

X-Treme Toyz Tech:

"WEEKEND UPDATE"

Two guys, one Jeep, and a driveway become the ingredients for a cool transformation on a budget.

Especially in these times, not everyone has the bucks to pay a professional installer to accessorize their vehicle. We decided to see how hard it would be to become "Do it Yourselfers" on a 1999 Jeep Wrangler TJ and install a Rubicon Express 3.5" suspension system that would clear our new Mickey Thompson Wheels & 33" Tires.

For our parts, we visited Off Road Unlimited's Burbank Facility and met with one of their sales staff. Our requirements were simple; Suspension - good parts that would perform well and could be easily upgraded if & when our budget permits and a tire/wheel combination that looked good and provided great off road performance, all for under \$4k.

After much deliberation and a myriad of worthy combinations, the system we all agreed on was a Rubicon Express 3.5" system, a set of 16x8" Mickey Thompson Classic Lock Wheels and 305/70/R16 (33/12.50/16) Mickey Thompson Radial MTZ Tires. Don't get us wrong, there are several kit combinations on both sides of our numbers (enough to make you dizzy!) we decided on our combination based on our specific desires and input from the sales staff at ORU.

Follow along as we perform this install in just under 6 hours with basic tools and see what you think. Maybe we'll inspire some new "Do it Yourselfers"!



Before

First, we raised the front of the Jeep and supported it at the frame with jack stands. We then removed the shocks, sway bar links, coil spring retaining clips, and coil springs (photo 1).



Photo 1

Next, we removed the lower trac bar bolt (we found this to be easier with one end of the drag link disconnected). After supporting the axle with a floor jack, we removed the lower control arms (photo 2).



Photo 2

We then installed the new Rubicon Express lower control arms and replaced the factory front brake lines with new steel braided units (photos 3 & 4).



Photo 3



Photo 4

Next, we drilled a 5/16" hole in the lower spring pads and used the supplied self-tapping bolts to cut threads for the new bump stop extensions (photo 5).



Photo 5

We inserted the front bump stop extensions inside the new front coils and installed the coils and factory retaining clips. We then attached the bump stop extension with the self-tapping bolt used to cut the threads. Next on the list, we installed the new front shocks and sway bar links with some cool quick-disconnects (photo 6).



Photo 6

To accommodate the new height, the lower trac bar mounting hole had to be re-located $\frac{3}{4}$ " towards the driver side and drilled (photo 7). We did not re-connect the trac bar until the vehicle was back on the ground with weight on it so as not to stress the rubber bushing.

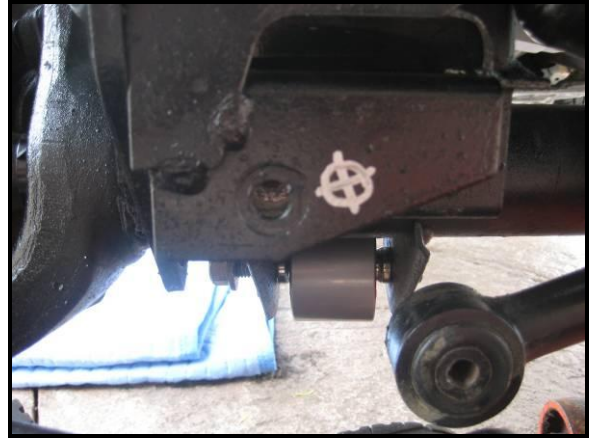


Photo 7

We then installed the new front wheels (photo), bled the front brakes, and set the front back on the ground. We gave the front a few "settling bounces" and then tightened the control arms and trac bar. We were now ready to attack the rear!



Mickey Thompson wheels & tires added a rugged look.

At the tail end, we once again raised the vehicle and supported the frame to allow the suspension to hang. We supported the axle with a floor jack and removed the shocks, sway bar links, springs, and lower control arms (photos 8 & 9).



Photo 8



Photo 9

We removed a plastic shroud at the trac bar mount on the axle (photo 10). We then bolted the new extended mount in place and drilled two 5/16" holes for additional supporting bolts (photo 11).



Photo 10



Photo 11

Next, were the rear bump stop extensions. These attached by simply pulling the factory rubber inserts out, removing the bolt holding the cup, and re-installing the cup with a longer bolt and extension block (photo 12).



Photo 12

Finally, we installed the new rear springs, shocks, and sway bar links (photo 13).



Photo 13

To allow for proper driveshaft angles, we installed a transmission skid plate spacer kit (photo 14). This will keep the shafts from binding with the additional lift height.



Photo 14

We installed the rear wheels and put the Jeep back on the ground. After "settling" the rear much like the front, we tightened the rear control arm and trac bar bolts.

Lastly, we did a "rough" toe setting on the front to ensure we had about 1/8" toe-in. We took the Jeep to a local shop to have it professionally aligned after we were finished checking everything.

Although the TJ is now a capable off roader, we think our next investments will be the Rubicon Express upper control arm upgrade, which will allow even more flex, a rear CV style driveshaft conversion, which will eliminate our transfer case skid plate drop, and some body armor.



After

Project Cost Breakdown:

**Rubicon Express 3.5" suspension system # RE7003
\$1200.00**

**Mickey Thompson Classic Lock 16x8 wheels (5) #468421
\$915.00**

**Mickey Thompson Baja MTZ radial tires (5) #5265
\$1265.00**

Professional front end alignment: \$79.00

Driveway labor w/buddy: \$PRICELESS!

Grand Total: \$3459.00



Driving Impressions:

This kit can flex! We rolled over obstacles that were impossible prior to the upgrades. The street manners and handling were excellent. We didn't notice a huge power loss with the 33" tires, so we decided to leave the factory 4:10 gears in place. We will however be swapping the internal speedometer drive gear in the transfer case for one that will bring the speedometer back to reality. All in all, we were very pleased with our project so far.

Images & text courtesy of X-Treme Toyz

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