

8-24-09
2010 Ford F-150 Raptor

For all you Raptor fans who have been waiting patiently for the truck of your dreams it has arrived! I had an opportunity along with a dozen or so journalist to head out to the birthplace of the 2010 Ford F-150 Raptor, Borrego Springs. Yes it was 115 degrees in the shade but when you have a truck to test drive in its element, then who cares about heat!

Let me set the stage, Ford SVT Team (Special Vehicle Team) started out with a well equipped F-150, and then they hooked up with Fox Shoks out of Santee California and put 60 plus hours of shock tuning out in the desert, 60 hours tuning a shock absorbers? Well guess what? Ford and Fox got what they wanted; a truck you can drive on the street and then when the off road calls all you do is drop the tire pressure and hit it!

The 2010 Raptor comes with a 5.4-liter 3-valve EFI V8 engine that produces 320 horsepower and 390 foot pounds of raw torque at 3,500 rpm, you then get a 6-speed automatic transmission. A 400 horsepower version is on the way, but why? The Raptor sits on a box frame that give the truck all the rigidity it needs in the rough stuff, the tires are BF Goodrich LT315/70R-17 All Terrain tires that worked like a champ. You also get coil-on-shocks, (Fox Shoks) long spindle, double wishbone independent, aluminum lower control arms with SVT scripted in the arms, nice touch and you also get forged upper steel arms that is all in the front end. In the rear you will see a Hotchkiss-type non-independent live leaf springs and out board Fox Shoxs with a reservoir shock to handle the terrain. Of course you get an upgraded interior, Raptor specific and with a great gauge package which includes all the gauges you would need to hit the desert with confidence. For the guy who likes options Raptor gives you a four switch hard wired connector for all extra things like lights, winch etc. etc. all located in the center console.

I can go on and on about all the bells and whistles you will find in the Raptor but what I really want to tell you about is how it handles on the open road, desert, and one mother of a mountain we had to climb up, and then climb down!

We started in San Diego, tires pumped up and two journalists to a Raptor, and off we went south through Chula Vista, to Jamul, then up through Ramona then Julian (Sorry no pie stop) then down onto the desert floor. We stayed the night at the Borrego Ranch Resort, had dinner went to bed early and got up early to beat the sun and headed to the open desert but first our tech team dropped the tire pressure to 28 psi and the first challenge was to drive the Raptor up to 70 miles per hour in the sandy river beds with lots of woops. We had an SVT engineer riding with us to answer any questions we may have. My SVT engineer was Hether a Ford Noise, Vibration and Harshness Engineer and let me tell you she should get an A+ for her and her team's effort, my tester was quiet and solid on the open road as well as the desert. Then we went to the rock crawl portion of the event. Locking into low four wheel drive up the mountain we went, lots of shale and lose rocks and throw in a little sand and the pucker power increases, then we get to the top of the mountain (all I could see out the windshield was

sky!) Our desert master, Larry Rae guided out truck to the edge of the mountain, had us engage Ford's Hill Decent and his last words were, "If you touch the brake pedal you owe me a beer!" At that moment the Raptor dropped over the ridge and I stood on the floor board as if I was standing up! The Raptors Hill Decent kicked in and down the grade we went, slow and sure, once at the bottom flick off the Hill Decent button and you're back tearing through the desert. (No I didn't owe him, a beer!)

I will have more information on my weekly radio show on KCBQ 1170 Saturdays from 3 to 5 pm; I will get SVT to call in.

The truck starts out at \$38,995 plus tax and license and you have no competition, none. If there was a negative is when you test drive one at the dealer unless he has a lot of sand in the back yard you won't get the idea SVT had when the started the project back in 2006, but if you do make it to the desert in a Raptor, you will buy it! It is the first purpose built vehicle that has hit a bull's eye!