



PROJECT RHINO

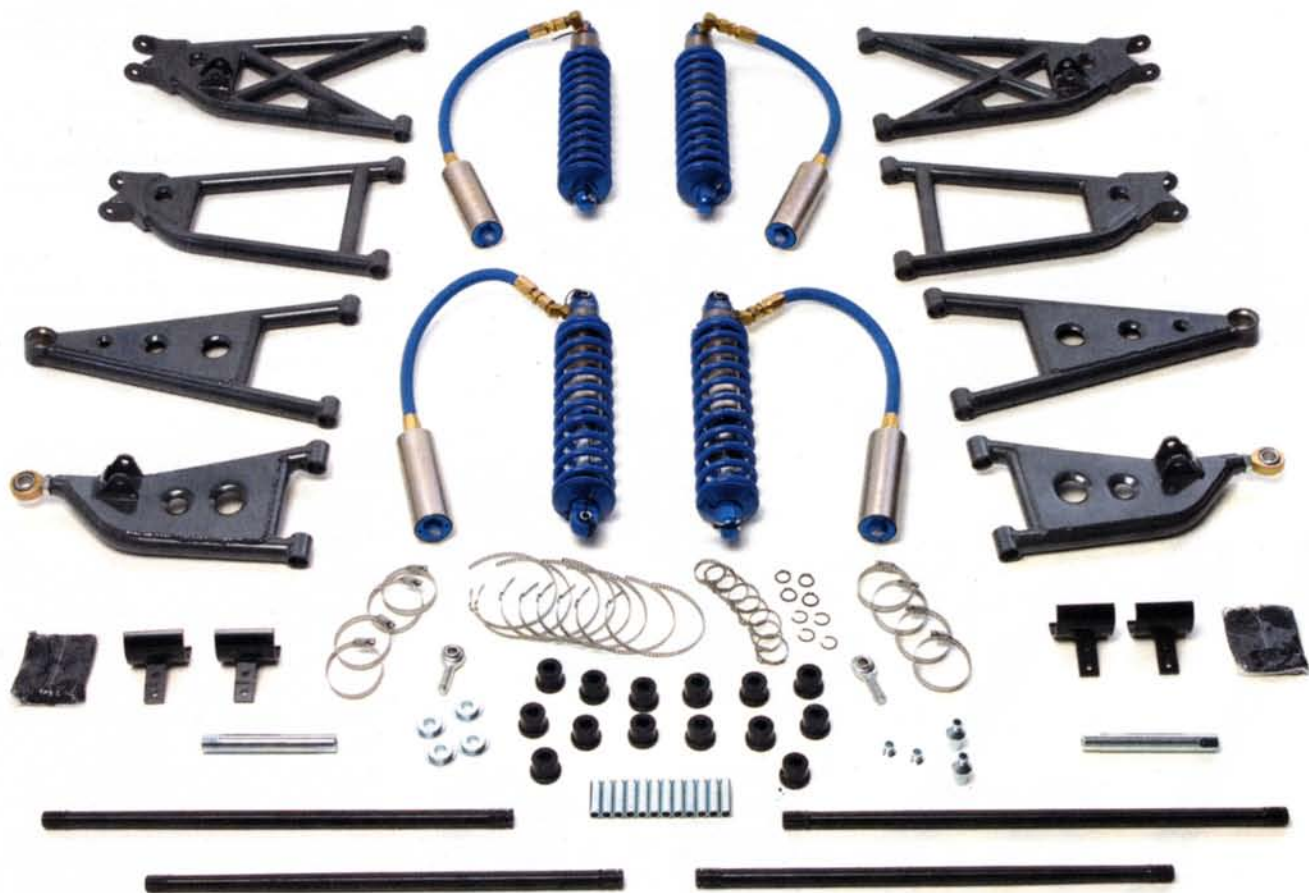
Part 2:
We test Fabtech's
long-travel
suspension

We must admit, we had no idea how much fun our '08 Rhino 700 had in store for us when we picked it up some three months back. For those of you who haven't experienced the thrill ride in a side-by-side take note. These little carts supply amusement effortlessly for hours on end, over any kind of terrain. Because of their petite size, Rhinos and other side-by-side models of similar proportions open up a plethora of trail systems normally off limits to larger Jeeps and SUVs. What was once only suited for quads and

dirt bikes is now our fun-zone too. Some OHV areas still remain off limits but those are few, and they are usually well marked with easy-to-read signs. The resulting wheeling we've been enjoying has added a whole new dimension to the activity; trails that were once too narrow or lacking the necessary overhead clearance for a traditional rig are now just right. The Rhino's nimble size makes it that much easier to escape the carbon-copy of modern day civilization, allowing us to seek adventures quickly and more cost effectively by abandoning larger Jeeps and SUVs in the

dust at the parking lot.

Fabtech Motorsports hit the Rhino market hard with a whole assortment of desert-oriented products for side-by-side owners. We did some digging and discovered that Fabtech's long-travel suspension system is actually the most complete kit available to date. Obviously we wanted an in-depth look at the system, so we dropped off our Rhino at Fabtech's Corona, California, facility and waited anxiously as the talented team of R and D engineers tackled the installation for us. Check out what's included with the system.



◀ Here we are testing the new Fabtech kit near Lake Shasta, California. More stable. More travel. More fun!

① This is the main portion of the Fabtech long-travel kit. Notice the extended 4340 heat-treated axleshafts and the included mounting hardware. Many other kits do not include these parts, but Fabtech wanted to make a kit where the end user didn't have to source additional parts from other companies. Everything you need to perform the installation is included. We dig the Dirt Logic 2.0 remote-reservoir shocks and chromoly tubular A-arms that allow for 13 inches of wheel travel front and rear.

② These cast-iron steering knuckles offer vast improvements in strength over the factory units. Thicker where it counts, these proven parts, once installed, abandon the known weak-link associated with Rhino front suspensions. These parts come powdercoated black for rust-free good looks (blue knuckles pictured for better visibility).





3 One area that is commonly overlooked by many companies that offer Rhino suspensions is the strength of the factory chassis. Fabtech addressed this issue by designing a weld-in frame gusset kit as a add-on option. Fabtech recommends this to all customers. For less than \$60 you get laser-cut steel plates that vastly improve the strength of pivot points and other areas where Rhino chassis are prone to failure.

4 This differential support bracket helps neutralize the added leverage of the longer A-arm and axle-shafts. Yet another touch Fabtech offers for its kit that others don't.

5 These steering linkages are included with the kit and provide a much beefier mechanical connection between the factory steering rack and the upgraded steering knuckles. With a total track-width increase of 6 inches per side, these robust longer tie rods are bolt-on and offer significant improvements in strength.

6 One thing we really liked about the new kit is the fact that it includes genuine FK rod ends throughout. FK is a known leader in spherical bearings and rod ends. These high-quality joints require no grease and are super easy to rebuild.

7 Fabtech offers slightly stiffer rear coil springs for customers who intend to install a backseat or simply need increased weight-carrying capacity. We didn't opt to have these installed when Fabtech had our Rhino, but we'll revisit that option if the need arises.

How Does It Work?

In a word, awesome! The Fabtech Motorsports Rhino long-travel kit provides us with additional confidence in every scenario. All but the largest of bumps feel like child's play and hard cornering exercises are no longer an act of balance. Instead, the 13-inch increase in overall track width allows drivers to set the rig up and drift around corners on the gas the whole time, and with a stable planted feel. The steering feels a bit on the heavy side but not enough so that our arms get tired quickly. The downside to this kit is we pretty much have to forgo the idea of ever fitting our Rhino in the bed of a pickup again. However we feel these sacrifices are well-worth the gains in performance. As of press time we challenged our new Fabtech kit to sand dunes, mountain trails, and even backwoods fire roads, the latter of which proved to be more fun than we ever suspected. Drifting the Rhino through corners on dirt roads is a new-found passion thanks to the added stability of the long-travel kit. We think the shocks are set perfectly and at this point will not need the complimentary shock revalve Fabtech offers each and every Rhino long-travel customer. **FW**

Kit Specs

Wheel travel: 13 inches
Width: 6 inches wider per side
Height: 3 inches taller
Wheelbase: 4 inches longer overall, 2 front and 2 rear
Suggested Wheels: 12x7 with 5+2 offset
Installation time: 4-6 hours
 No cutting or welding required*
 *Welding required for optional gusset kit

SOURCES

Fabtech Motorsports
 877/432-2832, www.fabtechmotorsports.com