmission to a six-speed.

The new automatic could, possibly, help fuel mileage. The transmission also has manual-shift controls on the end of the column-mount shifter. But steering-wheel shift buttons would be more intuitive. And also new this year is an exhaust brake to apply engine braking downhill, which helps prevent scorched rotors and toasted four-wheel disc brake pads.

You can't park a Mega Cab just anywhere. It is a few inches longer than the competing heavy-duty, crew-cab pickups, but the Mega Cab isn't a handful to drive. I was, however, cautious when passing large parked vehicles because the trailer tow mirrors are enormous - sticking out 15 inches from the body to house an 11-by-8-inch frame with an integrated fish-eye mirror for blind-spot detection. The mirrors - a $100 option - fold manually, but a power folding option such as Ford offers on the Super Duty would be appreciated to fold the passenger-side mirror.

The cabin is well soundproofed. And the truck's 160.3-inch wheelbase helps smooth the ride. Below 60 mph, it's far less bouncy than the Super Duty. And despite large, 13.9-inch disc brakes, firm pressure on the pedal is required to feel reassured by the stopping force.

Dodge wins the smack down for biggest pickup. Now all that's needed is the kit to run the diesel on french fry fat. SPECS

2007 Dodge Ram 2500 SLT Mega Cab 4WD

FEATURES

Standard equipment includes: remote locking, shift-on-the-fly part-time four-wheel drive, air conditioning, four-speaker audio system, 17-inch chrome-clad wheels and all-season tires, heavy-duty shock absorbers, trailer tow group, overhead console with trip computer, 60/40 split folding rear seat

Safety equipment includes: multistage front air bags, four-wheel anti-lock disc brakes; optional side-curtain air bags

PRICING

Base: $38,590 including $900 freight charge; price as tested, $46,110

Options on test truck: cloth bucket seats and six-way driver seat, $850; front and rear floor mats, $50; 4.10 axle ratio, $50; anti-spin rear differential, $325; 6.7 liter Cummins turbo diesel, $6,100; power rear sliding window, $295; flow-away trailer mirrors, $100; bedliner, $245

Where assembled: Saltillo, Mexico Heavyweights: Three heavy-duty, crew cab pickups with short beds:

Ford Super Duty F250 Crew Cab 4WD

Engine: Power Stroke 6.4-liter diesel

Horsepower: 350 at 3,000 rpm

Torque: 650 foot-pounds at 2,000 rpm

Transmission: Torqshift five-speed automatic

Front head/leg/shoulder room: 41.4/41/68

Rear head/leg/shoulder room: 38.4/31.8/68.1 inches

Length/wheelbase: 246.2/156.2 inches

Turning circle: 51.8 feet

Fuel tank: 38 gallons

Tow capacity: 12,500 pounds

Curb weight: 6,560 pounds

Base price: $47,265

Chevrolet Silverado 2500 HD Crew Cab 4WD

Engine: Duramax 6.6-liter diesel

Horsepower: 365 at 3,200 rpm

Torque: 660 at 1,600 rpm

Transmission: Allison six-speed automatic

Front head/leg/shoulder room: 41.2/41.3/65.2 inches

Rear head/leg/shoulder room: 40.5/39/65.1 inches

Length/wheelbase: 240/153 inches

Turning circle: 51.1 feet

Fuel tank: 34 gallons

Tow capacity: 13,000 pounds

Curb weight: 6,718 pounds

Base price: $45,078

2007 Dodge Ram 2500 SLT Mega Cab 4WD

Engine: 6.7-liter high-output Cummins turbo diesel

Horsepower: 350 at 3,013 rpm

Torque: 650 foot-pounds at 1,500 rpm (610 foot-pounds with six-speed manual)

Transmission: six-speed manual or optional six-speed automatic

Fuel capacity: 38 gallons Front head/leg/shoulder room: 40.8/41/67 inches

Rear head/leg/shoulder room: 40.5/44.2/66.5 inches

Length/wheelbase: 247.9/160.3 inches

Turning circle: 52.5 feet

Fuel tank: 38 gallons

Tow capacity: 12,450 pounds

Curb weight: 7,408 pounds

Base price: $44,630

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