

2017 CUB CADET

Versatile New
Utility UTVs from Cub Cadet

CHALLENGER 550 & 750

Story and Photos:
Dennis "Ketchup" Cox

You might know the Cub Cadet name by virtue of their line of rugged and reliable lawn mowers and tractors. But did you know that this American company has expanded its reach into the utility UTV marketplace? Cub Cadet started out with a single vehicle in their lineup, named the "Volunteer". After several years of R&D and successful sales with the Volunteer, Cub Cadet introduced the "Challenger" lineup of vehicles. With this introduction, Cub Cadet has a healthy lineup of 10 UTV's total. For the 2017 model year, the Challenger 550 and 750 models are all-new, and we recently enjoyed the opportunity to drive these new utility-based UTV's.





Aggressive treads help in these types of muddy situations.

Cub Cadet recently invited us out to the launch of these two new utility vehicles at a ride event located about 60 miles north of Los Angeles, CA. Known as Hungry Valley SVRA park, this Southern California based ride spot includes some 130 miles of marked trails for off-road recreation and exploration.

More Vehicles, More Fun!

These latest Challenger 550 and 750 vehicles from Cub Cadet are designed to give consumers access to more power, more versatility, and even more options for cus-

tomization straight from the factory. In all, the Cub Cadet Challenger lineup features the following vehicles:

- ▶ Challenger 400 (Base and LX editions, 404cc OHV engine, 50" width)
- ▶ Challenger 500 (471cc engine, many standard accessories included, 64" width)
- ▶ **NEW** Challenger 550 (Regular and Camo editions, 546cc EFI liquid cooled engine)
- ▶ **NEW** Challenger 750 (735cc EFI, liquid cooled engine)
- ▶ Challenger 750 Crew

(735cc EFI, liquid cooled engine, seating for 4, 65" width)

Feature Rich

Both of these new Challenger models include an automotive-style cockpit with full doors that offer abundant protection from the elements, whether you are tackling muddy terrain or are in a tree-lined forest environment. Drivers will also enjoy the standard tilt steering wheel, open storage built into the dash, and an opening glove box to house extra gloves and small tools. Both Challenger



Well laid out controls are easy to reach in the cab. Extra switch spots give you the opportunity to add accessories.



Simple and powerful, the 2 Challenger engines are ready to get you on the trail.

EFI models also come with sculpted bucket seats, three-way adjustable suspension on all four corners, and a fully automatic CVT on-demand 2WD/4WD gearbox.

From the outside, you will notice that the cab design includes standard features, such as sleek headlights, a full roof, sealed Rollover Protection Structure (ROPS) cab frame, and a full windshield.

Customization & Accessories

With modular accessory attachment capabilities, the



Ergonomic seats, cupholders, and full doors give you plenty of protection and convenience when riding.



A standard dump bed can be actuated from both sides of the vehicle.

Below: A lockable glove box gives you storage for the front passenger.



Challenger 550 and 750 EFI vehicles allow for seemingly endless customization possibilities. A front accessory mounting panel above the windshield allows the Challenger 550 and 750 to be configured with a variety of items, including LED light kits or other aftermarket electronic accessories.

Both new Challenger models can be completely weather-sealed in minutes with the quick addition of Cub Cadet accessories, including the optional upper doors and a rear window. Nice touch.

The rear mounting rack and accessory rack tubes save cargo bed space while enabling many more accessory-mounting possibilities, including a gun boot, chainsaw boot, and a spare tire mount.

"Customization of utility vehicles is extremely important according to the customers we continually talk with," said Tom Mielke, UTV Product Marketing Manager at Cub Cadet. "We've designed the Challenger Series with exclusive features that give owners the power to customize their utility vehicle for the challenges they face

— at the farm, ranch, off-road or in the woods."

New Rear Cargo Bed & Attachments

The cargo bed on both the Challenger 550 and 750 models measures out to be 34" L x 46" W x 11" H. They have an innovative set of integrated attachment points, also known as "T" slots. These T-slots help secure purpose-built accessories offered in the Cub Cadet accessory line. The vertical slots in the bed accept standard 3/4-inch plywood for partitions. The bed boasts a 500-pound cargo capacity for hauling everything from firewood, to any results from a hunting or fishing expedition.

Motor City

The Challenger 550 comes with a 546cc Electronic Fuel Injected (EFI), liquid-cooled engine, which is rated at 27.5 horsepower. The Challenger 750 features a 35.8 horsepower 735cc EFI, liquid-cooled engine. Both machines feature a 7.6 gallon fuel tank for a good amount of fuel range.

These powerplants allow



We appreciated the full windshield, which came stock!



The Challenger has a go-anywhere mentality with many standard features, including a 3500lb winch.

both models to operate at speeds over 45 mph and are rated to tow up to 1,200 pounds via the 2" receiver. The standard front winch is rated at 3,500 pounds, and both Challengers come with capable off-road tires, that use selectable locking front and rear differentials.

Ride Review

We had a chance to try out both the Challenger 550 and 750 models out on the Hungry Valley SRV trails at their introduction. Both models are extremely comfortable and the enclosed seating, with the partial doors, is a welcome addition. The



We love the LED accent lighting in the front lights, which bolster the aggressive front end.

doors helped keep the dust and debris off the driver and passenger. We found that the contoured seats hold you in nicely and provide easy ingress and egress for those who are using this vehicle around the ranch all day.

Steering effort, even without EPS (Electronic Power Steering), is fairly easy for most 2WD/4WD situations. You get a good amount of feedback when traversing rougher terrain, but that is to be expected with no kind of dampening system. When the terrain turns rough and

you find yourself in a place where you need to engage the differential locks on the front and/or back wheels, the steering effort increases and it can be a bit tougher time. If you find yourself in these tougher terrains and enjoy less steering effort and feedback, then we suggest that you go ahead and get the EPS system as an option for an additional \$800 on either vehicle. The steering column does have a quick adjustment system, which allows you to get more comfortable. Unfortunately, the seats

do not adjust to dial in the comfort further, and we feel that this is one of the most important additions that we would like to see on future Challenger vehicles. This would also help us alleviate our issue of feeling like we were driving with a cramped throttle position.

We thoroughly enjoyed the standard roofs and windshields on both Challenger models, which offered us shade and extra protection from the elements on our muddy ride in Gorman.

The CVT transmissions



Double a-arm suspension is found front and rear, and the shocks are three-way adjustable.

were flawless on our ride day too. Whether we were in 2WD or 4WD, the transfer case was easy to engage and fully functional. With a wheelbase of 76.75 inches and a towing capacity of 1200 lbs. each (along with 500 lb. cargo bed capacity) these units are hardworking and versatile for a variety of uses. Also, the dump bed lifts on either side for quick unloads.

Ground clearance is ample at 12 inches, and the selectable locking front and rear differentials give the machines a good amount of traction for any traction situation. Both models are available in Cub Yellow, Blue, Red, Black and Camo (Camo



A rear tire carrier is a nice accessory for those who like to venture onto their local trails!



There are a ton of aftermarket accessories available for the Challenger, including a half windshield and additional lighting.

is an additional \$300) versions.

Overall Conclusions

We are glad to see a variety of companies getting into the UTV marketplace with

capable models. Cub Cadet can be proud of the variety and usefulness of the models they have introduced this year. The new EFI 550 and 750 Challengers are very capable units.



The Challenger is fun to drive and offers a good amount of power and performance in a compact package.

They are comfortable for long days around the ranch or on the trail, and we appreciate how these machines are easy to own and drive. They offer smooth operation, a peppy motor, and come with a roof and windshield standard. That makes operating them more fun. And who isn't in favor of more fun? Just saying...

More information can be found on the new Challenger Series (and other models) at: www.cubcadet.com **US**

Click Here for FULL SPECS!



Skid plates come stock front and rear, providing extra protection in muddy conditions like this.



A great standard accessory on these Challenger models is a 3500lb winch.

Dealers & Pricing

All Cub Cadet models are available through Cub Cadet's Independent Retailers, which included the new Cub Cadet Challenger 550 and 750 models. Price-wise, you are looking at anywhere from \$5999.99 for the entry level Challenger 400 all the way to \$21,999.99 for the Volunteer WT CAB.

Retail prices on the new Challenger EFI 550 are \$9999.99, with the new Challenger EFI 750 going for a suggested retail price of \$11299.99.

Standard accessories on both the Challenger 550 and 750:

- ◆ Windshield (full)
- ◆ Winch (3500 capacity, with dash switch)
- ◆ LED Turn signal indicators
- ◆ Accessory Mounting System
- ◆ High Power Stator (600W peak)
- ◆ 2" Hitch Receivers (BOTH front and rear)
- ◆ Roof
- ◆ Horn
- ◆ Headrests
- ◆ Digital Display
- ◆ Alloy Wheels
- ◆ LED Tail Lights
- ◆ Side-view Mirrors

Future Accessories Planned – A growing list of accessories will be available at Cub Cadet dealers to customize these vehicles, including:

- ◆ Upper Doors (Pair)
- ◆ Vented or Folding Polycarbonate Windshields
- ◆ Rear Window
- ◆ Spare Tire Mount
- ◆ Dual 10-Inch LED Light Bar Kit
- ◆ Four Cube LED Light Kit
- ◆ Rock Sliders
- ◆ Rear Bumper
- ◆ Front and Rear Turf Tires
- ◆ 72-Inch Snow Blade