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3 messages

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Thank you for signing up to receive my newsletters. I hope you've found the previous editions informative and helpful for your vehicle- supported adventures. I trust you will enjoy this month's newsletter. If you have comments, please email me: Bob.Wohlers@discoveroffroading.com. You can access, download, and read previous newsletters on my website by clicking [HERE](#). Look through the Newsletter Reference for a topic that may interest you, or download them all!

A Day with the Cybertruck



Note to my Subscribers: After spending a day with the Tesla Cybertruck off-road, I don't pretend to know all it's attributes or trail-worthy features. However, I believe one day of driving over varying terrain in the Cybertruck is enough time to form some opinions and validate in my own mind what I've read or heard about this novel vehicle.

Yes, this vehicle is controversial. The Cybertruck is especially provocative from a design perspective. In fact, owning one means you will constantly be stopped and asked questions. Without a doubt, the Cybertruck is a unique "look at me" vehicle.

The Cybertruck is a love-it or hate-it vehicle. There's very little "gray" regarding the opinions on this vehicle. The entire debate over the Cybertruck reminds me of Arthur C. Clarke's "Three Phases of a Great Idea."

* Phase One: The idea is crazy; it will never work.

* Phase Two: The idea might work, but it's not worth doing.

* Phase Three: The idea is accepted as being self-evident. People will say, "I told you that it was a great idea all along."

I must be honest here; I really dislike the attitude embodied in Phase One. Most innovators would agree with me. Corporately, I've experienced leadership with this mindset. I think I'd like to work for Elon Musk, as I don't believe this personality trait resides in his DNA. In fact, the opposite—I believe he inspires people to "color outside the lines."

Whether the Cybertruck reaches phase three or not has yet to be seen. There is no doubt there will be future improvements to the Cybertruck, as there always are with new vehicles. The truck certainly represents the first two phases. Aside from the Cybertruck's unique design, I believe that many of the truck's EV (electric vehicle) innovations will be universally accepted as being self-evident (copied) in the near future. In my opinion, this is especially true when one considers the Cybertruck a true off-road machine.

Love it or hate it, the Cybertruck is here to stay, and it's selling—even at its rather large purchase price point (\$80K to \$120K USD). In July, USA Today stated that 11,558 Cybertrucks have been sold since the beginning of 2024. As far as EV trucks go, this puts the Cybertruck in second place behind the Ford F-150 Lightning, which has sold just over 15,000 units year-to-date. July year-to-date Cybertruck sales also beat the Rivian R1T (6,570), the GMC Hummer Truck (4,597), and the Chevy Silverado (3,257).



YouTube Content on the Cybertruck

You can literally spend more than a day watching YouTube content posted about this unique vehicle. I watched many YouTube channels prior to spending a day in the vehicle because I was interested in pre-learning:

- 1) Why was it designed and built as it is? (Especially answered by the current Cybertruck designers and engineers.)
- 2) How is it manufactured?
- 3) How do you change from one highway or trail-worthy feature to another?
- 4) What trail-worthy features are familiar, and what features are unique?
- 5) How do you drive the vehicle on the highway and over varying off-road terrain?
- 6) How does it handle off-road?
- 7) What's the vehicle's pros and cons as shared by real automotive experts?

To a large extent, I ignored YouTube content providers that: 1) were obviously posers or sponsored by competing vehicle manufacturers; 2) had an immature media delivery approach or a very annoying voice; 3) were just "haters" or "lovers" of the vehicle; and 3) obviously had no clue about general truck functionality or off-roading driving techniques (after all, it is an off-road 4WD truck). I could go on and on about my mostly negative YouTube feelings, but below are some links to a few videos I really liked regarding the Cybertruck. This is not a complete list of excellent YouTube videos on the Cybertruck, but if you're just interested in gaining a parenthetical understanding of the vehicle, this content will help.

Top Gear: "Can the Tesla Cybertruck Really Off-Road?"

The presenters in this typical Top Gear video are rather brash (“cheeky” may be a better word), but they put their Cybertruck through some of the same terrain I did, except we did not “launch” our vehicle off the ground. I was entertained and informed. I appreciate their review, and I share their mostly positive opinions of the off-road capability of the Cybertruck.

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Jay Leno’s Garage: “Cybertruck Easter Eggs, Features, and Design”

This is a very balanced and highly informative video, even though it was primarily a Cybertruck marketing piece featuring Tesla’s Head of Design, Franz von Holzhausen, and VP of Vehicle Engineering, Lars Moravy.

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Munro Live: “Tesla Cybertruck Deep Dive with 5 Tesla Executives

Another balanced and highly informative video, giving you some insight as to the extreme uniqueness of the Cybertruck build. Even if you aren’t an automotive engineer or vehicle software designer, you can appreciate the Cybertruck’s innovative thoughtfulness in this video. Be sure to watch this video. If you do, you’ll have a real appreciation for what Tesla did to make this vehicle rugged, trail-worthy, fun, and very innovative.

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Munro Live: Tesla Cybertruck 845-HP “Cyberbeast” Motors

An in-depth video on the Cybertruck’s electric motors, power train, and build. This is very interesting content if you want to learn intimate details about the vehicle.

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Why I Needed to Drive a Cybertruck

I knew the day would come when I received an email from a Cybertruck owner wanting to take one of my off-road safety courses. That day arrived about two months ago. This individual, I'll call him Chris, wanted private instruction. I love conducting one-on-one private instruction, but I had to tell him no. I shared with him my reason:

Chris, I can teach you some off-road basics, but the Cybertruck is so vastly different from the ICE 4WD's internal combustion engine that to help you successfully and safely drive your specific vehicle over differing terrain, I need to learn more about the Cybertruck. I need to personally drive it off-road using all the vehicle's trail-worthy features.

As a professional off-road trainer, I believe that I must:

1. Help students become "one" with the vehicle they intend to drive off-road.
2. Help them drive THAT vehicle successfully and safely over a variety of terrain.

I can only help a student become "one" with their 4X4 if I know their vehicle intimately. I need to personally experience and drive a Cybertruck off-road before I accept an owner in one of my off-road courses. As pilots say, "I needed some stick time" in the Cybertruck. The Cybertruck is so vastly different from other ICE and EV 4WD vehicles that I couldn't take Chris' money for a course.

While talking with Chris on the phone, I had a brain wave. I offered him what I thought was a win-win scenario. I said to Chris:

Let's get together where I teach at Prairie City State Vehicular Recreation Area and spend a day together, driving the Cybertruck on the rocks, up hills, down hills, in the sand, and over many miles of uneven and fairly challenging terrain. At no charge to you, I'll help you learn some off-roading basics while I, on the other hand, can drive the same terrain in your Cybertruck, learn about the vehicle, and take lots of photos and videos.

Chris agreed to this offer, so we met this past Saturday to put his Cybertruck through the paces. After spending a day with the Cybertruck on varying terrain, using all its trail-worthy features, I believe I can now help others with this vehicle should they attend my courses. I was also able to form my own opinions about the Cybertruck rather than listen to some of the buffoons on YouTube.



Picking the Right Tool for the Job

If you've been reading my newsletters for some time, you know that it is my opinion that there are five activities that street-legal 4WD vehicles are primarily

used for (of course there are crossover activities):

1. Vehicle-Supported Expeditions
2. Recreational and Lifestyle Overlanding
3. Recreational Rock Crawling
4. Scenic Backcountry Touring
5. Work-Related Off-Road

Like most 4WD vehicles, the Cybertruck will be best suited for one specific off-road activity. Any 4WD vehicle may be capable of handling several types of these activities, but more often than not, it will only be best suited for one. This fact is especially true once an owner begins to modify their stock vehicle to make it more capable for one activity or another.

After driving and examining the Cybertruck, I believe it would be best suited for recreational Scenic Backcountry Touring. Here's how I define Scenic Backcountry Touring:

This activity focuses on day-long excursions with repetitive returns each night to a home, cabin, developed campground, hotel, special event location, or motor home as a rest base or center of social activities. Vehicles participating in this activity rarely have camping accommodations or are kitted for overnight stays in the remote backcountry. Most scenic backcountry tourers enjoy remote environments yet appreciate the comfort of secure sleeping or camping accommodations.

Individuals participating in this 4WD activity typically use street-legal 4WD vehicles that may be modified to greater or lesser degrees, but most are bone-stock vehicles. Some individuals that participate in Scenic Backcountry Touring trailer or flat-tow their off-road vehicle to a destination using a motorhome or comfortable truck.

The Cybertruck might also have limited capability for Overlanding or Vehicle-Supported Expeditions, but at this date in history:

Range and lack of recharging stations are sizable concerns for these activities.

There are also some companies and individuals looking at the Cybertruck as an off-road vehicle for employees and farm-type work. Time will tell.

Further, the Cybertruck is a real "truck," so doing work by transporting or towing equipment is in its DNA. Since it is a truck, it has a fairly long wheelbase, giving it

a rather poor but truck typical breakover angle (26 degrees in “Extract” ride-height mode).

If I owned a Cybertruck, I could see putting it up on my flat-bed trailer and hooking it to my motorhome or PowerWagon. I would drive somewhere to camp and off-load the Cybertruck. Each day I’d put a lunch and my bug-out-bag in the vehicle, then drive it off into the hills to explore, returning at night for dinner, a campfire, and sleep. This is exactly what I do with my two-door Jeep TJ rock crawler, whose mileage range on a single tank of gas is about the same as the Cybertruck’s range on a full charge.

The reason I’m sharing my thoughts with you on this topic is that I’ve heard what I consider unfair criticisms about the Cybertruck not being able to do “this or that” type of off-road activity. If that’s your opinion, then don’t buy the Cybertruck or plan on owning several different 4WD vehicles. That way, you can pick the right “tool” (vehicle) for the route and adventure you are planning. It’s my opinion that if you are going to purchase a Cybertruck, plan on using it off-road as a Scenic Backcountry Touring vehicle.



Driving the Cybertruck Off-Road

The Cybertruck model Chris purchased is a Cyberbeast with the latest software upgrades. This model of Cybertruck has three electric motors: one for the front axle and two for the rear. The combined output from the trio is a mighty 845 hp and 864 ft/lbs of torque. The driveline of the 6,884-pound Cyberbeast can propel it to 60 mph in 2.5 seconds. This is faster than any truck on the market. Now I'm not a speed guy. I'm a "slow as possible, as fast as necessary" off-road adventurer. But that doesn't mean I don't think the Cybertruck's speed capability isn't fun.



Whether you are on the highway or off-road, the first thing you notice about driving a Cybertruck is the feel of the steering. The truck uses steer-by-wire technology, meaning there's no physical connection between the steering wheel and tires. The more I drove the Cybertruck, the more I enjoyed the feel of steer-by-wire. This type of steering is very responsive and adaptive based on the terrain and driving speed.

It is said that Elon Musk demanded that the Cybertruck have four-wheel steering. That means that when the driver turns the steering wheel, all four wheels respond. When turned on (yes, this feature can be turned off), this feature gives the Cybertruck a tighter than normal turning radius. Four-wheel steering can be very handy when you arrive at a tight switchback turn on a narrow shelf trail. After

driving vehicles like the new Bronco that have a “trail turn assist” feature, I like the Cybertruck’s solution to this trail-worthy feature better. I believe that the Cybertruck’s four-wheel steering is more environmentally friendly than those vehicles that apply the brakes to the inside rear wheel for a tight turn. Braking a Bronco’s wheels for a tight turn can degrade a trail easily if it’s navigated by a thoughtless driver. Also, the Cybertruck’s four-wheel steering can be used at any time, on high-traction pavement or loose off-road terrain. This is not true with vehicles like the Bronco. Trail turn assist may only be used on slippery or loose terrain.

In off-road mode, the Cybertruck’s air-suspension has three ride-height settings: High, Very High, and Extract. In the Overland Mode, you can select from one of four settings: All Purpose, Gravel/Deep Snow, Rock, and Sand. Wade Mode allows for a depth of 32 inches of water and preps the vehicle for river or creek crossings by defaulting ride height to Very High, switching HVAC to recirculate, and pressurizing the battery pack to keep water and debris out. Baja Mode optimizes the truck’s suspension and traction control for driving at high speed on dirt roads or in the desert.

I was very happy to see that the Cybertruck incorporated Trail Assist into its trail-worthy features. Trail Assist works like Toyota’s Crawl Control and Jeep’s Selec-Speed. Trail Assist mimics cruise control for low speed driving over challenging terrain, plus up and down hills. Trail Assist appropriately modulates the vehicle’s accelerator, gearing, and brakes to keep the truck rolling at the speed set by the driver. This allows the driver to keep both feet on the floorboard and totally focus on picking the right line on the trail. I drove the Cybertruck several times up a rocky hill to test my driving ability to hold momentum with the accelerator pressed, then with Trail Assist on. Without a doubt, Trail Assist navigated the Cybertruck up difficult hills better than I did when using the accelerator.



Conclusions

After only a day driving the Cybertruck, I'm a fan of the off-roading capability of the vehicle. The truck seamlessly tackles varying types of terrain. For me, the jury is still out regarding its exterior design and shape. However, I do think it is cool to look at, and I won't deny that the "look at me" spirit of the truck is fun. I give the truck's interior an A+. I love its very clean and uncluttered cab, including the huge touchscreen. I love the interior of Land Rover's new Defender, but I like the Cybertruck's cab even better. If I didn't already have a 4WD pickup truck and two different Jeep Rubicon's, I'd consider purchasing a Cybertruck after it's been on the market for more than a year.



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