

V8 Luxury Statement

Ram's Half-Ton Blends Old-School Power With Western Flair

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

In a full-size truck market that keeps moving toward turbocharged engines, giant screens and ever more polished road manners, the 2026 Ram 1500 makes a persuasive case for keeping at least one foot planted in tradition.

The old-school part is easy to identify. It fires up with a HEMI V8 rumble that feels coarse, aggressive and a little mischievous, more muscle car than luxury pickup.

That sound changes the tone of the whole truck.

Ram brought back the 5.7-liter HEMI V8 for 2026 after dropping V8 power from the Ram 1500 lineup for 2025. In this application, it produces 395 horsepower and 410 pound-feet of torque, and in Longhorn trim it gives this truck the sort of personality many modern luxury pickups have started to lose.

More important than the numbers, though, is the character. The engine feels relaxed, familiar and full of attitude in a way many turbocharged trucks simply do not.

That matters because this version of the Ram leans heavily on mood.

I still think Ram does the Western-themed luxury truck better than anyone else. Ford's F-150 King Ranch may have helped



The 2026 Ram 1500 combines bold proportions, upscale detailing and a confident stance that helps it stand out in the crowded full-size truck market.

define this niche, but Ram's interpretation feels more complete and more convincing.

The stitching, the colors and the materials all look thoughtfully chosen rather than simply applied for effect. Even the belt buckle-like latches on the backs of the front seats add a little wit.

It is a specific look, no question. Buyers who do not care for the cowboy and rodeo theme may find it a touch too much. But for the audience that does respond to it, Ram delivers real

craftsmanship instead of gimmickry. It feels premium, not theatrical.

That premium impression carries onto the road, mostly.

The Ram 1500 remains one of the better-riding trucks in this class, and this one spent most of my week feeling smooth, settled and easygoing. It has the kind of highway composure that makes a full-size pickup feel expensive.

Still, I would not order mine with the 22-inch wheels.

They look terrific, and on

a truck like this appearance is obviously part of the pitch. But the short sidewalls chip away at the ride quality just enough to notice. Sharp edges come through more clearly than they should in a truck whose mission is comfort and style. They are also easy to scrape, especially when you are maneuvering something this large with blind spots that never really disappear.

That tension between image and usability runs through parts of the truck. Ram has built something handsome and distinctive,

but it is also a big, high-beltline pickup that asks for care in parking lots and tight spaces. That is not unique to Ram, of course, but it is worth remembering if you are drawn in by the luxury-truck fantasy.

The HEMI helps smooth over a lot of that.

It does not just sound good on startup. It feels right in daily driving, with a broad, easy surge of power and the kind of natural response that suits a truck.

At \$86,205 as tested, this is not a subtle or budget-minded truck, but buyers in this part of the market are often paying as much for character as capability.

My bigger complaint came from the tech.

Some parts of the interface responded slowly during the week. I would tap a control and wait a beat longer than expected for something to happen. That is a small gripe, but in a modern truck where screens and software now shape so much of the ownership experience, it matters. It also felt a little odd because other recent Stellantis interfaces have generally seemed quicker and more polished, so this may have been a one-off issue rather than a deeper flaw.

Overall, the Ram still feels special in a crowded field, and that is not something every truck can claim.

AT A GLANCE

WHAT WAS TESTED?

2026 Ram 1500 Longhorn Crew Cab 4x4 (\$75,405). Options: Premium paint (\$295), customer preferred package 27K (\$495), towing technology group (\$595), trailer tow group (\$1,095), bed utility group (\$545), chrome power-fold mirrors (\$795), dual pane panoramic sunroof (\$1,595), multi-function tailgate (\$1,095), 22-inch wheels (\$2,095). Price as tested (including \$2,195 destination charge): \$86,205

BY THE NUMBERS

Wheelbase: 144.6 in.
Length: 232.4 in.
Width: 81.2 in.
Height: 77.6 in.
Engine: 5.7-liter HEMI V-8 eTorque (395 hp, 410 lb.-ft.)
Transmission: Eight-speed automatic
MPG: 16 city, 20 highway

RATINGS

Style: 9
Performance: 9
Price: 5
Handling: 8
Ride: 9
Comfort: 9
Quality: 8
Overall: 8

WHY BUY IT?

The Ram 1500 is for buyers who want a luxury truck with real personality, distinctive style and the satisfying sound and feel of a traditional V8.

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Inside, the Ram 1500 pairs rich materials, intricate trim work and a spacious layout that give this pickup an unmistakably premium feel.

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A CLOSER LOOK



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FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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