

# For those who want power, Dodge Ram is a serious contender

sacrifice front and back. We did however, make a few longish trips with two teenage girls in the back who were quite happy with the big rear seat and available space. Access for passengers or for just throwing groceries in the back seat is optimized by the two rear-hinged rear doors. The rear bench folds up and locks for maximum interior cargo space.

I don't usually get excited over minor conveniences like cupholders but after fidgeting and wiggling my Tim Horton's takeout into the unlikely contraptions of other vehicles, it's nice to drop your cup into a huge tray that, BAM, plops down with acres of space all around it. An equally big flop-down laptop-sized business console offers table-top notebook convenience and inside storage.

Standard interior appointments on base Rams are minimal, these are trucks after all, but my tester included a wealth of optional additions. An optional package added air conditioning, power and light convenience groups, keyless entry and alarm, overhead console with trip computer, and a CD player, to name just a few. Other features, new for '99, are limited to minor changes like a new headlight switch, an optional storage bin under the rear seat and the "power window express down", a stupid option I can easily live without. One nice new convenience item is the addition of audio controls to the steering wheel, a la Grand Cherokee. With cruise controls on the front of the steering wheel and audio buttons on the back of the spokes, this is

a feature easy to get used to especially if, like me, you like to keep your hands on the wheel and prefer to switch stations rather than suffer through repetitive radio commercials. This is a \$20 option bargain if the price sheet is to be believed, the best deal on a long list of additions that boost the \$30,780 starting price to a lofty \$40,120 as tested.

That still sounds pretty pricey for a pickup truck to a lot of people, so be very sure of your needs before you sign the dotted line. Likewise, when it comes to engine selection. Commuters and those who just love pickups will do quite nicely with the entry level 3.9 L V6. If you really need the stump-pulling power of the bigger V8s or even the V10, be prepared to pay the gas pump penalty.

Based on my 1000 km, 200 liter's and \$110 gas bill, I'd guess trucker wannabes might find the 5.9 L V8 loses a little of its allure.

But for those who need that muscle, the Dodge Ram is serious contender in the heavyweight category. With a GCWR rating of up to 9070 kg (20,000 lb.), a properly equipped Ram pickup can haul trailers weighing up to 6440 kg (14,200 lb.). Every Ram cargo box has stake pockets, tie-down brackets and slots for two-tier loading and cargo dividers.

The 1999 Dodge Ram Quad Cab, just one model in a lineup that features a versatile selection of bold and capable full-size pickups, heavy-duty workhorses wrapped with all the modern comforts and conveniences.

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