

# Lyons on Wheels

by Dan Lyons • *Special to The Daily Gazette*

## 2022 Ford Maverick

**Base MSRP: \$19,995 (XL, FWD), \$22,360 (XLT, FWD), \$25,860 (XLT, FWD) As Tested: \$34,790**



Ford puts an old name on a new frame with the rollout of the 2022 Maverick. The Maverick moniker first appeared on a compact two/four door sedan series that Ford produced from 1970-77. The new Maverick is a compact pickup truck, with a four door cab up front, and a short box out back. It rolls on the same platform as the Ford Escape. Along with the recently launched Hyundai Santa Cruz, Maverick marks a mini revival in mini trucks.

Since the bed-on-the-back is it's most unique feature, we'll start there. The box measures 4½' long with the multi-position tailgate up, 6' lowered, and has a payload capacity of 1,500 lb. Ford offers a variety of options for customizing the storage space: a bed extender, bed mats, bed liners, side tool box and storage bins, with more to follow. Buyers are also encouraged to DIY the space, using the pre-cut slots to add things like bed dividers, a bike rack, or a second tier above the wheel wells to hold plywood sheets.

Inside, six footers fit easily up front. Like the other new compact in this segment - Santa Cruz - same size folks will only fit in back, with some compromises from the front row. Also as with the Hyundai, the bench seat in the second row lifts and pins easily to the back wall of the cab. This reveals a long, storage bin on the floor. About half of that compartment's space is occupied by the spare tire jack in Santa Cruz, while both sides are open in the Ford. Up front, Maverick's cabin boasts simple controls, in easy reach. The amount of hard plastic in the dash



*Photos courtesy of the manufacturer*



and door panels is consistent with the under \$20K starting sticker in base level Mavericks, though it's less convincing in top trim versions, nearing \$35,000. The 8" center touch screen is modestly sized, but easily read. Ford's SYNC3 infotainment system is available optionally on top trim Lariat's, as part of the \$4,400 Lariat Luxury package, which also includes an 8-speaker, 680 watt B&O sound system. Apple CarPlay and Android Auto compatibility is standard on all trim levels.

Maverick's standard, hybrid powertrain is an industry first, for trucks. A 2.5L Atkinson-cycle four cylinder gas engine is combined with a 94kW electric motor and linked to an electronically controlled Continuously Variable Transmission. It has a combined, system output of 191 horsepower, and is offered only with Front Wheel Drive. Maximum towing capability is rated at 2,000 lb. EPA fuel economy estimates are impressive: 42/33/37, with a predicted range of 500 miles on a tank of gas. Optional on all trim levels is a 2.0L EcoBoost gas engine (\$1,085), paired with an 8-speed automatic transmission. It's offered with FWD standard, or available, All Wheel Drive (\$2,220). Max towing is 4,000 lb. Fuel economy is estimated at 23/30/26 (FWD), 22/29/25 (AWD).

I drove the 2.0L EcoBoost turbo four for my test drive. If you want AWD, this is the only engine choice. It's a nice match for the platform. AWD helps level the playing field when dealing with winter roads, and it comes with a more advanced, multi-link rear suspension. Maverick's unibody platform feels tight and stable, and it's a surprisingly sporty driver.

If you can do without AWD, a front drive, hybrid Maverick offers frugal versatility at a good price. If you want AWD, and/or need to tow, the turbo, gas four is the way to go. Either way, Maverick is an unassuming looking little truck, that's undeniably fun and functional.

*A 40 year resident of the Capital District, Dan Lyons has been reviewing new cars for publications for over 30 years. He is the author of six automotive books, and photographer of more than 200 calendars.*