

Toyota Unveils Throwback 4Runner TRD Surf Concept at the 2024 SEMA Show

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LAS VEGAS (Oct. 31, 2024) – Toyota proudly introduced the 4Runner TRD Surf Concept, a striking concept vehicle inspired by Southern California’s vibrant surf culture, at the 2024 SEMA Show. Built at the Toyota Motorsports Garage, the 4Runner TRD Surf Concept combines the rugged, open-air spirit of the first-generation 4Runner with the cutting-edge technology and design of the all-new 2025 4Runner, creating a unique tribute to the adventurous lifestyle that shaped a generation.

The 4Runner TRD Surf Concept draws inspiration from an iconic time in history when the Toyota 4Runner became a staple at 80s So-Cal beaches, as surfers sought the perfect wave. Marty Schwerter, lead builder and Director of Operations at Toyota’s Motorsports Technical Center, said his vision was shaped by his own experiences cruising the Pacific Coast Highway in a Toyota mini pickup. He saw the spirit of the first generation in the 2025 4Runner and envisioned a concept that captures the essence of those sun-soaked days.

“The 2025 4Runner reminded me of the original, with its rugged look and powerhouse 4cyl engine. I knew it had the potential to be the ultimate beach cruiser,” said Schwerter. “We wanted to create something that would resonate today while paying homage to the past. The removable top was a must, just like the original, and we made sure it’s as functional as it is stylish.”

4Runner TRD Surf Concept began life as an all-new 2025 4Runner TRD Limited. The iForce 2.4L turbocharged engine delivers 278 horsepower and 317 pound-feet of torque through an eight-speed automatic transmission. Power is distributed by way of a full-time four-wheel drive system, with an electronically controlled dual-range transfer case. A custom exhaust gives the factory powertrain a satisfying exhaust note.

Schwerter’s team immediately started focusing on transforming the most capable 4Runner into the perfect beach boss. However, creating a “factory” 4Runner that looks and performs equally well with the top off as it does with the top on, posed a number of challenges.

“Engineering a legitimate, removable top; going from a 4-door to a 2-door while maintaining functional windows; flipping the front passenger seat for improved rear seat access; and adding 2-inches of width to both sides were all just tip of the iceberg issues,” Schwerter said. “What makes this build so stellar has less to do with the changes themselves and more to do with the amazing way that they all work together—the result is truly greater than the sum of the parts.”

Every detail of the 4Runner TRD Surf Concept has been meticulously planned and crafted to celebrate its coastal roots. When focus shifted to the removable top transformation, nothing was left to chance. To gain real-world insight, a practice run was done on a GEN5 4Runner. Once work began in earnest, the team spent several days lining everything up. The removable top was built in-house, blending traditional fabrication with CAD and modern 3D printing technology to shape cutlines that perfectly mirrored both sides of the body, creating a perfect fit. Designed to be easily removed by a single person, this feature provides the open-air freedom synonymous with the 4Runner legacy.

As rugged as it is stylish, the 4Runner TRD Surf Concept’s long-travel suspension system features billet aluminum front upper and lower A-arms, designed to handle the toughest terrain while providing a smooth ride. Steering upgrades, custom front axles, and Toyota Tundra rear-end housing complement the custom suspension. At each corner, 37-inch tires, mounted to 17x.8.5-inch custom wheels, complete the concept’s muscular appearance.

In preparation for any adventure the 4Runner TRD Surf Concept might encounter, the weatherproofed interior includes soft, waterproof flooring and a front passenger seat that flips forward to allow easy access to the rear seating area. Accessories include a custom surfboard “Travel Quiver” made specifically for this concept, which pairs perfectly with the roof rack.

The 4Runner TRD Surf Concept also highlights the collaborative spirit within Toyota, bringing together various departments such as TRD North Carolina, TMNA Production Engineering, Service Parts and Accessory Development (SPAD), AAP, and Motorsports and Engagement Marketing to bring this concept to life.

“This vehicle not only showcases Toyota’s engineering prowess; it also reflects the passion and creativity of our team members who are dedicated to pushing the boundaries. And besides, who doesn’t love a concept dedicated to surfing!?” said Mike Tripp, group vice president, Toyota Marketing.

The 4Runner TRD Surf Concept will be on display at the 2024 SEMA Show from November 5-8 at the Las Vegas Convention Center in the Toyota booth (Central Hall, Booth 22200). Attendees are invited to visit Toyota’s booth to experience this innovative concept up close and discover how Toyota continues to honor its heritage while embracing the future of automotive adventure.

Vehicle referenced is a special project prototype vehicle, modified with parts and/or accessories not available from Toyota that may void the vehicle’s warranty, may negatively impact vehicle performance and safety, and may not be street legal.