

Maverick Gets Tougher

Ford's Smallest Truck Adds Off-Road Package for 2023

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

For people who think giant trucks are overkill, Ford's compact Maverick was a breath of fresh air when it was introduced as a 2022 model.

A year later, the Maverick remains in a class by itself as the only legitimately small, affordable pickup sold in America. The base model is priced at \$22,595 and comes with a hybrid drivetrain rated for 40 mpg in city driving.

As a contrarian, I'm absolutely in love with it.

The Maverick is the opposite of most 2023 trucks. It reminds me of the old Ford Ranger, a basic, no-frills pickup designed to do little-truck jobs: hauling bags of mulch for gardening, using 4x4 to get to a remote campsite or picking up supplies for home-improvement projects.

The Ranger was a great little truck that left a void when it disappeared from America in 2012, only to be resurrected a few years later as portlier, pricier, almost F-150 sized vehicle that shared nothing with its simple namesake.

There's a place for big, powerful, expensive trucks. But not all of us want them.

That's why I'm in love with the Maverick. It's not because it's the best pickup in the world. It's just the best for me and, surely, lots of people like me.

In its second model year,



Ford's Maverick pickup adds a new Tremor off-road package for 2023. It gives the compact truck a one-inch lift and some useful tech for the trails.

the Maverick — which should have been named the Ranger if Ford had better sense — adds some off-road capability with a new Tremor package.

Unfortunately, it negates one of the best reasons to buy a Maverick: its amazing gas mileage. The Tremor is rated for 20 mpg in city driving and 24 on the highway, which is better than big trucks but nowhere near as eye-popping as the cheaper hybrid model.

The Tremor package cost \$4,490 on my XLT tester when paired with some appearance options. That's a hefty uncharge over the XLT's \$24,455 base price, but it comes with some impressive off-road tech, including a new all-wheel-drive system with a locking rear differential and a heavy-duty transmission cooler.

Five drive modes — designed for pavement, mud, sand or snow, and towing —

let you select automatic settings for each condition. It also comes with Trail Control, which works like cruise control for off-roading, and a unique suspension with a one-inch lift.

The higher position makes the Maverick Tremor look more purposeful than cute.

This truck's downsides are, oddly enough, some of the same reasons I love it.

The Maverick won't win any awards for refinement.

Its engine makes more vibration and sounds rougher than most trucks, and there's more hard plastic in the cabin than you'll find on other 2023 vehicles. But to me, that just makes it feel unpretentious. It's not trying to impress the neighbors. It's trying to be a good new truck for an affordable price, something all too rare in 2023.

Granted, that's assuming you can find one. I've heard

WHAT WAS TESTED?

2023 Ford Maverick XLT Tremor AWD (\$24,455)

Wheelbase: 121.1 in.

Length: 200.7 in.

Width: 72.6 in.

Height: 69.5 in.

Engine: Turbocharged 2.0-liter four cylinder (250 hp, 277 lbs.-ft.)

Transmission: Eight-speed automatic

Fuel economy: 20 city, 24 highway

Why buy it?

It's a right-size, common-sense truck for people who don't need the size, thirst and price of a bigger pickup.

anecdotal stories from people who had to endure long waits and greedy dealer markups to get their hands on a Maverick. Hopefully that will get better as supply-chain problems dissipate and car lots return to a post-pandemic normal.

Overall, though, I can't blame buyers for clamoring for this truck. Now that it's available with some extra off-road swagger, it's only going to crank up the demand burners for what I see as the sole common-sense pickup on sale this year.

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The Maverick's cabin is designed for functionality, including storage in the door pockets and under the rear seat.

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A CLOSER LOOK



AT A GLANCE

FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

What was tested? 2023 Ford Maverick XLT Tremor AWD (\$24,455).

Options: Equipment Group 300A (\$2,200), Tremor with Appearance Package (\$4,490), Ford Co-Pilot360 (\$650), WiFi hotspot removal (-\$20), splash guards (\$180), spray-in bed liner (\$495). Price as tested (including \$1,495 destination charge): \$33,955.

Wheelbase: 121.1 in.

Length: 200.7 in.

Width: 72.6 in.

Height: 69.5 in.

Engine: Turbocharged 2.0-liter four cylinder (250 hp, 277 lbs.-ft.)

Transmission: Eight-speed automatic

Fuel economy: 20 city, 24 highway

RATINGS

Style: 8

Performance: 5

Price: 10

Handling: 5

Ride: 6

Comfort: 5

Quality: 6

Overall: 8

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