

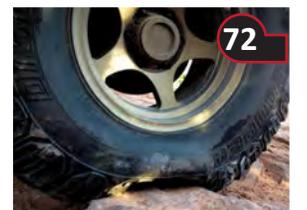
TCT MAGAZINE



JULY 2014 • VOLUME 7 • ISSUE 3

On The Cover:
Daniel Grogan of Plano, TX navigates his 2006 4Runner on a trail at the 2014 Lone Star Jamboree.

photo by Phillip Jones



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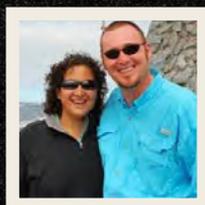
Shane Williams | Publisher
2007 FJ Cruiser TRD SE | 2007 Lexus GX 470
Colorado Springs, CO



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2006 Tacoma
Colorado Springs, CO



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2005 100 Series Land Cruiser
Grand Junction, CO



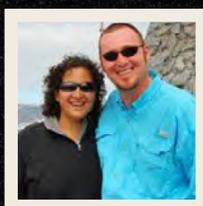
Krista Johnston
1998 4Runner | 1969 FJ-40
Casper, WY



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2006 Tacoma TRD
Denver, CO



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2007 4Runner | 2006 Tacoma TRD
Frisco, TX



Beau Johnston
1998 4Runner | 1969 FJ-40
Casper, WY



Vacant
Contact Shane for info



Vacant
Contact Shane for info



FROM THE PUBLISHER

As we promised when we combined FJC Magazine & Tacoma Magazine, we're constantly expanding coverage of events across the nation. You'll notice in this issue of Toyota Cruisers & Trucks Magazine that we have more events than any issue in our history. While we're excited to be able to get & about more, we're still not there. Many have expressed interest in joining our TCT Trail Team, and several of you are already working on assignments, but there are many events we simply can't make it to. If you've been on a trail run, Toyota Event, or just had a great weekend wheeling with friends...we want to hear from you! Send your photos in via our website for a chance to be featured in a future issue of TCT Magazine!

I'm writing this as quickly as I can, because as most of you know July is a busy time of year in the mountains of Colorado, especially for the TCT Crew! We'll have three editors plus myself at the FJ Summit next week (of course Jonathan is running the summit, so he won't be doing exclusive TCT coverage), and others on our team are off working on new adventures. The largest Toyota Off Road event in the country promises to be the biggest & best yet! More trucks, more vendors, more trails, and more fun! I'm finishing the event guide this weekend so it can get printed before we head out, and all Summiters should've seen their On My Way to Ouray stickers by now.

It's going to be a busy rest of the summer for sure, but for now, sit back, relax, and enjoy the July issue of TCT Magazine!

Until next time, Tread Lightly, Stay the Trail, and HAVE FUN!

Shane



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New & Noteworthy

FN Wheels

After over a decade of wheel design and production experience, Dustin Flickner branched off from the import car market to create FN Wheels in 2011. Based out of Corona, California, FN Wheels creates wheels with an emphasis on quality, unique designs and colors, and clean functional designs. FN Wheels has tapped into the Toyota heritage and taken inspiration from Japanese designs to bring a variety of unique wheel designs for Toyota owners to choose from.

FN Wheels offers five hub centric options for the Toyota 6x139.7mm bolt patterns and even has a hub centric option for the Toyota 5x150mm. Coming soon will be a sixth hub centric option for the 6x139.7mm as FN is set to release a 17x8.5 option on their popular Five Star model.

For more information on FN Wheels, please visit them at <https://www.fnwheels.com> and follow them on Facebook.



SOURCE: FNWheels.com

Mojoe Griddle



love to cook over the campfire, but dealing with standard cooking grates can definitely be a pain. Enter the Mojoe Griddle.

With over three square feet of cooking surface, this griddle allow you to cook over a campfire, a propane burner, or any other suitable heating source. It's built tough for generations of use with 1/4" steel and is made right here in the USA. The non-stick surface is easy to clean, and while it weighs in at a hefty 40lbs with legs & handles, it looks like a great option for family cooking in the great outdoors.

MSRP: \$195

SOURCE: mojoegriddle.com

Pronghorn MFES for Tacoma

Pronghorn Overland Gear debuted their Modular Front-End System (MFES) bringing several industry-first innovations to the Toyota Tacoma off-road platform. This includes Pronghorn's innovative fully-modular 6061-T6 aluminum construction and the new GearMount™ Accessory System, which offers a wide variety of accessories designed to make dangerous recovery tasks safer.



SOURCE: pronghorngear.com

MFES-Tacoma will also feature an industry-first, patent-pending, Low Mount Winch. Pronghorn Overland Gear devised the idea for mounting a winch as low as possible after consulting with dozens of well-known 4WD specialists. The Low Mount Winch keeps the heavy recovery device as low as possible for an improved center of gravity, and well-protected behind a skid plate integrated into the front-end system.

Components for the MFES-Tacoma will be laser and water jet cut from 3/16" 6061-T6 aluminum, CNC bent, and TIG welded by hand for a finishing touch only a human can deliver. Due to their lightweight and modular construction all Pronghorn MFES units ship by UPS Ground and do not require costly freight shipping or a commercial address, saving the buyer time and money. The Pronghorn MFES-Tacoma System is built in the USA

The Pronghorn Overland Gear MFES-Tacoma will fit all Toyota Tacoma models produced from 2005 to 2014. Production is underway with first units reaching consumers by July. Prices to be announced.

Lab Rak Cutting Board



We've seen some great products come through the pipe from Lab Rak, a boutique shop out of Oregon. The owner, Shane truly has Land Cruiser running through his veins so when we heard about the new 80/100 series tailgate cutting boards, we were giddy. After several months of development, these direct replacement units swap out that dirty carpet with something useable and can be removed when not in use and the carpet easily replaced. We got our hands on an example and Jonathan will be putting

it through its paces. Look for the full review in the October issue.

- CAD drawn and designed
- Precision cut
- Made from HDPE Cutting board sheet stock
- Countersunk mounting holes, to protect your knife's edge.
- Direct replacement of factory carpet pad
- Easy installation
- Easy clean up
- Non slip textured top
- The edges are rounded and smooth
- Replaces cumbersome tables
- Use while camping, tailgate parties, sporting events, changing diapers, pets, mobile work bench, it has endless uses.
- Made in the USA

MSRP: \$229

Photo: Bob Brindell

SOURCE: LabRak.com



OVERLAND EXPO 2014

Beau Johnston, Jonathan Harris, Colter Larsen

In the quiet hills of Arizona's Coconino National Forest world travelers, adventurers, entrepreneurs, and renowned experts gather at Mormon Lake for the world's largest overland event, Overland Expo West. Started in 2009 with an attendance of just 900 people, the expo has had to change venues in previous years to accommodate the demanding growth. In fact, because of the demand, there will now be two shows per year. The second show will be held in Asheville, NC on October, 3-5 of this year.

This year's event hosted approximately 8,000 visitors, over the course of three days. You'll need the three days to fully absorb the happenings of the event. With 160 different classes and workshops to sign up for, you will

find there is something for everyone. While commuting between the classes you won't miss out on the vendors supplying equipment for your next 4WD or ADV motorcycle outing. Not to mention all the fine vehicles that have been driven/shipped to the event. You will definitely see some rare and well kitted out vehicles that have been used to travel all over the world. This year both Land Rover and Chrysler had a plethora of vehicles you could drive around the off road course, including the new Dodge Power Wagon. In the evening, happy hours, a film festival and music will surely entertain. This year Paul May of Equipt threw a celebratory party for the crew of Expedition Overland.

With eye candy (the trucks and bikes) in every direction, on top of all the things to do, and most importantly, the people to meet, the event is often a sensory overload, but in a good way. To me, the event is about the sharing of information, friendships and just having a good time. So mark your calendars for 2015 or if you live on the Eastern side of the US, attend the show in Asheville! We'll shut up now and get to the stuff you've been waiting for. ❤️



Look for a writeup very soon on this super clean GX.



Download on the
App Store



Mountain Kahakis brought out some great new products. Take a look at this collapsible dog bowl.



Inside Four Wheels Campers offers well thought out floor plans with features to fit your backcountry needs.



Note the industry first low mount winch carrier, maintaining a low center of gravity.



Pronghorn working diligently on a live install of their new bumper.



National Luna Weekender 50 installed in the Equipt 4Runner.



Bryan Blacks (ITS Tactical) FJ Cruiser lookin' good under a fitting canopy.



Great coilovers from toytec.



Beau and Krista Johnston continue to impress the crowds with their live cooking demonstrations and kitchen oriented classes.

A Land Rover instructor shows how to properly set up and weld with your vehicles battery.



ARB imported this trailer to showcase how effective their lockers are in off camber situations.



Seth Jacobsen's (Adventure Driven) well equipped & thought out 80 series.



Spotted, The White Rhino. A solid axle swap 100 series build by Slee Offroad.



Simple and sturdy, the Tembo Tusk camp table.



This Four Wheel Pop Up is a perfect fit on the access cab Tacoma.



Toytec showing off the goods.



We loved the detail work like these undermounted KC 2x2 LEDs on the black Rhino Raco platform.



Woodrowgerber lighting up the night.



The Maxtrax FJ Cruiser equipped with a Long Range Automotive fuel tank, gives the FJ approximately 30 gallons of fuel to assist with long distance travel.



The James Baroud series of roof top tents was new for this years expo. They have many styles to fit nearly any application.



Tastefully set up vehicles were around every corner.

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2014 Lone Star Toyota Jamboree

Story and Photos by Phillip Jones

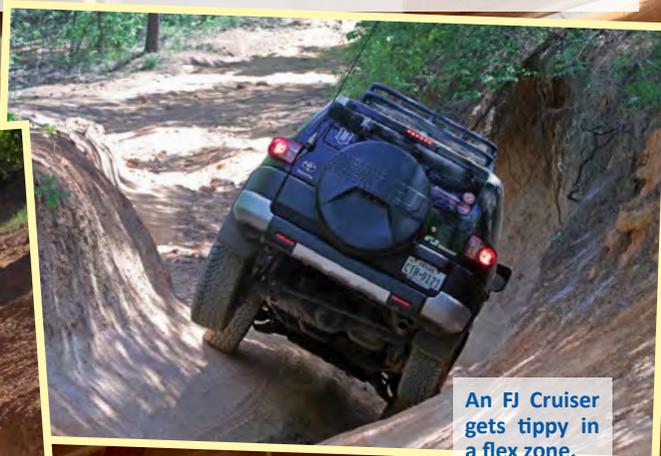


Jonathan Davis flexes his Tacoma on one of the off-camber trails.

Deep in the Pineywoods region of East Texas, the Dallas-based club known as the *Toyota Trail Riders* holds the annual *Lone Star Toyota Jamboree* at a large off-road park. The Barnwell Mountain Recreation Area contains nearly 2,000 acres atop one of the tallest hills in the area. Scenic wooded trails are scattered across all sides of the hilltop, dipping into the connecting valleys. Trail difficulty levels range from easy, which are suitable for stock trucks, to the boulder-strewn playgrounds for crawlers.



A beefed up 1999 4Runner driven by Johnny Waldo attempts a challenging crawler trail.



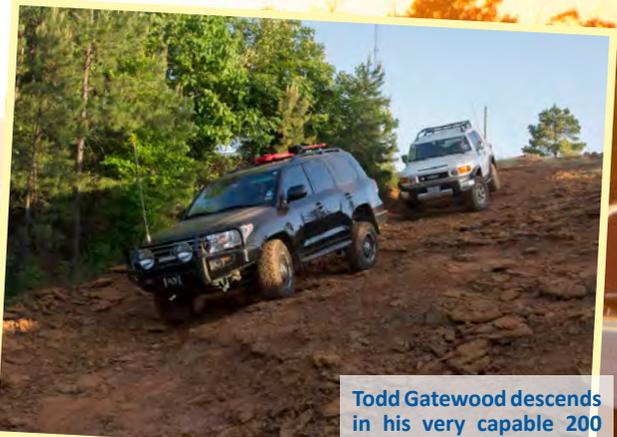
An FJ Cruiser gets tippy in a flex zone.



The May 2014 event was a hit with 180 trucks with 316 attendees. Jamboree Chairman Chris Gray said, "The turnout for this year set a new record. We hope to break that record next year for the 10th anniversary." To help draw in the crowd, the Jamboree committee arranged for some impressive prizes: roof-top tent, bumpers, portable fridge, skids, sliders, and LED lightbars.

One of the primary objectives at LSTJ is to introduce beginners to off-roading in a safe environment. Classes covering wheeling basics, safety, and recovery techniques were offered both Friday and Saturday. Sign-up sheets were provided with trail names and difficulty ratings for organized trail runs. Each trail run was led by experienced trail guides, who are required to be familiar with the trail for which they are leading, have a functioning CB radio, proper extraction equipment, and experience with spotting. Beginners were encouraged to participate in the daily run entitled

Introduction to Barnwell Mountain & Beginner Guided Run.



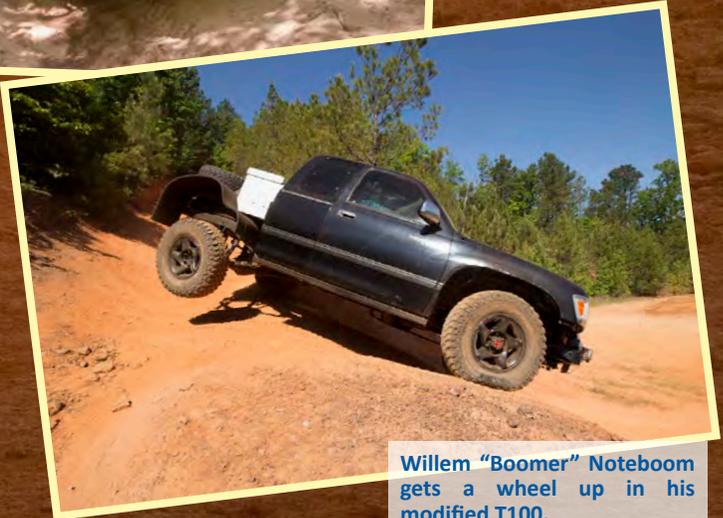
Todd Gatewood descends in his very capable 200 Series Land Cruiser followed by Conrad Smit in his FJ Cruiser.

Organized trail runs offered a great way for gaining familiarity with the park.



Chase Gooding gets a wheel up during a stock trail run in his 1999 4Runner.

A 1998 4Runner driven by Kris Kinsinger muscled through a wobbly uphill trail.



Willem "Boomer" Noteboom gets a wheel up in his modified T100.

For Friday evening dining, a tasty Jambalaya dinner was served up by the Louisiana Land Krewsers. The line of hungry off-roaders wrapped around the vendor tables, providing a meet-and-greet atmosphere with the many vendors. The dinner for Saturday night, sponsored by BaerTrax of Dallas, featured catered East Texas BBQ.

Cajun cooks from Louisiana Land Krewsers.



The event competition on Saturday afternoon featured a timed obstacle course. Orange cones outlined a route containing small hills that presented clearance and off-camber challenges, while a final tight turn and a bumpy straight-away offered speed challenges. Confident drivers barreled through in an attempt to earn the best time while avoiding penalties for toppled cones.



Matt White navigates his Tacoma through the obstacle course.



A 1984 FJ60 driven by Shane Potter makes a dramatic run in the obstacle competition.



Clayton Bryan's 1977 FJ40 prepares to enter a flex zone.

Many of the trails are ideal for night runs, giving drivers a chance to light up the night and test their trail feedback skills. Each night, the park lit up as convoys of well-lit trucks headed out to the trails.



Brad Cooper's Tacoma demonstrates the advantages of a solid front axle swap.

The event draws all walks of life and a diverse selection of Toyota trucks. Young and old drivers—the latter of which are usually chasing their youth by coming to this event—arrived with their sense of adventure. The trucks seem to reflect varying design philosophies—minimalists barely make mods and like to see what they can get away with on the trail, whereas gear junkies load up with mods in anticipation of encountering that perfect moment the gear provides



Kris Kinsinger and Megan Adams drove down from St. Louis, MO.

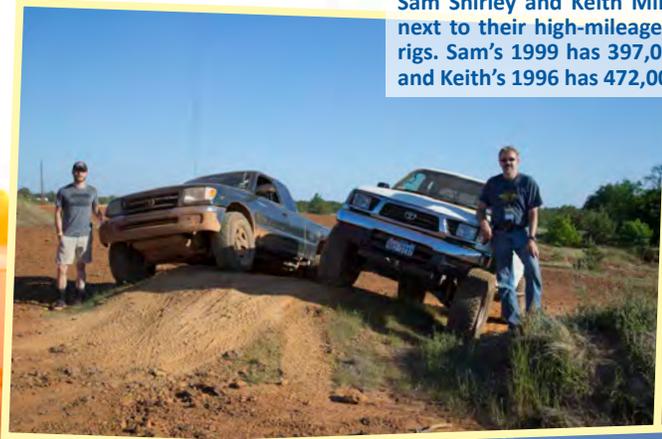


value. Despite the differing ideas and interests on the specifics, everyone is bonded by the common adoration for Toyota trucks and the enjoyment of testing the trucks' limits at Lone Star Toyota Jamboree.

Sam Shirley and Keith Miller pose next to their high-mileage Tacoma rigs. Sam's 1999 has 397,000 miles and Keith's 1996 has 472,000 miles.



Alexis Dennis hangs out the window waiting on her boyfriend to return from spotting another rig.



Steve Graham and Shannon Clark take a break from differential gear repairs to pose next to their trucks.

More about the event, the club, and the park can be found at these websites:

<http://www.lonestartoyotajamboree.com>

<http://toyotatrailriders.com>

<http://www.barnwellmountainra.com>

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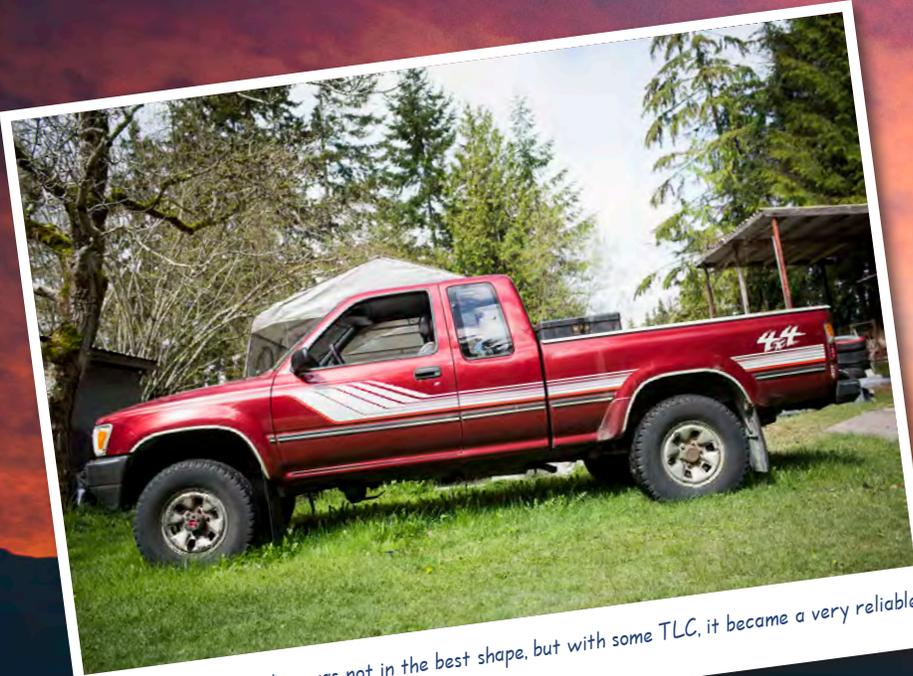
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Finding Glory on the Open Road

By Richard Giordano



This 1990 Toyota Pickup was not in the best shape, but with some TLC, it became a very reliable trekking machine.

We did what you are *supposed* to do. Graduate high school, go to college, get a job, go to night school, get a second job (one we were passionate about this time), get married, and buy a home. Done. So now what? We weren't quite ready to settle down and produce offspring. What were we *supposed* to do next? Why did we feel unhappy and trapped in our seemingly successful lives?

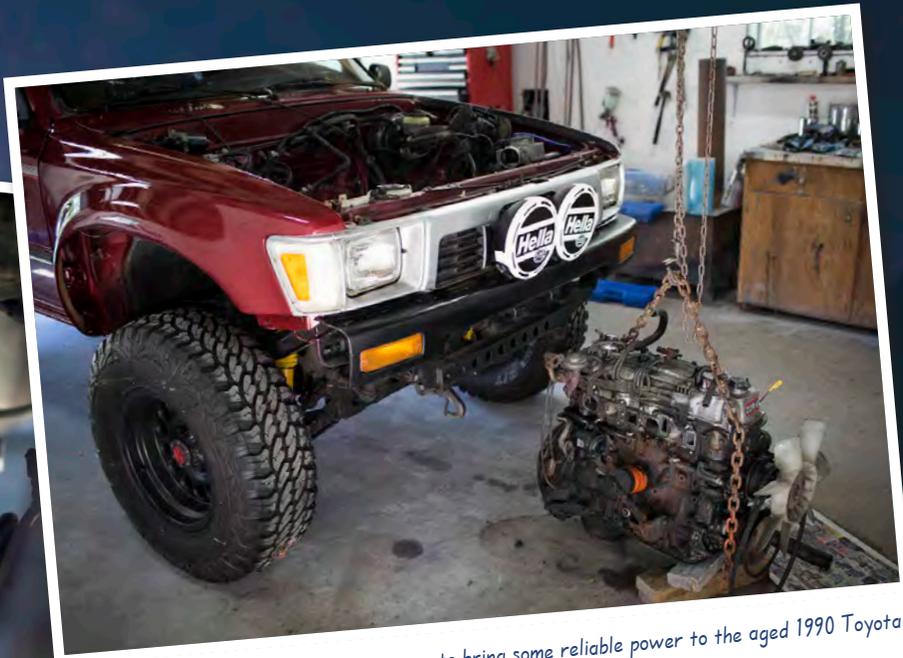
The catalyst for this trip was a text message from Ashley. "We need to have a life chat." Knowing that she probably didn't want a divorce or babies I was intrigued. We had been working at opposite ends of Vancouver so we met at a coffee shop somewhere in between, and made the decision to make a change. That change would be selling our belongings, renting out our condo, and moving into a 1990 Toyota Pickup for the next 8 months. We knew we wanted to travel and the normal 3-4 weeks wasn't going to cut it this time. We

yearned to see the world before running short on our 30,000 days on this Earth. A plan was hatched at the coffee shop and we had four months to prepare ourselves and our truck for a 20,000 km+ road trip into the depths of Central America.

From day one many people looked at us like we were a little crazy, although slightly envious, when we told them what we were doing. The first question always was, "What are you driving?" When we told them it was an older Toyota Pickup with a 22RE they just smiled and said, "Okay, you'll be fine." These old pickups are confidence inspiring and known for their reliability. Many people we have encountered on the trip have a story about a Toyota they once had. Most of those experiences involved trucks with insane amounts of mileage on them that never stopped running. If that didn't convince us, the Top Gear episode where Jeremy Clarkson attempts to destroy



With new legs under the rig, they were one step closer to hitting the road.



The beginning of the two day engine swap to bring some reliable power to the aged 1990 Toyota Pickup.



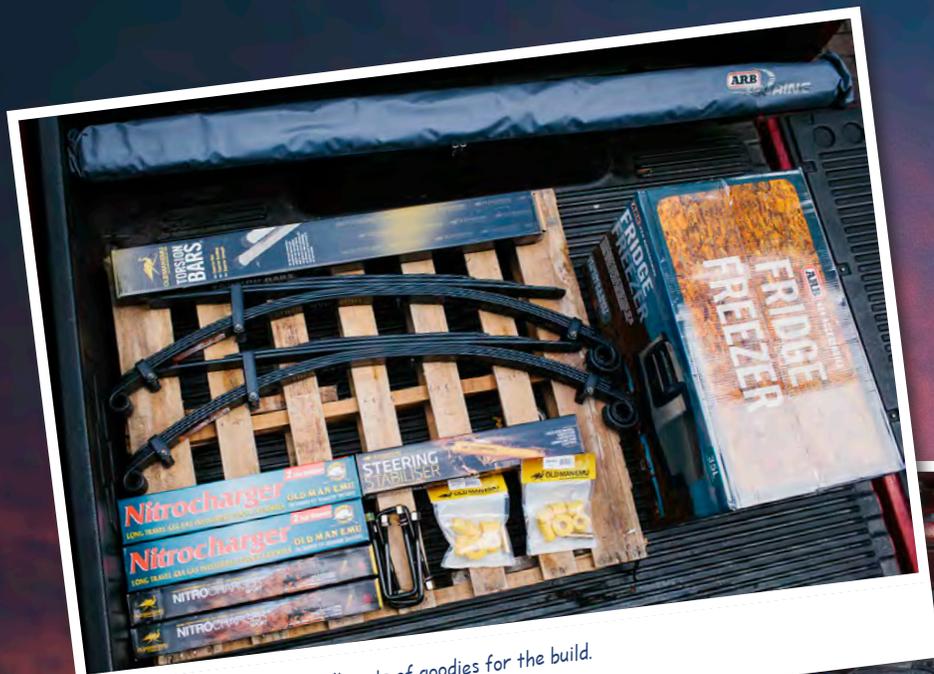
A complete Old Man Emu suspension kit ready to go under the 1990 Pickup.

a Toyota Pickup would. Perfect. Too bad ours was a freebie left for dead in a backyard in need of some serious TLC.

Overall the truck was in great shape for its age and a perfect starting point. We contacted a few reputable companies and were able to work with some great people throughout the build. First things first, a replacement for our 330,000km 22RE was built by Ryan Thom at Disturbed Industries in Abbotsford, BC. While this was in progress we replaced the suspension with a full kit from Old Man Emu. Since the only rust on the truck was on the fenders we replaced them with flared

fiberglass pieces from Toyota Fiberglass in Penticton, BC and painted them in the backyard. Brakes, exhaust, clutch, flywheel, ball joints, vital engine sensors and all fluids were replaced before heading out. All final prep was done by Disturbed Industries to make sure to minimize troubles on the road. Generally, anything marginal was replaced to avoid having to do it on the side of a dirt road in the middle of nowhere.

Once the truck was mechanically up to par we installed dual Optima Yellow Top batteries, an 85W solar kit from Samlex America, Blue Sea Systems battery isolator, a 37QT ARB Fridge/



A trip to ARB USA meant all sorts of goodies for the build.



The Disturbed Industries 22RE ready for a road trip.

Freezer, an ARB Awning, and a CVT Cascadia Vehicle Tents Mt. Bachelor roof top tent. With hours of research reading TCT Trucks, Overland Journal, and Expedition Portal I felt confident with these purchases. That was good, because our shake down run was non-existent. We started south immediately after breaking in the new 22RE. The first time we used any of this gear was the first night on the road. After almost 200 days of camping this setup has worked flawlessly.

In terms of planning, we rarely look more than a few days in advance and almost never know our route until the day we hit the road. As long as the truck is full of fuel with spares and tools on board, the fridge is full of food and drinks, and we've got both paper and digital maps, then we know we'll be fine whether we end up where we want to or not. Some of the best experiences have been unexpected detours we weren't afraid to take because we could.

The real question always is, "How?" How did we leave our secure jobs? How are we living on

the road without an income? The easy answer is that we chose to. We made the decision to leave, so we did. In four months at home we saved enough money to put us on the road in Central America for almost 8 months. We sold what we didn't need, sold some more, and did our best to reduce any payments we would need to make at home while we were away. A trip like this is not out of reach if you want it. For somewhere between \$1500–\$1800 per month you can head straight south and very comfortably live on the road. It's not hard to do, but it's really hard to start. Now that we've started though, it's going to be really hard to stop.

Richard Giordano
www.desktoglory.com

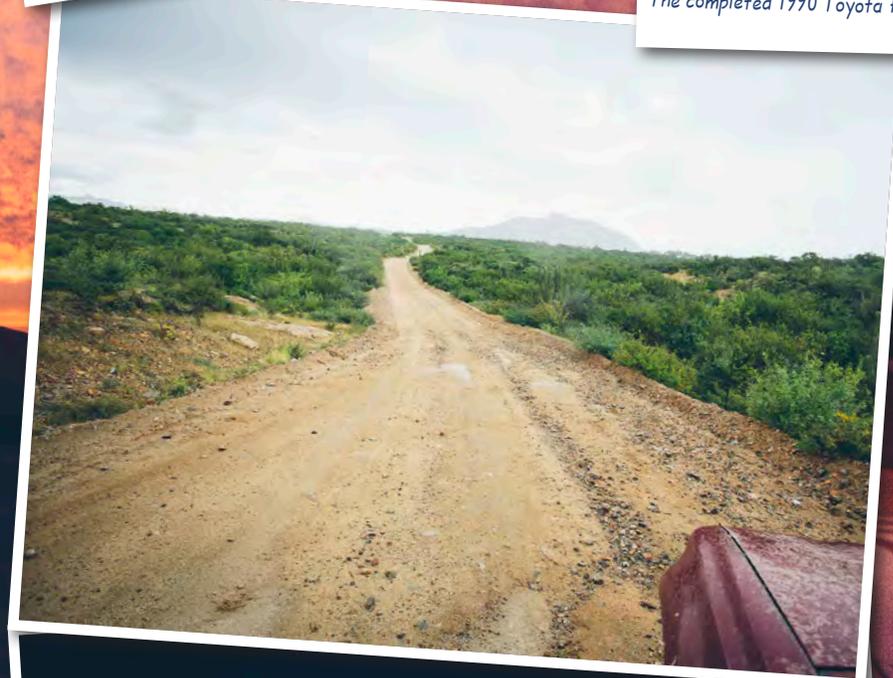
Richard and Ashley Giordano are from Vancouver, BC and are currently living in their 1990 Toyota Pickup somewhere in Central America. 🇸🇨



Ashley and Richard enjoying life away from the desk.



The completed 1990 Toyota Pickup at home in Baja, Mexico



1990 Toyota Pickup Details

Rebuilt 22RE by Disturbed Industries,
Abbotsford, BC

Old Man Emu Suspension System

Toyota Fiberglass Fenders (www.toyotafiberglass.com)

4Crawler 1" Body Lift

ProComp Xtreme M/T Tires 265/75R16

Eagle Alloys Series 100 16x8" Wheels

2x Hella Rallye 5000 Lights

Trail Gear Rear Bumper and Sliders

Dual Optima Yellowtop Batteries

Samlex America 85 Watt Solar Panel Kit

Samlex America 1000 Watt Pure Sine
Wave Inverter

Blue Sea Systems ACR Battery Isolator

ARB 37QT Fridge/Freezer

ARB Awning 2000

CVT Cascadia Vehicle Tent Mt. Bachelor
RTT

MAXTRAX Vehicle Extraction Devices



Thanks to a great group, Dome Plateau turned out to be a great easy day to get away and explore some new (to some) areas.



For nearly the whole time on the trail, Behind the Rocks offers a great view of the La Sal Mountains and Behind the Rocks wilderness.



As another May comes to an end, another Rock Therapy goes in the books. Filled with dusty days and blurry nights, Rock Therapy 2014 was again a must attend Tacoma events of the year.

Nearly 70 trucks were in attendance this year (including Tacomas, 4Runners, FJ Cruisers, a couple Lexus GX450 and even a Jeep), showing off their rigs and new modifications to their friends of new and old. This was a great opportunity for the sponsors to see first-hand, their products on a variety of customer vehicles. At the same time, it was a great opportunity for the attendees to meet and hang out

with their favorite sponsors and thank them first hand for their hard work.

This year had an amazing lineup of sponsors who helped make Rock Therapy 2014 stand out. Through their contributions and donations, campsite amenities were covered 100% and the raffle helped raise over \$3,000 to help Area BFE and Stay the Trail Colorado continue their ongoing efforts to improve the off-road community.

Most of the trucks camped out in Area BFE, and the event included: daily trail runs, a centralized bonfire, sand dune

The masses lined up for the photo shoot on the dunes.





Dome Plateau lined up ready to go.



With the intimidating High Dive behind, Jace makes easy work of Up Chuck



Behind the Rocks offers a variety of fun ledges and obstacles.

jumps for the long-travel rigs and a very impressive raffle. There are always many trails to choose from in Moab during gatherings like these, which Moab seems to be one of the off-roading capitals of North America, and never seems to let anyone down.

Rock Therapy gives Toyota owners an opportunity to gather with like-minded individuals and explore the amazing trails that Moab has to offer. Gatherings like this allow experienced drivers to get together and push their limits as well as gives drivers who are less experienced an opportunity to grow and learn just how capable their trucks really are. However, this year did have its fair share of trail damage to go along with its success stories, including: two roll overs, one near flop



on "hells gate", numerous counts of door and fender damage, mangled slider, busted wheel, at least one driveshaft, one destroyed 3rd member, a few CVs and even a power steering pump.

This year also drove home some important lessons for organizers and attendees. We learned the importance of watching each other's backs on the trail. When communication gets lost among the group, accidents can go unseen until it is too late. Many of the incidents that occurred on the trail could have been avoided with better communication among the trail leaders and drivers. Issues also came about with larger group sizes. When large groups gather, it is easy to fall into a spectator state of mind. No matter who is with you on the trail, it is important to be watchful and be willing to lend a hand when needed. The person leading the trail should point out: ledges, boulders, drops and holes that they have seen that others may not.

Rock Therapy, has been and always will be a fraternal type of gathering with a unique structure that allows its attendees to relax, be flexible about trails and just have fun. If you haven't yet taken the pilgrimage Moab for Rock Therapy, don't miss out on another year and start your planning today! ❤️

Rock Therapy 2014 Sponsors

[Toytec Lifts](#)

[Cascadia Vehicle Tents](#)

[Area BFE](#)

[Low Range Off Road](#)

[Bay Area Metal Fabrication](#)

[Pelfreybilt Off-Road](#)

[All-Pro Off-Road](#)

[Rebel Off Road](#)

[Rock Toy Industries](#)

[Addicted Offroad](#)

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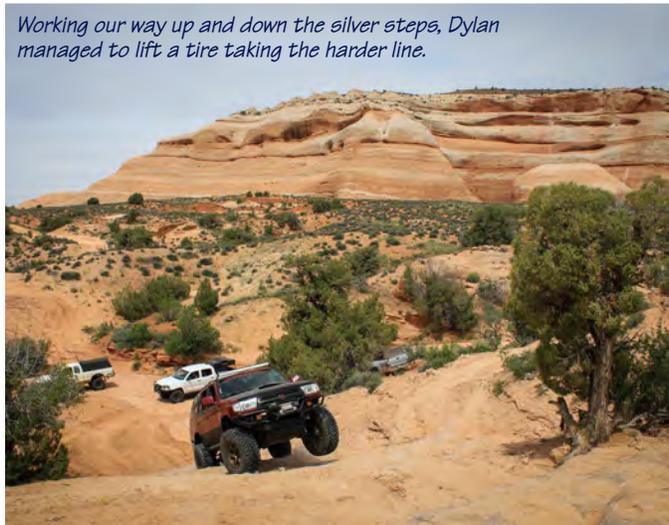
[Stay the Trail Colorado](#)



Rock Therapy 2014 dune photo shoot.



Working our way up and down the silver steps, Dylan managed to lift a tire taking the harder line.



For many, the smooth desert trails were the highlight of the day along Dome Plateau.



RTI coming down the steps.



Behind the Rocks early group below Balcony Arch.



As the sun went down, it was time for the long travel rigs to show off to the crowds.



Jason took the title again this year showing that his hard work dialing in his rig was well worth the effort.



Lunch had an amazing view of the Fisher Valley below.



Dome Plateau also has some caves along the trail to explore.



Jerry showing off his linked suspension in the Golden Crack



Low Range coming down the steps.



Lunch spot along Dome Plateau.



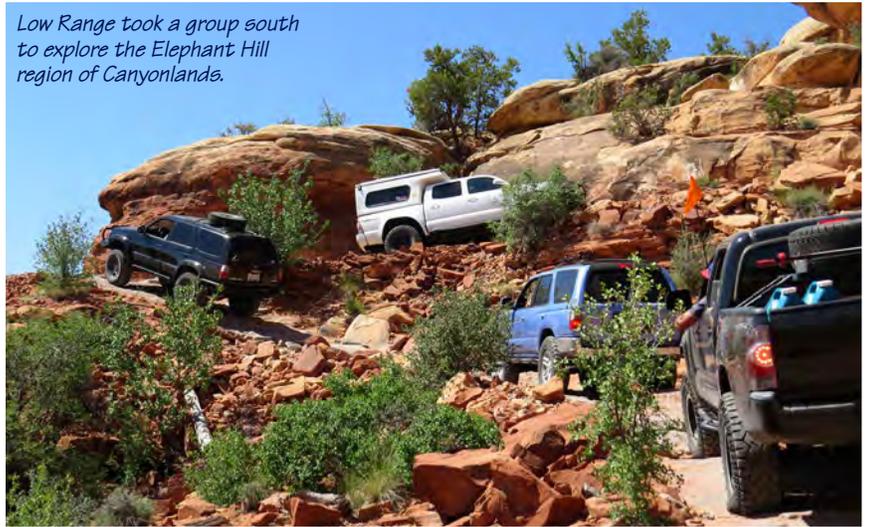
Nearing the end of Dome Plateau, an old mining camp and mine shaft can be explored.



Most of the obstacles offer a variety of lines to choose from.



Low Range took a group south to explore the Elephant Hill region of Canyonlands.



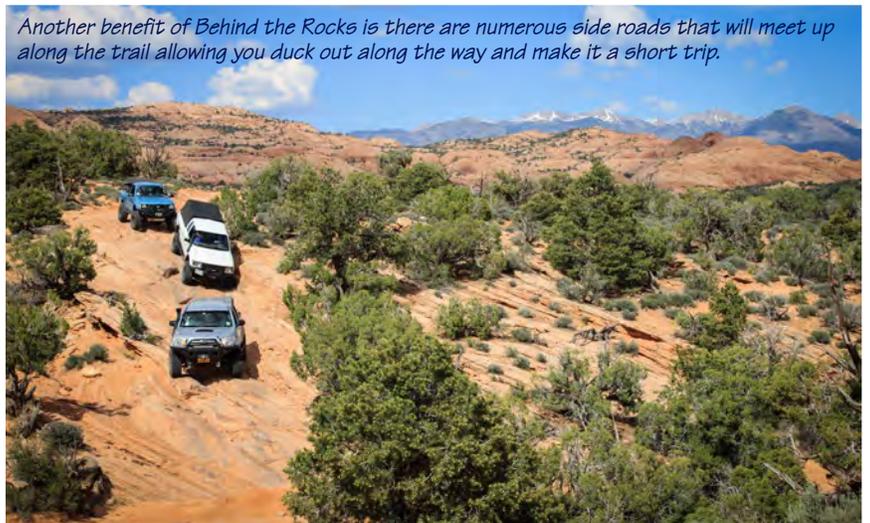
Dome Plateau trailhead can be found next to the historic Dewey Bridge along Rt. 128.



Another near incident on Hells Gate with one of the Lexus rigs when he decided to wave to the camera.



Another benefit of Behind the Rocks is there are numerous side roads that will meet up along the trail allowing you duck out along the way and make it a short trip.



The first casualty came on the Golden Stairs. Luckily no one was injured and the rig made it back on its own power the following morning after a JB Weld fix on its engine.



Jerry in his BAMF crawler stretching out its new solid axle conversion on the Gold Bar trail run.



Line up along the dunes Friday night.

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By Jonathan Harris



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Spring Break on the Slickrock

By Tyler Carvell and Chris Wenman

Equipped with their 3rd generation 4Runners, Chris Wenan, Tyler Carvell, and Nate Hufnagel ventured onto popular off-road trails in Moab alongside friends with other types of trucks.

Spring Break was in March, but it was January when the foundation for our wheeling trip to Moab, UT was planned. Moab is the mecca for off-road enthusiasts, and we were ready for it. Eight weeks later, our mud tires hummed over Highway 128 along the Colorado River, with views of the quintessential red rock canyon walls on either side.

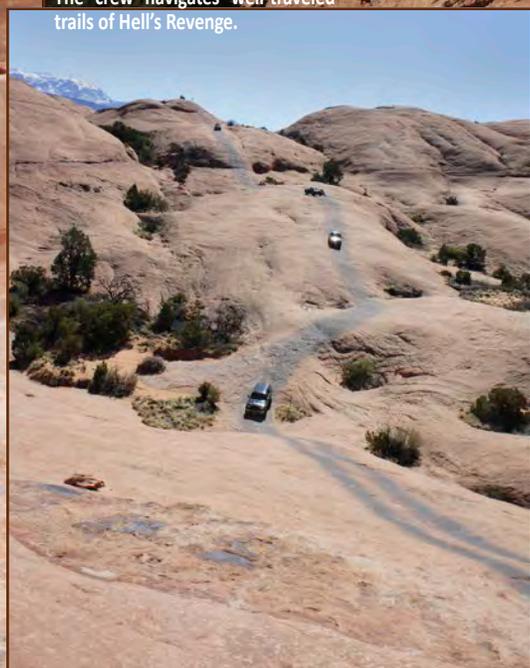
Our first trail day in Utah was set in motion as tents warmed from the rising sun, and percolating coffee filled the camp stoves. We convoyed into Sand Flats Recreation Area ready for Hell's Revenge. The game of follow-the-leader began as engines roared to life over tires at 15 PSI and disconnected swaybars. The entire group gracefully handled every ledge, fin and clench-worthy drop, with the La Sal Mountains beaming in the distance under a blue bird sky.



The crew navigates well-traveled trails of Hell's Revenge.



Tyler descends from Hell's revenge in his 2000 4Runner with the La Sal Mountains in the background.



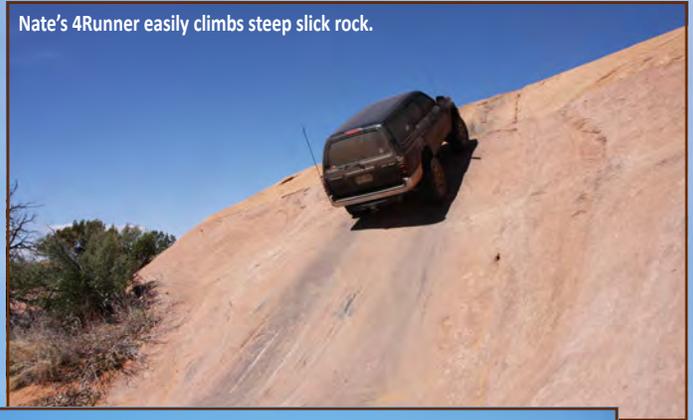
A tourism Hummer serves as an obstacle atop Hell's Revenge.

We stopped at Hell's Gate for lunch, but everyone opted for beer and sandwiches overlooking the Colorado River instead of tackling the obstacle. After lunch, it was time for more breathtaking views than we could count while everyone pushed their trucks (and driving skills). Built vehicles took harder lines, conquering smaller hot tubs and the Tip Over Challenge while stock trucks enjoyed the beaten path. We dropped out of Sand Flats into Moab in the evening and took inventory—no injuries for truck, man, or dog. We celebrated with Fireball and a campfire under the stars.

Day One lived up to the hype, but Day Two was bound to be epic—airing down at Poison Spider Mesa while the paleontologist-in-training described the famous dinosaur footprints near the trailhead. Poison Spider Mesa was a great warm-up with fun ledges and v-notches, all surrounded by Moab's infamous, awe-inspiring scenery.

Excitement was mounting as we transitioned to Golden Spike, rolling over Launch Pad, Skyline Drive, and dropping endless ledges.

Nate's 4Runner easily climbs steep slick rock.



Tyler descends a staircase at Golden Spike.



Chris experiences an off-camber moment in his 2000 4Runner at Poison Spider Mesa.

Nate flexes his 1999 4Runner at Poison Spider Mesa.



Articulation in front of a stunning backdrop.



Tricky descent at Golden Spike.

Photo: 2015

Four trucks dropped into Golden Crack as the sun met the horizon, cameras flashing and the GoPro rolling. Sunlight gave way to off-



Golden Crack is easily conquered by these able-bodied 4Runners.



road only lights as the group moved through Golden Staircase and Body Snatcher. After what seemed like hours in the dark we reached Gold Bar Rim, a trail filled with ledges and drops that were intensified by the darkness. Night wheeling had its challenges, but damn if it didn't make for a great time! After thirteen trail hours, we hit the Denny's in town for much-needed late night sustenance.

Tyler lights up the Gold Bar Rim trail.



The remaining two days in Moab were mellow after the Trifecta tested the limits of our driving and sanity. We hiked Corona Arch, rode some easy trails to get the tires dusty, and sipped PBRs while enjoying the views. As we were packing camp, it suddenly felt as if we hadn't

been there more than a day, but responsibility was calling in Colorado, Oklahoma and North Dakota. That didn't stop us from turning off at Dewey Bridge for a quick run on Top of the World to hold us over—at least until our next adventure. 🇺🇸

The scenic Bowtie and Corona Arches are defining objects for the Moab region.



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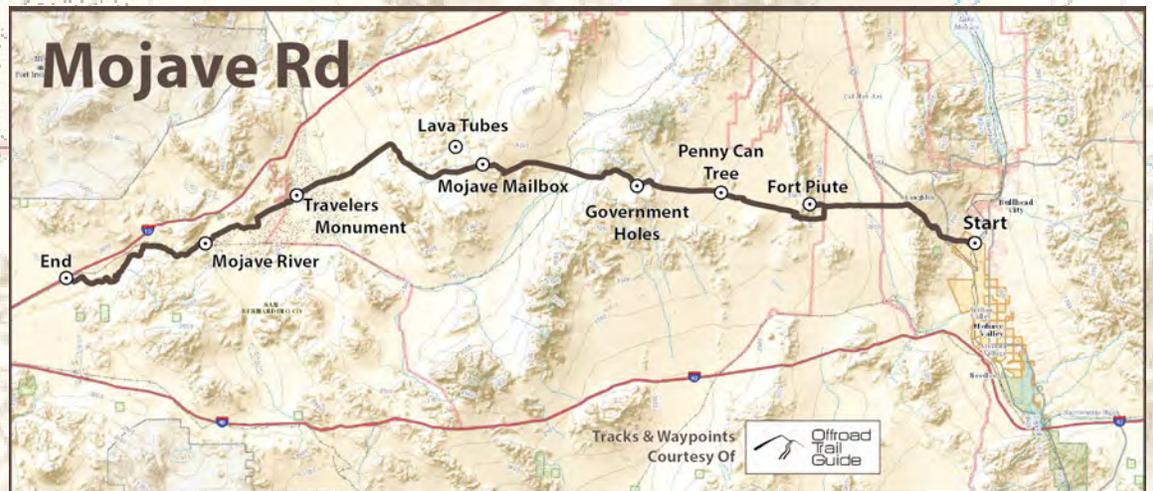
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Mojave Road Trail Report

By Kyle Renzelman, Vegas FJ Cruisers
Photos courtesy of Nick Moody, Mike Teliska, Alex Alavekios, and Rod Kuglin

It all started at the local coffee house. Fridays after work a group of Vegas FJ Cruiser owners and offroad enthusiasts got together to talk mods and trails. Being February, it was just nice enough to sit outside as the coffee warmed our hands. But, as winter sometimes does in Las Vegas, the breeze picked up and brought a chill to the air. We moved our conversation back inside, and the topic changed to where we should explore when the temperatures rose. Almost immediately it was mentioned that the Mojave Road should be at the top of that list. Before we departed we settled on the dates of April 5 and 6, 2014 and started planning. In addition to the normal camping/offroading supplies there are a couple things you will want to bring: some pennies, a ceramic frog and a garden gnome. You know ... for safe travels.



With the gear loaded up in the ten Toyota FJ Cruisers and one lonely Jeep Wrangler, we hit the road for what would turn out to be a journey we all would not soon forget. Day one started on the banks of the Colorado River, just south of Laughlin, NV. Oh, and make sure you pick up a big rock as you head out. You'll need it later.

As we moved into the Mojave National Preserve, we knew that the excitement would keep building. We knew some of the sights that were in store for us from weeks

of research leading up to the trip and had planned our route and time accordingly.

Twenty miles in, Fort Piute was our first stop. There were several miles of a very rough and rocky road. When we arrived, it was amazing to see not only the remnants of old buildings, but lush green foliage surrounding the fort. This was a natural place for us to take a break and grab some lunch before hitting the road again.

From Fort Piute we drove on to see the Mojave Road Bus, Penny Can Tree and Government Holes. Each of which provided plenty of opportunities for the photographer in all of us to come out.

As day one came to an end, we pulled into an old cattle corral just off the trails and set up camp for the night. Before we set off on this journey, some of us knew each other, but there were some that we had just met only hours earlier. The true testament to the trip was that at the end of the day we were all able to sit down around the campfire and enjoy sharing stories. The sun ducked behind the mountains in the west and night set in. The stars came out, brighter than any of us had seen in years. With the distant howl of a coyote we put out the fire and headed for some much needed sleep.



A chill was in the air as we fired up the coffee pots the next morning. On the horizon, the sun was just coming up and lit up the surrounding Joshua Tree forest. It is times like that, that you really can take a step back and realize how beautiful this part of the desert can be.

Back on the trail for Day Two and the first several miles we headed up towards Mojave Camp and on to the highest point on the trail. From there you could see miles upon miles of trail from where we've been and to where we were going. Along this section of trail the flowers were blooming and were cause for frequent quick stops for pictures.



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We stopped at the Mojave Mailbox, signed our names in the journal and left a Vegas FJ Cruisers sticker for those that may come after us to know we were there. We also placed our frogs in the Frog Garden and gnomes next to the Gnome Tree, to welcome the next group of travelers.



On to the Lava Tubes. This for me was the highlight of the journey. At one time lava flowed underground in the area and eventually blew through the earth's crust leaving lava rock for as far as you could see. You can climb down inside the tubes to see that the lava had formed the rock around it. We were there around 12:30. The time is important as you have small windows in which the sun's rays show through the holes above the tubes creating unforgettable images.



Here's where we have to give the Jeep guys a hard time. We had to do a trail repair on the lonely Jeep, before leaving the Lava Tubes, due to a brake line issue. The only Jeep and it's the one that has issues. All

the FJ's were doing just fine.

After a quick lunch we headed over to an abandoned cinder mine. Apparently you need to be on the lookout for big-horn sheep in this area. Cresting a ridge, one member of our group almost caught a hood full of horns. The mine was still very much intact and almost looks like it could be started back up at any time. Here we stopped for a poser moment.



The trail continued on towards the dry Soda Lake bed. We were able to really get some speed going. Word of caution though: be on the lookout for sudden drops. There are many washes that have formed since the lake went dry and they can be hard to spot with the sun reflecting off the mostly white surface.



Near the end of the lakebed is Travelers Monument. Here is where you place the stone you picked up at the beginning of the trail. Make sure you climb up the mound for your history lesson of why the monument stands. It is hard to imagine, after all of the miles we have traveled at this point, that the Interstate 15 is within view.

Leaving Travelers Monument we are down to our last stretch of the trail. We continue on through Shaw Pass to the sand dunes and into the Mojave River bed. We follow this for a few miles before having to cross it twice.



It was the perfect way to end the journey. We made our way back to I-15 to air up the tires before parting ways. The trip had a little something for everyone, but more importantly brought us all a little closer. This is a trip that the Vegas FJ Cruisers will be making on an annual basis. If you take the journey, make sure to leave us a note in the mailbox.

For GPS track and coordinates, visit www.OffroadTrailGuide.com.

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FRAMED

f/11 1/180s 50mm



White Rim Trail Moab, UT | Craig Honeyfield

FRAMED

f/11 1/500s 17mm





Chris W's 2000 4Runner @ Top of the World, Moab, UT | AnnMarie Gilbert

FRAMED
f/xx.0 HDR 32mm





Rock Therapy '14, Moab, UT | Bob Holliday



FJ Summit 2013, Ouray, CO | Scott Hookom

FRAMED

f/8.0 1/250s 40mm





TRD Pro Test Drive

By Jim Akers



A very “Happy Anniversary” for Toyota Racing Development (TRD)! This year TRD is celebrating 35 years in the US market. The official Racing Division of Toyota USA has been a crucial part of the company’s success, not only with their motorsports racing victories, but with their performance and accessory parts for both on and off-road. Over the years TRD has earned the reputation of being one of the leading developers of motorsport-derived retail performance accessories with offerings such as wheels, exhausts, suspension parts, brakes, superchargers, body kits, and more for Toyota, Lexus, and Scion cars, trucks and SUVs.



What better way to celebrate this milestone anniversary than to introduce an all new line of performance package and parts for three different platforms for the model year 2015—the Tundra, Tacoma, and the 4Runner. TRD is being very vocal that this is not just a new model for each vehicle; rather this is a re-launching of the TRD brand around the TRD Pro family.

In May we flew out to Las Vegas to see, feel, and experience the all new TRD Pro performance package vehicles in the desert. Toyota set three tracks for us to test drive on featuring wash crossings, bumps, rocks, and high speed sections.

Before a long day of putting these three platforms through their paces there were still a couple of big questions floating around my head and they seem to be mainly focused toward the Tundra.

- If you want to take over the “work truck” market why do you not offer a diesel power plant?
- Will anyone ever try to compete with the Ford Raptor?

After posing these questions to the designers and engineers we may have come up with some answers. With the new emission regulations coming out in the next couple of years the diesel may just not be prudent at this time and we all know that Toyota is a very, conservative manufacturer (almost too conservative). We have found out some possible explanations as to how and why Jeep and Nissan have made the leap. Cummins may have been left high and dry by one of their largest customers, leaving a large volume for them to unload in the open US market very “inexpensively.” Jeep may be considering this a good trial to see what the desire actually is. Nissan on the other hand, may be using this to build their market share on the back of Cummins’ reputation. As far as the Raptor, the TRD Pro Tundra has now put Ford on notice. The Tundra is lighter, faster, and with the TRD Pro package it can handle a little air time as well.

Putting These Trucks to the Test

Tundra TRD Pro:

- Available in double cab 4X4 or CrewMax 4X4
- Toyota front grille
- TRD-Pro stamping on the bed quarter panel
- TRD interior and exterior touches
- Aluminum skid plate
- Custom Bilstein suspension package with TRD tuned coil-overs

The TRD Pro Tundra was the first platform to be reconfigured to take on this make-over project. Being the flag ship for the TRD Pro, a lot of thought and effort went into creating this package for the Tundra, from the tuned suspension setup, tires specifically matched for best ride possible, to all of the details in between. The Tundra took every bit of what we could possibly come across and still didn't

touch a bump stop. It handled the corners, the braking, the drifting, and the bumps like we were on a Sunday drive with the family. I have to admit, the Tundra surprised me the most. I thought it was going to be too heavy and big to be able to throw it around. I found out, by way of, Toyota Racing Legend Ivan "Ironman" Stewart that I was wrong, way wrong. I am still not sure how this truck will handle mountain trails here in Colorado. It will take on the red and blue without question. It's the narrow shelf roads and the tight lines through the trees that will probably be the only stopping point for this beast of a truck. We'll just have to wait and see when the production truck gets here.





Tacoma TRD Pro:

- Available in access cab 4X4 or double cab 4X4
- Toyota front grille
- TRD-Pro badging
- TRD interior and exterior touches
- TRD cat-back exhaust
- Custom Bilstein suspension package with TRD tuned coil-overs

TRD packages make up about 40% of the overall makeup of the “Number-One-In-Segment” Toyota Tacoma. This TRD Pro is an improvement on what Toyota has come up with to date. Like the Tundra, the Tacoma has its own all new Bilstein suspension package, tires matched for performance, and cosmetic improvements. As a whole, this is the only predictable model of the three. To put it bluntly, it is exactly what you would expect for looks and performance.



4Runner TRD Pro:

- Toyota front grille
- TRD-Pro badging
- TRD interior and exterior touches

They might have done the least to modify the 4Runner, but what was done is spot on! Yeah, they did not put the same effort into the suspension as the Tundra or Tacoma, but they did level the ride and made it a little more useful on the bumps. They did do a few little touches to the interior and exterior to dress up the package as well.

After driving the 4Runner for a while, it is comfortable, stable, and even impressive.

It might not be the prettiest SUV on the road, but it will sure eat up the competition off pavement. It is a little hippy and we drug the rear bumper a couple of times, but that can be fixed by trying to not hit the bumper (we may have been trying to see if it would hit). The 4Runner would definitely be my first choice of the three for a daily driver. The cabin and the ride in general are quite comfortable.



If you decide to buy a TRD Pro here are a couple of recommendations for additional modifications:

- Tundra—Bigger tires and put a Supercharger on it.
- Tacoma—Bigger tires and more heavy duty armor.
- 4Runner—Supercharger, Supercharger, Supercharger.

I had the chance to ride in a 4Runner with a Supercharger and all I can say is hold on tight, it's an incredibly fun ride.

With all of this being said, if the last 35 years are a sign of what is to come, I for one cannot wait to see where we are headed. 🍌





At Thrill on the Hill with his new Tundra

Those of us who take our modern 4Runners into the wild for off-road use are well aware of the limitations of aftermarket componentry available. We see the fabrication love geared toward the Land Cruiser, Tacoma, FJ Cruiser, and older 4Runners and thus feel a bit neglected. Thankfully we have Jason Demello and his fabrication company, Demello Off-road, which has been in business for 12 years. He is no stranger to 4Runners, he drives a very recognizable 4th gen.

enthusiast," he explains. "It is more than just a business. When I'm not at an event, I'm usually spending my weekends in the mountains with family and an off-road rig." 🇺🇸

So why does he show love for the modern 4R? "Personally, I like the 4th gen 4Runner because of the V8, comfort, and cargo space. I've always been a 4Runner fan. Previously, I owned the 1st and 3rd gen 4Runners. I especially liked the convertible top on the 1st gen."



Jason off-roading at Lone Star Toyota Jamboree

Demello Off-road offers a front bumper and rock sliders for the 4th gen 4Runner, and has a 5th gen bumper in the works. A beta version is undergoing testing. Is anything else in the works for 4Runners? "I'd really like to do a rear bumper. My goal is to offer rear bumpers for each of the Toyota models." What about aluminum front bumpers? "The aluminum bumpers are in the design phase. I want to preserve the strength while retaining aesthetics and am exploring different avenues that will meet my preferred standards."

Jason expanded his product line to offer a front bumper for the Tundra. "Demand has exceeded my expectations. In addition to the off-roading Tundra owners, I'm getting orders from people who are into the protection and rugged look that our bumper offers. The Tundra bumper has really taken off."



Demello front bumpers have become popular as more are appearing on Toyota trucks at off-road events. As order volume increases, how does Jason plan to react? "Improving on what we already have, including improving manufacturing processes. Volume is driving the need to examine what we do and determine how to do it better. For example, the Tundra bumper was started from scratch. We determined how to make it better. What we learned from that will be applied toward improvements with the rest of our product line."



Research and design are a vital part of making products to ensure they fit and function as expected. Jason understands this and makes it a priority. "I prefer building the concept and then changing it multiple times until I get what we want. Tundra was done right on the second time. For the Tacoma, we've gone through four or five iterations. The time we put into the initial designs is worth it."

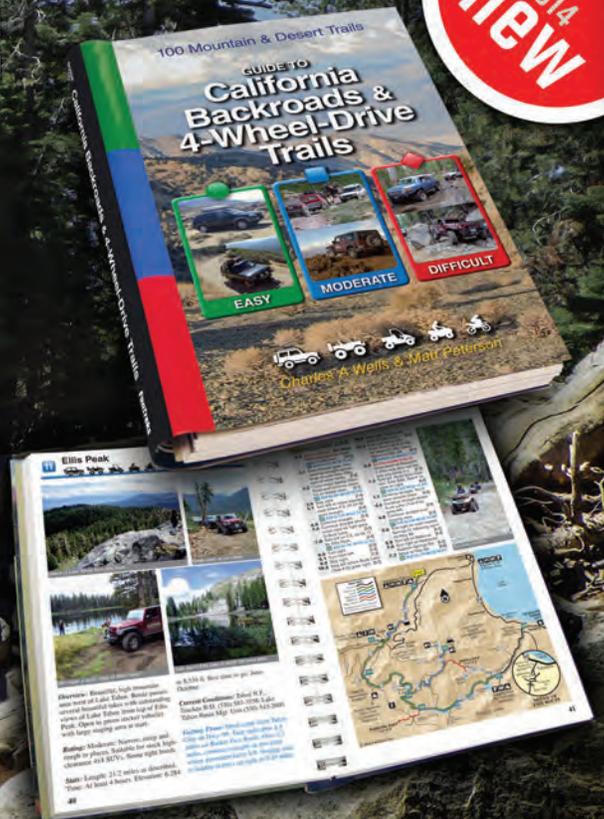
Jason can be seen at a number of off-road events. He attends Lone Star Toyota Jamboree, Thrill on the Hill, Sedona Fest, Summit, and events more local to him in California. "I'm still an

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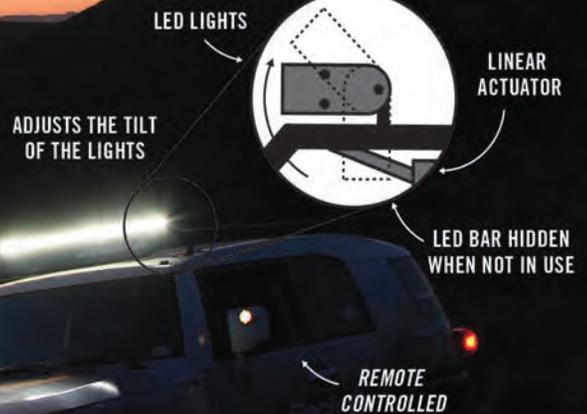


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Choosing a Camp Stove

The Future is Bright!

By Beau Johnston
LivingOverland.com

Part 3

In the first two articles in my Choosing a Camp Stove series I discussed the importance of knowing how the types of meals you will be preparing affects the selection of a camping stove. We learned how stoves are designed for specific styles of outdoor cooking and how flame control and burner size affects the types of meals you can prepare in the field. We also discussed the most common types of fuels used in modern camping stoves and how they should be factored in when purchasing the stove that is right for you. Each fuel type comes with advantages and disadvantages that must be weighed when deciding on the stove that is right for you. In this, our third and final article, I will be taking a step back

from all of the technical jargon and will instead be talking about why I am excited about the advancements I am seeing in the camping stove market.



We are in the dawn of some pretty remarkable times in the outdoor cooking market. There has been a revolution in camping cooking and a growing number of people want to cook, I mean really cook. We are no longer satisfied with the statuesque of hotdogs and canned beans. The number of cooking classes at events like Overland Expo attest to this rise in backcountry culinary dining. Stove manufacturers are catching up with market demand and listening to what customers are saying and watching how they are cooking in the field.



Camping stoves are becoming more than just burners. We are no longer satisfied with being relegated to cooking our meals in pots and pans; we want grilled asparagus and steak with our risotto. Camp stove manufacturers took note and are now designing stoves with integrated barbecue grills. One burner provides heat for a large grill cooking surface. Integrated drip trays catch grease and help to distribute heat across the grill. The second burner provides heat to a cooking grate for those meals needing to be prepared in traditional cookware. The best thing about these stoves is you are not limited to just using the grill for barbecuing. Although the grills provide heat over a larger area, they can still be used to heat cookware and some stoves even come with non-stick griddles that can easily be swapped in to expand the cooking capabilities.



There is nothing quite like eating fresh-baked bread, especially while in camp, and there is a growing market for camping stoves with integrated ovens. Built like mini ranges found in home kitchens, these stove/oven combos feature two standard burners, for preparing meals in traditional cookware, and ovens capable of reaching up to 400° F (Camp Chef) and cooking up to a 12-in. pizza (Coleman). The menu possibilities these stoves bring to the table (pun intended) are endless. The stove/oven combinations allow for meals like clam chowder served in freshly-made bread bowls or chicken cordon bleu with long-grain rice and pine nut pilaf to be served for dinner and peach cobbler to be served for desert. Okay, now I am really getting hungry!



Camp cooking innovation does not stop with barbecue grills and ovens. Advancements in thermo-electric power generation have changed how we can look at camping stoves. Once was seen as unsophisticated and rudimentary, wood burning stoves are now being fitted with electricity generators, combustion fans, and USB power ports. A portion of the heat produced in the combustion process is converted into electricity. That electricity is used to power a combustion fan that is used to make the combustion more efficient. Excess electricity is used to charge our portable electronic devices as we cook dinner.

Technology isn't only affecting the ability for stoves to charge our portable electronic devices. Advancements in materials and manufacturing

techniques have allowed manufacturers to produce lighter and stronger stoves for less money. Carbon steel was once the material of choice for camping stove construction. Today we are seeing stoves made from stainless steel and aluminum with many components being constructed from composite materials. Companies are also looking at other areas to integrate technology.



So you can see why I am excited about what the industry is working on. All of these design and technological advancements means companies are investing money in design and further innovation. Startup companies are popping up, beginning to develop and produce stoves for the market. We saw this same advancement in backpacking stoves over the previous decade. As more products enter the market, there is increased pressure on the manufacturers to be innovative. This is a great time to be buying or upgrading your camping stove, the only problem is how much more impressive will next year's stove designs be and can I wait until then to find out. ❤️



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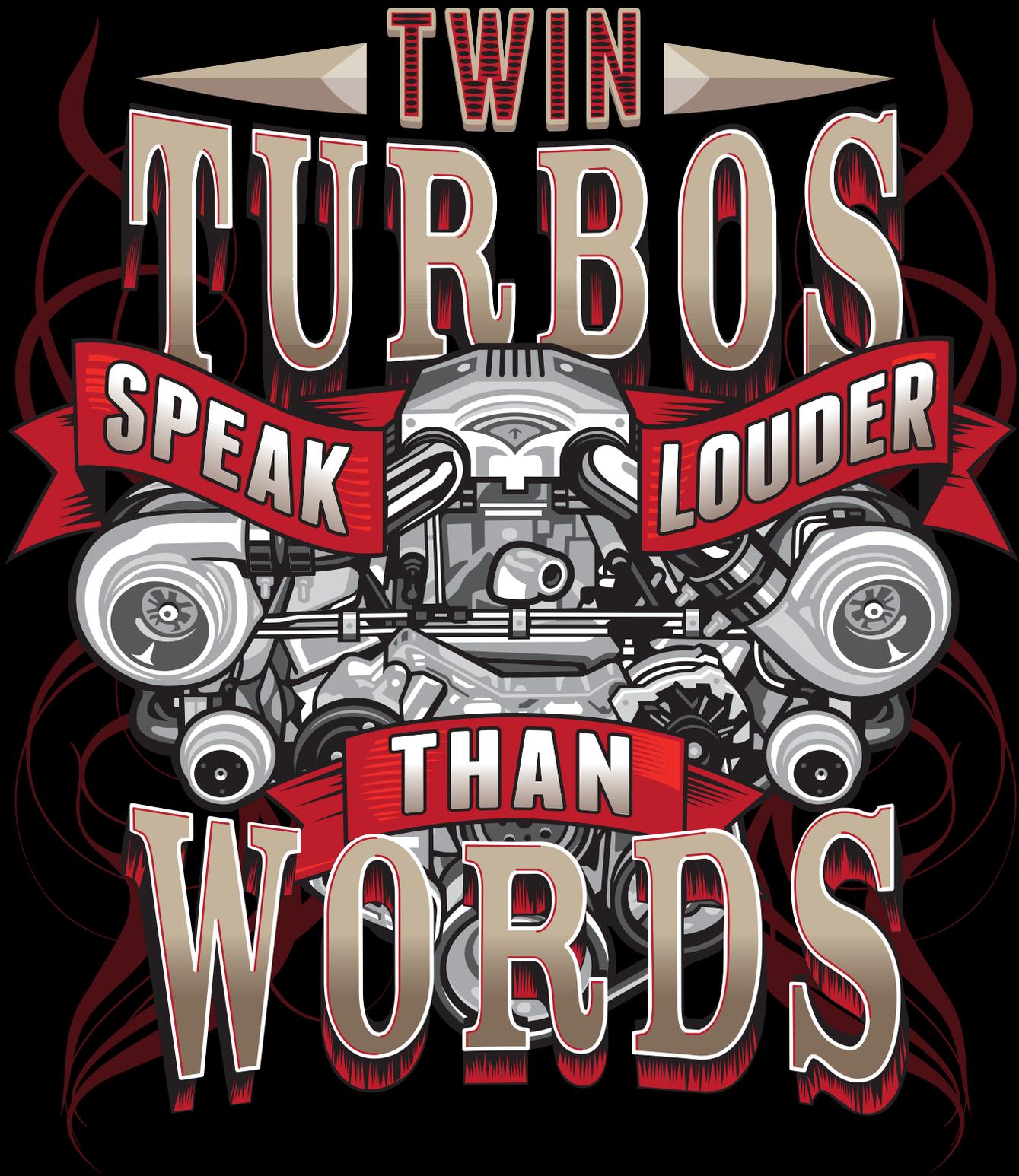
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Manley EXPLORE Upgrades

By Shane Williams

Photos by Shane Williams & Jim Akers

When we purchased the Manley EXPLORE trailer last year, we intentionally kept it fairly stock. We wanted to get a feel for how the trailer would be used before doing any upgrades, since each use case is so different. Over the last few months we've pondered upgrade options (see the January 2014 issue), to decide how best to spend our time and money, hoping to modify the platform for our best long-term goals.

Trailer Lining

The first thing that became apparently clear after putting a few thousand miles on the

MORV last year was need for a better coating on the inside of the bed. Even when gear was properly stowed, items shifted, slid, and bounced around when on a tough trail. We needed a coating that would make it easier to secure loads while protecting the steel from further scratches.



Rhino Linings of Colorado Springs came through in a big way with their HardLine protective coating. It's super-tough and prevents scratches and some dings inside the trailer. It's also easy to slide boxes around on the lining, but when strapped down everything stays safe and sound. Look for a detailed account of our experience with Rhino Linings on our website at <http://tctmag.me>





Living Quarters

One of the top priorities for our family of four was living/sleeping arrangements. The original CVT Mt. Hood tent was great for 3 of us, but it was very high off the ground and wasn't quite big enough to sleep 4 comfortably. Inspired by the Manley BaseCamp setup and other 'fold out' trailers we've seen, the search was on for a more versatile tent option.



Luckily after several conversations with Bobby Culpepper from CVT, we helped spec out a new 'family' style trailer tent option that he was already working on. The new line of CVT Trailer Tents are meant to be a cost effective way for families to have a little extra space to spread out while maintaining the ability to completely get off the beaten path.



This new tent can be setup in minutes in a variety of configurations. As a basic bed and changing room, the tent folds out in the same manner as other RTTs. The large bed

accommodates up to four people, and the changing room is a perfect place to let the kids play, or to get out of the sun. From there, the awning can be zipped on, and 3 more walls can be added to create a very large living area perfect for extended stays. Since we literally just mounted this tent, check our website soon for additional photos, reviews, and configurations. So far we're very excited to have the CVT-12 on the trailer.

Beyond sleeping and living arrangements, we've decided to add quite a few additional upgrades to the MORV. It was clear from the beginning that a tongue box would be a requirement going forward. The original plastic box we strapped to the tongue bounced too much and rubbed powder coating off, it also wasn't very useful for holding heavier gear since it was held on with nylon straps.

Tongue Storage

We opted for the Tradesman aluminum box, which provides needed storage area for the ArkPak power station and various other trailer accessories. The box mounts securely to the trailer with 4 stainless steel bolts, and while the ArkPak takes up most storage area, we can still fit several straps, the articulating hitch, hardware, locks, chains, and wheel chocks. The lightweight box includes a lockable latch and seems very well built. While it's not dustproof, it is fairly water resistant so moisture won't be a concern. To be safe we'll be storing most items in waterproof bags to keep things neat and tidy.



Plenty of Power

In order to be prepared for extended stays in the backcountry, we decided to purchase an ArkPak power station and Optima Yellow Top deep cycle battery. The system can be recharged from the vehicle, 110v/220v, or via our 80W Go Power solar panel. While this system is still being configured, soon we'll be using various LED lights for the tent, a portable

HF Ham Radio setup, and of course the ArkPak will charge plenty of camera batteries. In initial testing, the ArkPak manages the battery very well while delivering plenty of power for all of our gadgets. Like most of our upgrades, check our website often for updates on how we're using the ArkPak and solar panel.



Fuel + Water for Extended Trips

For extended trips with the FJ Cruiser, we've been using standard jerry cans on the rear bumper for additional fuel storage. However since we have extra space on the trailer we thought a little more fuel, plus an additional water storage option would be a good modification. We sourced 2X RotoPax fuel and 2X RotoPax water bottles, along with their innovative mounting system directly from the company. Each bottle holds 2 gallons, so we're able to carry an additional 4 gallons of both fuel and water on any trip.



Keeping the trailer organized

Finding the right storage option for inside the trailer will always be a changing system. Our initial low-cost containers didn't last long, and most were too tall to be truly useful for longer trips. Following the advices of a thread on Expedition Portal, we found Plano bins on Amazon.com that fit the bill perfectly. Combined with our existing camp kitchen, stove, and portable heater from Adventure Trailers, we have plenty of storage in the bed of the trailer while maintaining room on top for additional items. We also found these great LoopRope straps, which are a perfect way to secure uneven loads in the bed. By hooking the straps together with additional bungee cords, we can make a secure web that works in just about any configuration.



In addition to a mounting system four LED camplights, we're going to run LED string lights into the tent, all on individual switches. A marine-grade switch panel will be mounted on the trailer to route power to our accessories.



Since the tongue box is larger than anticipated on the trailer, we're still sourcing an appropriate mount for the 20# propane tank. This tank will provide gas for cooking, our campfire (for fire restricted areas), and portable heater.

While the Rotopax provides 4 gallons of water, we'll most likely add an in-trailer tank with a pump on it for extended stays in the back country.

Choices for how to upgrade your Off Road Trailer are many, and each individual modification will depend heavily on your situation. The fact that the MORV is such an inexpensive entry-level price means that more time and money can be spent on upgrades that fit your situation perfectly. So far our trailer is working out better than we thought, and at just over \$10,000 total money invested, it's actually been a great bargain. 🍷

To Do List

Of course our upgrades are not 100% complete. We have a few more projects to finish this summer, so our fully 'overland ready' MORV won't be ready for a few months.

SOURCES:

<http://manleyorv.com>

<http://cascadiatents.com>

<http://rotopax.com>

<http://www.arkportablepower.com>

<http://rhinoliningsofcoloradosprings.com>



The Troopy That Picked Me

Story by Ben Meddows—OutbackProven.com

Written by Bry on Dorr—ExploringElements.com



This is the second time I saw her around 1, July 2010 at the Musgrave telegraph station outside the Lakefield National park in Queensland.

My 1981 FJ45 Troopy was a vacation love affair that has become so much more. I spotted this special vehicle on two separate trips “down under,” but it wasn’t until returning home and cross checking photographs that I realized it was actually the same vehicle I was lusting over on both trips. This special Troopy was destined to be mine!

In June of 2009 I found myself traveling “down under” to attend the first annual PradoPoint Get Together event, for an Australian Land Cruiser Prado forum, in the Red Center of Australia. Before the event a member of the forum, who had become a good mate through an FJ Bruisers event “up above,” invited me to join him on a trip from the Gold Coast across the Queensland outback to Birdsville, on the edge of the

Simpson Desert. The goal was to do the famous Simpson traverse, a legendary overland route across an incredibly remote landscape. The traverse starts in the town of Birdsville, and that is where I first laid eyes on a beautiful 1981 Land Cruiser FJ45RV parked in front of the iconic Birdsville Pub. This machine

was one of the finest examples of the breed I’d ever laid eyes upon. It was hard to break my gaze as my camera snapped away. I later took even more pictures of this fine machine at our campground before heading off into the desert for a trip of a lifetime. After crossing the Simpson Desert with several now life long friends, we took the Ghan railway track to Alice Springs to attend the PradoPoint Get Together event. The trip even included travel in the Macdonnell Ranges and down to Kings Canyon to Ularu before I had to head back “up above.”

Exactly one year later I found myself on the Cape York Peninsula filming an Australian television commercial with Brad McCarthy and the team from MAXTRAX. The group met in Carnes and set out north through the Daintree National Forest and up the Old Telegraph Track to “The Tip,” the farthest point north of Australia, in Queensland. On the trip, I expressed my interest

in finding a Troopy in OZ and bringing it back to the US. Brad said it was as



This is the first time I saw her in Birdsville, Queensland parked in front of the Birdsville Pub around 28, June, 2009.

simple as inquiring with the owner of one of these fine machines if they would be willing to sell after they returned from their offroad adventure to The Tip. While there were plenty of Troopies spotted on this trip, none really called out to me enough to inquire further about.

On the return trip from The Tip we took the Lakefield National Park route. We refueled at the Musgrave Telegraph Station, a last chance refuel, when I spotted a particularly lust-worthy Troopy parked at the pump. I approached and chatted with the owner Clive, a pensioner who had retired and bought the vehicle to explore OZ, with two specific expeditions in mind, the Simpson Desert and Cape York Peninsula. After a good chat about the vehicle I gave the “Gray Nomad” my business card and asked nicely to be his first call if he ever decided to sell his beautiful machine.

Upon my return to the US I was sorting through old photos of the previous year’s trip to the Simpson Desert and noticed the solar shower and very rare mud flaps on the rear wheel arches of the Troopy I had lusted over in Birdsville. They looked very familiar. I pulled up the pics from the Cape York trip and quickly realized that the Queensland plates matched and that I had spotted the same Troopy on both trips. I immediately e-mailed Brad at MAXTRAX to see if the owner Clive had ever contacted him. With Brad’s “no” response my heart was broken once again.

About a month later I received an e-mail from Brad titled “Your New Troopy.” The attached photos showed the Troopy I’d spotted on my two trips to OZ with its vintage 80’s ARB bull bar, solar water heater in the roof rack and rare rear mud flaps. Dreams do come true! We immediately started the discussion of how to get the vehicle “up above,” which is not an easy task. While the plans to ship her were sorted out, a Kaymar rear bar and Lightforce lights were added. I also had Brad remove the bed system from the back and put back the iconic inward facing Troopy rear seats.

With record rainfall and flooding in Brisbane, the scheduled ships were unable to dock for over two months. With hopes of getting her to Overland Expo 2012, she was driven all night to Sydney on Brad’s birthday to catch a ship for Long Beach. With my breath



Mojave.



At the Overland Expo.

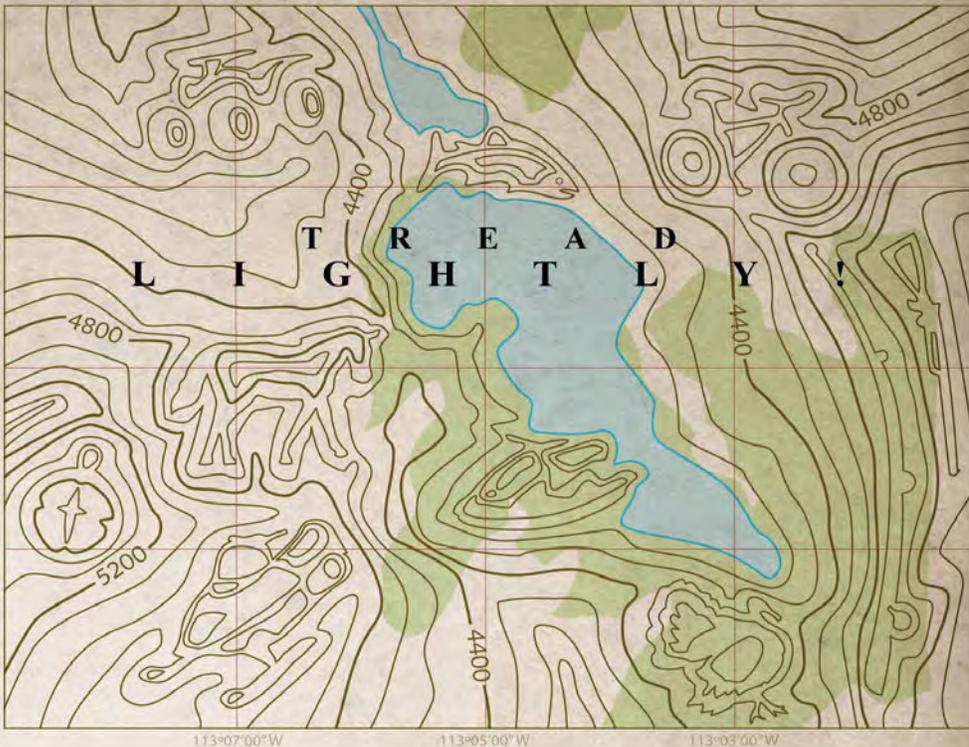


On the Beach—Noosa Qld.

held, I tracked the ship as it crossed the Pacific. The Troopy hit the docks stateside on Wednesday and managed to clear customs late Thursday. Brad flew in early, waited for the paperwork to clear and drove overnight to make Overland Expo, which started Friday morning. As you can imagine, I was beyond excited as Brad drove this right hand drive manual beauty into Expo and handed me the keys, a moment I won't soon forget!

I drove my new Troopy from Overland Expo in Arizona back to my home in Maryland, with a quick stop at Sierra Expeditions for a once over to make sure she was mechanically sound to make the journey. With a satisfactory bill of health, the cross-country drive went smoothly.

Once I got her home I changed the coolant hoses, coolant, vacuum lines, plugs, fuel pump, points, cap and rotor and added Old Man Emu springs and shocks. I wanted to keep everything original, but did need to cut down the Tradesman roof rack in order to add an ARB roof top tent. The Troopy has only needed minor repairs since. The 2F engine did need a new water pump, thermostat and radiator to keep her cooler and a new HEI distributor from Man-A-Fre to handle higher altitudes found on trips to Colorado and Utah. The aging door seals and hood rub guards were replaced to keep her rattle free, but other than that she's still the same truck.



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Since Musgrave, as I affectionately call my Troopy (named after the place I saw it that second time), has been "up above," she has traveled to every Overland Expo, several Overland Rallies, Cruise Moab and is a regular on the trails of Goodsprings and around the Las Vegas area. I moved to Las Vegas a few years ago to open Outback Proven and Musgrave has been a showpiece and shop truck of the company ever since. She gets just as many lustful looks cruising the Las Vegas strip as she does on the trails in Moab.

To show my appreciation to Clive for letting go of this beautiful Troopy I sent him the original shift knob and a thank you letter. I have plans to fully restore this amazing machine to all its original glory and have been collecting new old stock parts in order to do the restoration correctly. I'm so thankful that I can share my passion for Australian off-road culture with my wife and daughter, as well as my many clients at Outback Proven. Musgrave will stay in the family and remain a centerpiece for the company for many years to come. My love for this magnificent machine grows daily.

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Piranha Dual Battery System Installation

By Bob Holliday

We recently got our hands on a Piranha Dual Battery System for the Toyota Tacoma courtesy of Outback Proven. Outback Proven offers a wide range of Piranha dual battery kits designed to fit various Toyota Trucks and Cruisers. The kit comes with an electroplated battery tray, 140 amp isolator (Piranha DBE140S), battery monitor (Piranha DBM4), cable kit, six blade fuse box and mount, and steering pump hoses that are used in rerouting the plumbing. Battery sold separately.

Although the installation is not technically demanding, the process is time consuming and I would give yourself 4–6 hours for the installation. Tools used: Power steering fluid, socket set, pliers, drill and drill bits, self-tapping screws, angle grinder with cutoff wheel, hole punch, soldering tools, zip ties, wire crimps, and various wire connectors (for accessory wiring).

Outback Proven has put together a great kit to convert your Toyota Tacoma into a dual battery setup. Providing all parts needed in the installation, they really made this install easy, time consuming, but easy.

Engine bay before the operation did not have much open space to begin with, but the design of the Piranha kit utilizes common areas that are available in the Tacoma engine bay.

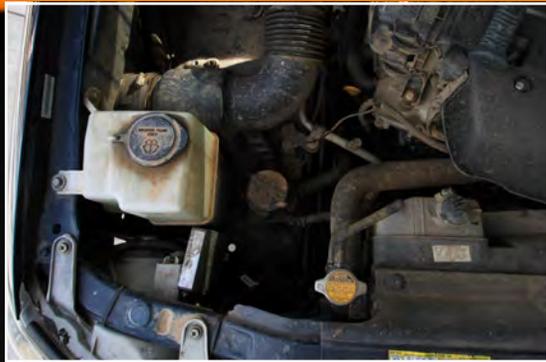


Before getting too deep into the project, we found a suitable home for the Piranha auxiliary fuse box mount.

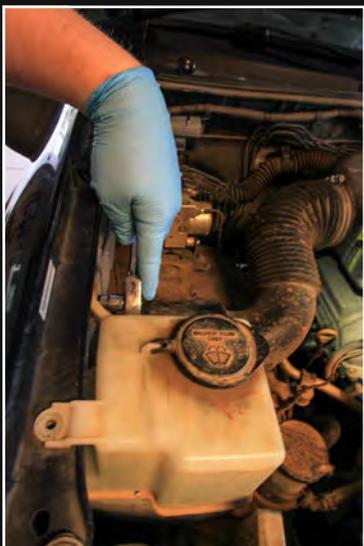


The secondary battery will have a new home where your current power steering fluid reservoir sits. This will be your working area for a while.

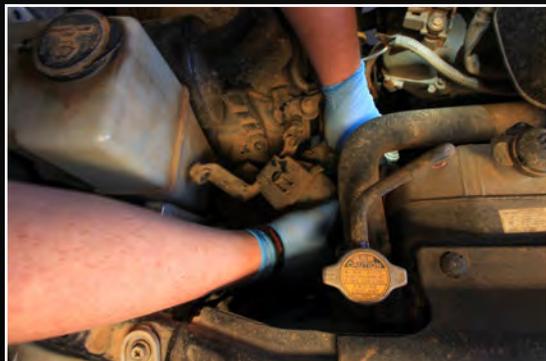




To gain access to the area, you will need to unbolt your windshield washer fluid reservoir. There is no need to remove the reservoir to complete this installation.



The next steps will be a bit messy. Make sure you have something ready to catch power steering fluid that will come out as you remove the power steering reservoir and lines.



Here is the reservoir attached to the factory mount. You will need to modify the mount in

order to work with the Outback Proven kit. More on this later.



Using the provided power steering hoses, exchange the factory hoses with the provided hoses. Longer hoses are needed to reach the reservoir's new location.



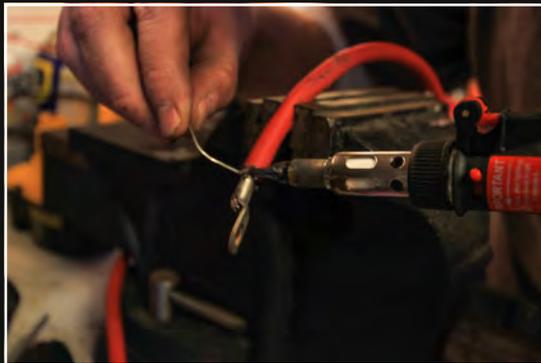
Now back to the factory reservoir mount. Using your favorite cutting device (we used a grinder and cutoff wheel), remove the flat mounting surface the reservoir used to mount to (circled in red). This will be modified to work with the Piranha battery cage provided in the kit.



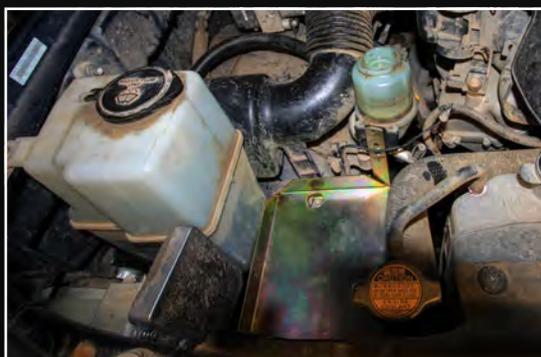
With the mounting plate removed, two holes are required to be drilled to mount onto the new battery mount.



Outback Proven provides a good amount of battery wire that will be used in connecting the main battery to the isolator and over to the secondary battery. The wire will need to be cut to length and terminal ends will need to be connected. The kit includes terminal ends that can be used for this. We suggest soldering the ends to ensure solid connection for years to come.



With the reservoir mount modified, it can be attached to the battery mount. The battery mount takes some tricky maneuvering to set in right, but with some patience and maybe some bloody knuckles, you'll have a solid mount where your secondary battery will sit.



With the battery installed, reinstallation of the removed parts can continue. We left the washer fluid reservoir loose until this step to allow us room to feed our ground wire and power steering hoses behind. The power steering fluid can also be refilled at this point. An extra set of hands is helpful at this time to

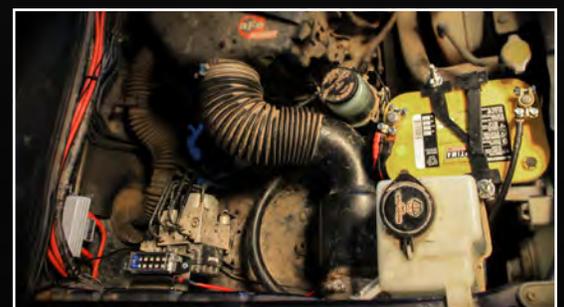
properly fill the fluid. Add fluid, then rotate your steering wheel back and forth, lock to lock, allowing the air in the lines to work its way out. Do not let the fluid get low as you are doing this. When the level remains constant, fill to the lines indicated on the reservoir and secure the cap. This is also a good time to make sure your power steering fluid hoses are routed in a manner than is acceptable for your future engine bay mods.



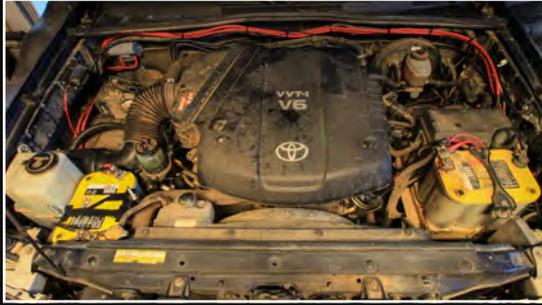
At this point, the hard part is over. Now it's time to mount the DBE140S management system to your firewall and start running your power cables from each battery to the DBE140S. There will be a ground wire that you will need to find a solid grounding location for upon installation.



Here you can see our final setup of the new hardware. The management system on the firewall, auxiliary fuse block on the side (bottom left), new power steering hoses re-routed to the new reservoir location, and the secondary battery between the washer fluid reservoir and radiator.



The second positive cable running along the firewall in this picture is for my existing auxiliary fuse block. The main battery has connected: starter, main fuse block and winch. The secondary battery has two auxiliary fuse blocks connected to run a variety of items (currently includes HID headlights, light bar, ditch lights, rock lights, bed lights, fog lights, and a power outlet in the bed for a fridge and other items).



Final step will be to install the Piranha DBM4 battery monitor/protector. I chose to mount mine using Velcro next to my parking brake. This location is out of the way, yet still visible.



This Piranha dual battery system can be found at [Outback Proven](#), and don't forget to follow them on Facebook for their latest updates.

For more information on Piranha Off Road and the wide variety of off-road products they offer, visit their [website](#). 



FORUM | REVIEWS | LOGISTICS



Long-Term Review:

4Runner CBI Rear Bumper

Photos and story by Phillip Jones

On July 2, 2012, I installed my new rear bumper by CBI Offroad Fab with swing-out tire carrier onto my 2007 4Runner. For the next two years, the bumper has been through numerous off-road adventures, ranging from overlanding to rock crawling. Not only is the bumper highly functional, but—based on the multitude of compliments I have received—it also adds aesthetic value to the truck's stance. Despite being functional and pretty, there's still the outstanding question of functional durability.

Let's define function: clearance, construction integrity, protection, able to perform extractions (both ways), able to carry gear (fuel can, spare tire and rim, D-shackles, CB antenna, Hi-Lift Jack, license plate with illuminator); and to do so securely in typical off-roading scenarios.



The 4Runner bumper by CBI Offroad Fab is designed to carry fuel, spare tire, and Hi-Lift Jack.

Clearance remains a constant primarily because of how the bumper attaches to the frame and rear cross-member. The eight upward bolts and the four cross-member bolts have remained tightly in place since install. The angles and lines have not changed, thus the integrity of the overall construction remains intact, including the swing-out arm, which is hinged to the bumper via a solid post. Nathan Wright of CBI explains the mechanics as such: "The spindle is 1 1/2" and the brass bushings fit inside a milled out hub. The bushings are oil-impregnated brass bushings." The result is a swing-out that moves in a fluid fashion and shows no sign of wearing out.

CBI offers a jerry can carrier attachment that installs to pre-drilled holes on the swing-out arm. The lower part of the arm allows for the attachment of a Hi-Lift jack, license plate, and a light for illuminating the plate (light is included with the swing-out). The bulb eventually broke due to off-roading and could not be removed from the socket. I replaced the entire assembly with an LED, which should be able to better withstand bumpy travels.

Placement of the D-shackles is ideal. I've been extracted twice via the rear bumper, and have extracted a number of trucks, including a 3/4

After several years of hardcore use, the bumper fit proves to be solid.



ton Dodge diesel quad-cab with engine failure out of a rocky riverbed. The solid design has maintained rigidity. This is affirmed by the number of times the rear end has dropped to land on a ledge when crawling. The thud of the bumper landing on a hard surface is never a joyful moment, but knowing that my truck is able to continue intact is.

My biggest concern was the ability for the spare tire holder to withstand the up-and-downs of off-roading while holding a heavy 33" mud-terrain tire and rim. This component allows for flexure and thus reduces the opportunity for breakage, and has retained its original shape.



The swing-out arm is held on by a durable spindle. The latch dangles while attached to a stronger cable than what was originally supplied.

So is everything perfect? Almost. I experienced issues with two things. First, the spring-loaded pin, which is designed to prevent the arm from swinging into another lane should you forget to screw in the swing-out latch, failed recently. As the arm swings open, a small ramp attached to the hinge pushes the pin upward until the pin meets a hole and locks in place. The ramp bent the pin, preventing vertical movement. I was able to unthread the pin and remove it for continued use of the arm. I contacted CBI with a photo of the bent pin and they shipped me a replacement. Second, the small cable they sent with the bumper is designed to

The author's 4Runner gets extracted by Marlin.



prevent the screw latch from falling to the ground and possibly disappearing should it become unscrewed while driving. The cable snapped during an off-road outing. An easy fix was made by replacing it with thicker cable.

While minor, these two infractions do affect the safety of the bumper. Therefore, I grant the bumper a grade of an A- for this long-term review. I feel

confident that this bumper will continue to perform as expected for many years. 🍷

Introducing THE SNIPER

By Mike Francis, RSO Performance.com



It has long been a dream of mine to have a 4 door fj40. But until recently it was just that. My original plan was to cut a 40 into quarters and place it on an 80 series chassis and then just fill in the voids. At SEMA 2013 I learned Todd at Aqualu was thinking the same thing, so after a couple phone calls and e-mails we got rolling. My basic requirement was that I wanted the body to fit directly onto an 80 series chassis. I wasn't concerned about the drivetrain or suspension too much as I was going to change all that anyway. The plan was a fuel injected v-8, custom 4 link rear and 3 link front and 40-42 inch tires.



While Aqualu was busy with the body, we got started on our chassis. Everything was removed from the frame and it was sent off for media blasting. When it returned it was given a quick coat of epoxy for protection and we waited for the body. We decided to take delivery of the body in Moab during Easter Jeep Safari, since Aqualu was already planning a trip south. Once back at the shop the body was perfectly fitted to the frame.

It was at this point that our target wheelbase of 120 inches just wasn't enough. This thing is a monster and needed to be moved a little more. We pushed the front out for better approach and moved the rear back for a better departure angle, resulting in a 135-inch wheelbase. I then contacted Josh miles of 5 ace designs to work on some concept ideas.

After a few layouts I wasn't happy with any of my color choices. So what about polishing the body? Maybe a full wrap? It was decided that a combination would look awesome. So we contacted Zephyr for polishing and they hooked us up with Mario at extreme polishing, who made the body look like a mirror. We then selected Gatorwraps for the partial wrap and the design of the wrap. Now with the body under control we focused on the drive train.

We had Brian and County Machine build the motor, which is a 383ci full roller with aluminum heads. It runs an MSD ignition, fuel injection, and stainless ceramic headers from Gibson. Our compression ratio required a heavy starter and so a Powermaster 9500 was installed. The 9500 is capable of 18:1 compression and can be clocked to clear all headers

and oil pans. Cooling The Sniper is left up to flex-a-lite and a 27x19-inch aluminum radiator and fan combo. The transmission is a 4I80 from Maximum transmission and we are using a split case transfer from an FJ-60. Since this will be a street ride as well as trail truck, we decided against full hydraulic steering and opted for AGR performance's rock ram and pump. A tilt column from Ididit is attached to the AGR box, again because of its dual purpose we wanted the tilt.

For suspension we wanted to stay Toyota. We want to use as much of the donor car as we can. However the high pinion 8-inch front wouldn't be happy with our large tire size. So we decide to have Ruffstuff build us a housing for the 9 1/2-inch diff as well as all our hiems and brackets. Nitro gear chromoly axles and birfields and 80-series high steer knuckles from Hellfire fab complete the drivetrain, so we moved to shocks. Bilstein Black Hawk 9100-series coil overs and springs from Hyper Coil will keep everything in control. While tires haven't been chosen as of yet, we have gone with Method race wheels new 20-inch 105 full bead lock as our wheel of choice.

For electronics in this Land Cruiser, we're going to keep it simple. Lights from VisionX, gauges to be determined, sound system of course and for recovery a 12.5 talon from Superwinch. With the electronics ready, we need to work out our power system. 4x4spod was the answer and they sent out a double stack set up of their source units complete with switches and panels.



Accessories for The Sniper are equally as simple. A Powertank for airing up tires, a box of billet grab handles, and a quick release extinguisher from Off Road Solutions. Rally venture seats and belts from PRP including a 60-inch rear bench finish off the interior.

The Sniper will be on display at the Off Road Expo in Pomona in October, and of course SEMA 2014 November. We'll also make the rounds at the major events on the west coast. Full build updates are available online at RSOperformance.com and see our videos on our YouTube channel. 🇺🇸

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COOPER TIRE

Discoverer STT

By Bob Holliday

From air up to air down, your tire purchase can be a major component of any truck build. We recently teamed up with Cooper Tire and FN Wheels to put the Cooper Discoverer STT to the test and see how it handled all of our overlanding needs. After nearly 10,000 miles over a variety of terrain, the Discoverer STT has handled every test given to it with ease.



Since the first day the Cooper STTs were mounted on the FN Wheels Five Stars, I knew this was going to be a good relationship. The STT has an aggressive look that really stands out with the matte bronze finish on the unique Five Star wheels. The first matter at hand was to ensure proper fitment within my wheel wells for the larger 315/75R16 tires. Measuring only 11.9" wide, they were a great option as I had previously cleared for 305/70R17 tires which measured 12" wide.

Exploring the Colorado and Utah backcountry are my preferred ways to spend my weekend, however, my truck is still my daily driver during the week. For such an aggressive tread design, I was blown away by how relatively quiet they were along the roads. Yes they still had a hum to them, but compared to other mud terrains out there, they were more along the lines of an aggressive all-terrain as far as on road manners are concerned.



Our first real test was a five day overland trip down to Coyote Buttes and Vermillion Cliffs in Arizona. If you have ever travelled in the Vermillion Cliffs Wilderness, you know how sandy these roads can get back there. It was rare that we needed 4wd with the STTs pushing our way through. Numerous times I would push my luck by slowing down and seeing how well I could work through deep sandy areas in 2wd. I would lock up the rear and the STTs would just keep digging their way through the sand pushing me through. The only time I really needed 4wd was to get out of our camping spot at the White Pockets. The exit is a steep hill climb with deep sand that serves as a "gatekeeper" to this camping location. I was hoping for more of a challenge getting up the hill after hearing previous trip reports, but I was able to get up fairly easily. For those reading this on their iPad app, see below for a video.

After having fun in the sandy roads of the Vermillion Cliffs region, we turned our truck north into the Grand Staircase on our way north to the San Rafael Swell. Cottonwood Canyon Road cuts through the Staircase and is a fairly maintained dirt road cutting north which allowed us to keep a good pace when we weren't stopping to take photos in the amazing scenery. Upon entering the San Rafael Swell, we were greeted by some

heavy rain. The rain passed, but it left some sloppy, muddy roads for the remaining portion of our trip. The STTs had no issues finding traction on the slick roads cutting through the canyons and valleys.



A couple weeks later, we found ourselves on another five day overland trip, but this time to the Moab region. We made up a modified Kokopelli journey into Moab as we ventured into the Lost Spring Canyon, Winter Camp Ridge and through Dome Plateau on our way to Dewey Bridge where we picked up Kokopelli proper. This portion of the trip was filled with more sandy roads cutting through the backside of Arches National Park. It wasn't until we took the Top of the World trail that we encountered our first rock crawling tests for the STTs. Many times I approached ledges expecting to have to work a little to get up them, but the STT's scalloped shoulder lugs had no issues grabbing a hold of the rock and pulling the truck up (see the video below). The tire's ability to grab onto the rocks also helps greatly coming down large ledges, allowing controlled drops.



The Discoverer STT's "Armor-Tek3" carcass construction features two radial polyester body plies and one angled polyester body ply to provide three full plies of protection. Along with a raised rim protector, the STT offers some trail security when encountering hazards that would normally damage other tires. This was helpful when descending Rose Garden Hill. With many ledges to drop down and odd shaped rocks trying to cut into your sidewall, the STTs showed no signs of damage through this section and formed nicely around the rocks allowing a very controlled descent.



After conquering the many ledges found along Top of the World, Kokopelli and Rose Garden Hill, the smoother slick rock of Seven Mile Rim was a welcome sight and offered a different set of challenges. Here, the gripping power of the STTs was able to shine. Sure there are other mud terrain tires with more grip, but with the stickier





compounds, you sacrifice tread life. The STTs showed plenty of grip on the slick rock helping make quick work of even the hardest lines found along Seven Mile Rim.

So far my experiences over the past two months with the Cooper Discoverer STTs have been very enjoyable and I am very pleased with the results. We'll see how the long-term results are with the STTs, but as of right now, I would not hesitate to put another set on my truck.

Summary of my Observations

Icy/snow pack—They had better grip than other mud terrains I've tried. They won't perform as good as some mud/snow tires, but under most conditions, grip was never an issue. When aired down, these have amazing grip through deep snow. The deep shoulder lugs really grab the snow well.

Rain—I had no complaints or traction issues even in heavy rain.

Rocks—Aired down, they would wrap around the rocks extremely well. The Armor-Tek3 carcass really held up great against the rocks and trees we encountered.

Mud—These love to paddle their way through mud and clean out well.

Sand—We saw a lot of sand in Southern Utah and Northern Arizona and we had no problems during our travels. Plenty of response when needed to get through the deep sand. However, with that much grip, don't get too throttle happy in the deep stuff.



Cooper Discoverer STT

Size Tested: LT315/75R16

Testing PSI: Road @ 34–35psi, Off-road @ 15–18psi

Load Range: E

Approved Rim Width: 8"-11"

Load Capacity/Tire: 3860 lbs.

Overall Diameter: 34.49"

Section Width: 11.9"

Tread Depth: 20/32nd

Weight/Tire: 65 lbs.

Price as tested: \$290/ea

Wheel Spec

Manufacturer: FN Wheels

Model: Five Star

Dimensions: 16"x8"

Bolt Pattern: 6x139.7mm

Offset: -25mm

Backspacing: 3.52"

Weight: 18.9 lbs.

Load Rating: 2,100+ lbs. (955kg)

Price as tested: \$775/set of four

Tread Life—I am happy to report that after 9–10,000 miles through the mountains of Colorado and exploring the backcountry of Utah and Arizona, the STTs are only down to approximately 17/32nd tread depth (20/32nd depth new).

For more information on Cooper Tire and their extensive line up of tires, visit their [website](#), and follow them on Facebook.

For more information on the Five Star and other products offered by FN Wheels, please visit them at <https://www.fnwheels.com> and follow them on Facebook. 🇺🇸



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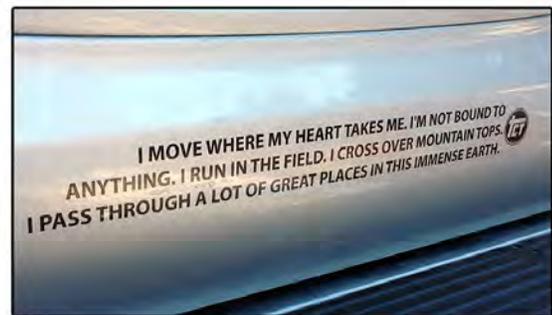
We look forward to seeing everyone next week in Ouray, Colorado for the 2014 FJ Summit.

Be sure to stop by our booth for discounted printed copies of TCT Magazine, stickers, maps, and FunTreks books.

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