

OZ ROAMER

4WD & AWD SUV

2017 COTY AWARDS

We Review

- **66 Vehicles**
- **In 298 Pages**
- **In 14 Categories**
- **For 2017 COTY**

**The OzRoamer
COTY Awards are
without doubt the
most independent
and comprehensive
4WD & AWD SUV
awards in Australia**



OZROAMER 2017 COTY AWARDS

PRICE \$9.90

EDITORS COMMENTS

The number 298 is a stunning number. Stunning for OzRoamer because that is the exact number of pages this year's OzRoamer 4WD and AWD SUV Awards magazine contains. Yes readers, that represents reviews on 66 vehicles in 14 categories with 14 winners and 52 other nominees.

There is of course the cover page and my indulgence, the editor's comments, along with one page supporting the Daniel Morcombe Foundation and the rest of the pages are reviews. A grand total of 295 pages of pure vehicle reviews for you to read. OzRoamer's annual Car of the Year awards are widely regarded as the industry's most comprehensive and independent review of the 4WD and AWD SUV's in the Australian market.

It has been a monumental effort by all those involved!

Since we published our first 4WD and AWD SUV Buyers Guide in 2011 where we announced our inaugural COTY winners, the annual awards have grown and, we believe, become even more relevant for consumers.

By breaking down the categories into those that best represent consumers buying decisions and parameters, the buyers guide enables consumers to compare vehicles in a logical fashion and really get a feel for each individual offering in their chosen segment. How can a buyer use the awards if they compare a sub \$45,000 SUV to an \$80,000 4WD or Prestige Sport SUV that costs upwards of \$150,000? Buyers want a 5 seat vehicle or a 7 seat vehicle, AWD or 4WD etc. We want to keep it relevant!

All the vehicles nominated in these awards are strong contenders and hold individual merit, however the winners highlight class-leading attributes and those that offer the coveted combination of outstanding design, functionality, performance and value for money. Now in its seventh year, the awards continue to receive recognition from within the industry, individual consumers and motoring organisations.

With SUV's accounting for almost 40% of the new vehicle market last year, a thorough buyers guide and considered awards process to help consumers navigate the market has never been more pertinent. The categories also reflect the growth areas of the industry. The smaller SUV style vehicle has seen explosive growth in sales and as a result, a plethora of vehicle choices from manufacturers. The other growth area is Prestige SUVs, with some manufacturers indicating that SUV sales account for up to 70% of their annual sales.

The other interesting trend has been the growth in 2WD SUV style vehicles. It appears that a growing number of consumers are looking for the SUV attributes without the want, need or desire to venture any further than the local shopping centre or cafe. That is something we will need to look at, perhaps for future issues of our buyers guides.

The people that work with OzRoamer, freelance for OzRoamer and are associated with us are all about as passionate as I am and it is with this passion that we produce the 2017 COTY magazine for your enjoyment. I thank the small number of dedicated people that have helped put this magazine together.

There will definitely be some choices here that you won't agree with, you will reckon we are nuts and that is the beauty of our choices. They are our opinions as to what we believe are the winners in each category. In many categories, the differences between the winner and second place can be so minute that it may warrant joint winners, however we have decided to bite the bullet and have only one winner in each category.

I hope you enjoy this magazine, as our main reason for producing it is for you. Our COTY Award Special Edition magazine is more important than ever in helping you, the buyer, make educated buying decisions and find a car that fits your unique specifications. Thanks for your support 😊.



Rob Fraser

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2017 COTY AWARDS

OzRoamer Car of the Year (COTY) Awards are now in their seventh year and have proved to be an outstanding success with buyers in helping them make educated buying decisions.

They are deliberately oriented at having a complete reader and consumer focus, by breaking down the categories into those that best represent their buying decisions and parameters.

In light of that, in 2017 we have multiple categories for various vehicles. This is line with our philosophy of comparing vehicles that are likely to be compared by buyers. How can a buyer use the awards if they compare a sub \$45,000 SUV to an \$80,000 4WD or Prestige Sport SUV that costs upwards of \$150,000? Buyers want a 5 seat vehicle or a 7 seat vehicle, AWD or 4WD. We want to keep it relevant!

The OzRoamer COTY Awards are without doubt the most independent and comprehensive 4WD & AWD SUV COTY awards in Australia.

Since starting in 2011 we have grown the yearly magazine and this year, the magazine will be bigger and even more informative than before!

The criteria for our awards is simple:

- The vehicle must be currently available for sale to the general public;
- The vehicle must meet the criteria for its category;
- Final contenders are selected by the panel;
- Each vehicle is subjectively and objectively measured against strict criteria and its competitors in the category;
- The vehicle with the most points wins. If there is a tie then the panel decides!;
- The judging criteria reflects real life situations because you, our readers, buy these vehicles for use in similar situations;
- The awards assist our readers make educated buying decisions; and
- Advertising dollars and marketing hype doesn't sway the eventual winners or even the contenders.

Pricing comes from the industry website redbook.com.au with a Sydney 2000 postcode as the standard. If it is unavailable, we use the manufacturers' website pricing. The categories, we think, reflect real world buying decisions. If you feel we have left a worthwhile contender out, please let us know for next year.

The results are sure to prompt a lot of emails like last year as we have alternate views on vehicles and aren't influenced by pressure from manufacturers, advertising dollars or reputation. Our view is that the reader should be able to rely on these awards to assist with buying decisions.

So to the categories and contenders!

OzRoamer 2017 SUV under \$45,000 Award

- Fiat 500X Lounge AT AWD
- Suzuki Vitara S Turbo 4WD
- Jeep Renegade Trailhawk 4WD
- Mazda CZ3 Akari 2.0 Petrol AT AWD
- Honda CRV VTI-S AWD
- Subaru XV 2.0i S CVT AWD
- Toyota CHR Koba AWD
- Hyundai KONA 1.6T Highlander AWD



OzRoamer 2017 AWD SUV \$45,000 – \$60,000 Award

- Audi Q2 2.0L TDi Sport Quattro
- Honda CRV VTi-LX AWD
- Hyundai Tuscon Highlander 1.6 T
- Kia Sportage GT Line 2.0R CRDi
- Mazda CX5 GT 2.2 DTD
- Subaru Outback 2.5i Premium
- VW Tiguan 140TDI Highline 4Motion



OzRoamer 2017 4WD \$45,000 – \$60,000 Award

- Ford Everest Ambiente 3.2L
- Jeep Wrangler Unlimited Rubicon 3.6L
- Jeep Cherokee Trailhawk 3.2L
- Mitsubishi Pajero Sport GLX 2.4L Tdi



OzRoamer 2017 7 Seat 4WD \$45,000- \$60,000 Award

- Holden Trailblazer LTZ
- Isuzu MU-X LST
- Mitsubishi Pajero Sport Exceed
- Toyota Fortuner GXL



OzRoamer 2017 7 Seat AWD SUV \$45,000 - \$60,000 Award

- Hyundai Santa Fe Elite 2.2R CRDi
- Kia Sorento SLi 2.2 CRDi
- Mazda CX-9 Touring AWD
- Toyota Kluger GX V6



OzRoamer 2017 AWD SUV \$60,000 - \$80,000 Award

- Audi Q5 2.0 TDi Sport Quattro
- BMW X3 xDrive 20d
- Lexus NX 300 Sport Luxury
- Land Rover Discovery Sport SD4 SE



OzRoamer 2017 4WD \$60,000 - \$80,000 Award

- Jeep Grand Cherokee Limited
- Toyota Landcruiser Prado GX Auto
- Toyota LC70 GXL Wagon V8 Diesel
- Land Rover Discovery 2.0l TD4 S

OzRoamer 2017 7 Seat 4WD \$60,000 - \$80,000 Award

- Toyota Fortuner Crusade
- Toyota Prado GXL Turbo Diesel
- Mitsubishi Pajero Exceed DiD
- Ford Everest Trend

OzRoamer 2017 7 Seat AWD SUV \$60,000 - \$80,000 Award

- Hyundai Santa Fe Highlander 2.2DT
- Kia Sorento GT Line 2.2 CRDi
- Mazda CX-9 Azami 2.5L
- Toyota Kluger Grande V6

OzRoamer 2017AWD SUV \$80,000 - \$100,000 Award

- Audi Q5 2.0 TFSI Sport Quattro
- BMW X4 xDrive 35d
- Jaguar F Pace 25D R Sport
- Lexus RX 350 F Sport

OzRoamer 2017 4WD \$80,000 - \$100,000 Award

- Ford Everest Titanium
- Jeep Grand Cherokee Trailhawk
- Land Rover Discovery SD4 HSE
- Toyota Landcruiser 200 V8 GXL
- Toyota Prado Kakadu DiD

OzRoamer 2017 Prestige SUV over \$100,000 Award

- Audi Q7 Tdi Quattro 200Kw
- Jaguar F Pace 30d
- Lexus LX 570 V8
- Maserati Levante GranSport

OzRoamer 2017 Prestige Sports SUV Award

- Audi SQ7 V8 TDi
- BMW X5 M50d
- Jeep Grand Cherokee SRT
- Range Rover Sport V8SC HSE Dynamic

OzRoamer 2017 Dual Cab Ute Award

- Ford Ranger XLT
- Holden Colorado LTZ
- Isuzu D Max LST
- Mitsubishi Triton Exceed
- Mazda BT50 GT
- Toyota Hilux SR5 DiD

To find out the winners simply read the following pages and maybe there are a few surprises there.

The results are sure to prompt a lot of emails like last year as we have alternate views on vehicles and aren't influenced by pressure from manufacturers, advertising dollars or reputation.

Our view is that the reader should be able to rely on these awards to assist with buying decisions.



OZROAMER 2017 SUV UNDER \$45,000 AWARD



Perhaps the fastest growing and most competitive segment is the sub \$45,000 SUV market, with a plethora of options from most manufacturers. This includes a number of significant all new models launched this year. Consequently we found it almost impossible to exclude many vehicles, hence this is the most nominated category. We have however only nominated AWD or 4WD SUV's excluding 2WD variants.

Vehicles range from clearly urban designed Hyundai Kona, the brilliant crossover Subaru XV through to the true dual range Jeep Renegade Trailhawk. The nominated vehicles include the all new Honda CRV, Toyota C-HR, Hyundai Kona, Subaru XV, along with upgrades to the Mazda CX3 and Suzuki Vitara. The Fiat 500 X and Jeep Renegade Trailhawk are the same as they were last year.

So we have selected what we believe to be the most interesting offerings in the sub \$45,000 segment and come up with 8 alternatives. These represent a good cross mixture of design philosophy, market appeal and capability. Some of these finalists are sure to prompt discussion but as we have always said, opinions are everywhere and none are usually right.

The Fiat 500X Lounge is an interesting choice, being uber trendy, with its style and street appeal obvious, but backs it up with surprising driveability. Of all the vehicles nominated it is the one that generated the most interest from casual observers. The Honda CRV is all new and heralds a return to the forefront for Honda after a while in the design wilderness. It also represents outstanding value for money and stuns with it's internal space. Compared to the others that have been nominated it is positively cavernous.

The Mazda CX3 follows on from the outstanding success of the CX5 with its middle of the road, do nothing wrong approach. The range topping Akari is full of features and embodies the Mazda philosophy.





The Subaru XV is an all new design and the 2.0i-S we tested here is packed with safety and comfort features. It also has surprising all road capability. It is purpose built for active lifestyle owners, perhaps more so than any other vehicle in this segment.

Sitting along side the Subaru for off road ability is the Jeep Renegade Trailhawk. The normal Renegade is a little bland but the Trailhawk changes the Renegades personality totally. It also has a true dual range and exudes Jeeps legendary 4WD capability. It however looks like a box on wheels with some funky edges thrown in.

Finally we have the stunning designs of the Toyota C-HR Koba and Hyundai Kona. Each have pushed the envelope in external design with angular appeal along with many different lines throughout.

Both have an abundance of 'fun factor' and are ideally suited to inner city urban dwellers. Each has their own unique features.

So there you are, 8 nominated sub \$45,000 SUV's, each approaching the market from a slightly different angle, each would make their owners happy with their purchase and in the end separated by a few points.

However there can be only one winner!

| Model | Fiat 500 X Lounge | Honda CRV Vti-S | Hyundai Kona | Renegade Trailhawk | Mazda CX3 Akari | Subaru XV 2.0i-S | Suzuki Vitara S turbo | Toyota CH-R Koba |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------------------|---|
| Model Price | \$41,282 RDAP | \$39,578 RDAP | \$39,903 RDAP | \$44,831 RDAP | \$39,305 RDAP | \$39,423 RDAP | \$37,209 RDAP | \$39,418 RDAP |
| Engine | 1.4 L Petrol Turbo | 1.5 L 4 Cyl Petrol | 1.6T 4 Cyl | 2.4 L Tigershark | 2.0 L Petrol | 2.0 L Boxer Petrol | 1.4 L Turbo Petrol | 1.2 T 4 Cyl Petrol |
| Drivetrain | 9 Sp AT AWD | CVT AWD - demand | 7 Sp DCT AWD | 9 Sp AT 4WD | 6 Sp AT AWD | 7 Sp CVT AWD | 6 Sp AT AWD | 7 Sp CVT AWD |
| Power | 125 kW @ 5500 rpm | 140 kW @ 5600 rpm | 130 kW @ 5500 rpm | 129 kW @ 6400 rpm | 109 kW @ 6000 rpm | 115 kW @ 6000 rpm | 103 kW @ 5500 rpm | 85 kW @ 5600 rpm |
| Torque | 250 Nm @ 2500 rpm | 240 Nm @ 2000 rpm | 265 Nm @ 1500 rpm | 230 Nm @ 4400 rpm | 192 Nm @ 2800 rpm | 196 Nm @ 4000 rpm | 220 Nm @ 1500 rpm | 185 Nm @ 1500rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP | 5 Star ANCAP | 5 Star ANCAP | TBA ANCAP | 5 Star ANCAP | 5 Star ANCAP | 5 Star ANCAP | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 157 g/km | 168 g/km | 175 g/km | 175 g/km | 160 g/km | 159 g/km | 145 g/km | 148 g/km |
| Economy ADR | 6.7 L/100 km ADR | 7.4 L/100 km | 6.7 L/100 km | 7.5 L/100 km | 6.7 L/100 km | 7.0 L/100 km | 6.2 L/100 km | 6.5 L/100 km |
| Servicing | 3 Yrs Free Scheduled | Fixed Price | Capped Price | Capped Price | 3 Yrs fixed price | 3 Yrs capped price | 5 Yrs capped price | Capped Price |
| Tow Rating | Max 1200 kg | Max 1500 kg | Max 907 kg | Max 907 kg | Max 1200 kg | Max 1400 kg | Max 1200 kg | Max 600 kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 120 kg | 100 kg | 90 kg | 90 kg | 120 kg | 140 kg | 100 kg | 60 kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 150,000 km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist | 5 Yrs / Unlimited km 5 Yrs Roadside Assist | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist | 3 Yrs / Unlimited km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist | 3 Yrs / Unlimited km 1 Yrs Roadside Assist | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km OPT Roadside Assist |

FIAT 500 X LOUNGE 4X4**\$41,282 RDAP**

It's not often I drive a car that almost completely changes my perception within a few days however the Fiat 500X Lounge 4X4 did just that. My first impressions admittedly though were as a passenger along Parramatta rd. at peak hour, probably one of Sydney's worst arterial roads.

by Rob Fraser



It's not often I drive a car that almost completely changes my perception within a few days however the Fiat 500X Lounge 4X4 did just that. My first impressions admittedly though were as a passenger along Parramatta rd. at peak hour, probably one of Sydney's worst arterial roads.

However the next day I went for a drive and almost immediately this urban warrior started to grow on me. Now I am usually more at home in a dual cab Ute somewhere far from civilisation, but the Fiat 500X Lounge started to feel very comfortable. We later opted for a Saturday afternoon drive up the northern peninsula to Palm Beach, where the rich and famous have their holiday houses. Surprisingly this very chic AWD SUV was quite popular with the locals and tourists alike. Sitting in a fish and chip shop overlooking Pittwater I noticed just how many people both walking and driving past, either stopped for a better look or looked sideways from their car as they passed. Yes the style gets a big tick.



While the Fiat is marketed as a 4X4 in reality it is a beefy inner city warrior for those that want something more muscular than the normal 500 or MINI etc. Given that the 500X rides on 18 inch 45 series profile tyres I'm not sure just how far the off road pretensions go. So let's assume that the majority, well, all drivers probably will utilise the 4X4 feature for safety, wet weather and weekend trips to the snow.

The exterior as mentioned is stylish, well balanced and muscular. To my eyes it is more appealing than the normal 500. I could go into marketing speak overdrive and talk about flowing lines etc., but let's keep it simple. The 500X looks pretty darn good.

by Rob Fraser

Internally it is a surprise and a combination of both good and bad as only the Italians could do. The height and reach adjustable steering wheel feels great in the hands with easy to use controls and good visibility for both the control stalks and the three ring dash. The central larger dial houses the MFD and I found myself almost exclusively using this for speed and DTE. Again clear and easy to read.

The hard metal dashboard divided opinion. Some liked it and some hated it, not many in-between. I liked it as it gave a subtle simple appeal that harks back to simpler days. However I would have liked no dials at all on it. A personal preference not a design fault. The 6.5 inch centre screen houses the U Connect Bluetooth, Sat Nav and is the heart of the outstanding 'Beats' audio system. Below that are the controls for A/C, hazard lights, stop start, USB etc. Again simplicity of use is a feature.

The driver's seat is manually adjustable for both slide and tilt, but does have a handy electronic lumbar support that was very welcome. The headrest is a little intrusive I found. My front passenger also has a comfortable seat with plenty of room. Rear passenger's seats are better for two than three, are a little upright and firm with a flat squab and have no separate A/C vents.

However on a couple of occasions I had rear passengers without complaint. Boot space is as you would expect, but flexible with fold down 60/40 rear seats that fold almost flat and a couple of handy tie down points. There is reasonable storage with dual glove boxes, the lower lower one lockable, bottle holders in the padded doors and central cup holders with a small but useful centre storage bin. Rear seats have useful door bottle holders.

Powering the Fiat 500X 4X4 is the 125kW version of Fiat's 1.4 Turbo MultiAir II, paired with a ZF nine- speed automatic transmission, with the availability of front wheel drive and all-wheel drive. Fiat's "mood selector" allows a choice between three driving styles. The selector acts on engine, brakes, steering and gearbox/transmission to select the driving style most appropriate to the situation or road surface conditions. Options are: Auto – Sport - All Weather. The engine produces power of 125kW @ 5,500rpm and torque of 250Nm @ 2,500rpm all driving through the 9 speed automatic transmission as mentioned. This is surprisingly enough to move the bulky Fiat 500X along at a good pace, is enough in city traffic and performs adequately on the freeway on longer trips etc.

Fuel economy is again surprisingly good at around 8.5l/100k actual usage. One thing to note though is that the engine braking can be severe and often comes just as you are applying the brakes, so you end up stopping about 20m short of where you were aiming for. It takes a little adjusting to. The ride is generally smooth but on uneven surfaces (such as Parramatta rd.) can be choppy and pitchy. This is not an off road vehicle nor is it a sports car, but rather suited to a comfortable ride on most tar surfaces.



FIAT 500 X Lounge 4X4

\$41,282 RDAP

by Rob Fraser

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Model | Fiat 500 X Lounge |
| Model Price | \$41,282 RDAP |
| Engine | 1.4 L Petrol Turbo |
| Drivetrain | 9 Sp AT AWD |
| Power | 125kW @ 5,50 rpm |
| Torque | 250Nm @ 2,500rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 157g/km |
| Economy actual | 6.7L/100 km ADR |
| Servicing | 3 Yrs Free Scheduled |
| Tow Rating | Max 1,200kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 120kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 150,000 km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



Safety is a feature with the latest active safety systems available to improve handling and assist the driver, including sophisticated ESC (Electronic Stability Control) and DST (Dynamic Steering Torque) systems, which improve both driving safety and handling performance by actively correcting over and understeer. DST is completely integrated into the vehicle's ESC system and intervenes to correct potentially dangerous situations.

To further improve safety, ABS, ERM (electronic rollover mitigation); hill start assist; ASR (traction control); MSR (gearshift engine torque management); electronic parking braking, front fog lights with cornering illumination (excluding Pop); seven airbags, blind spot monitoring (BSM), rear cross path detection, reversing camera, forward collision warning(FCW), Brake lock differential system (BLDS)and Fiat's lane departure warning system.

Fiat marketing hypo blurb mentions over 60 safety features, all of which make this car all the better but way too many to list here. However mention should be made of a few. The BSM system emits a loud buzzing sound when you may be changing lanes on another vehicle. That is good apart from the fact that it scares the bejesses out of you and that it is super sensitive, buzzing when you are way passed the car or in fact when nothing is there at all. The FCW systems works brilliantly, as I found out. Thank you.

Overall I have to say I really enjoyed driving the 500X. There is something about it that transcends metal, it has character and that flows through to being fun to drive. Without treading on the Fiat marketers I can see this vehicle being ideal for the couple of inner city dwellers that like to travel on weekends and escape the city without being too adventurous off road. For that it is ideal.

At around \$42,000 RDAP in Sydney, with a five star ANCAP safety rating and a high street credibility, this is a vehicle that should do well and expand the buyer base for the 500 range. I have to mention again just how much I enjoyed the Fiat 500X Lounge 4X4.



What's Good:

- Street Appeal
- Safety features
- Uncomplicated design

What's Not:

- Occasional choppy ride
- Engine braking
- Expensive

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 71/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 7 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 5 |
| Performance | 7 | Off Road Ability | 5 |
| Ride & Handling | 7 | Value for Money | 7 |

HONDA CRV VTi-S AWD

\$39,578 RDAP



Honda thinks of itself as a premium car maker, and so it is. The Honda CRV VTi-S AWD is a surprise, especially at the price. It offers stunning internal space and flexibility.

By Alan Zurvas



A buyer once told me that he wasn't looking at a Honda because it didn't have enough tech. That might have once been true, but certainly is not the case now on the VTi-S AWD CRV we are testing here. 2017 has seen the launch of an all new CRV. The new car is bigger on the outside than the old model. It also looks more modern. The 17" wheels on the VTi-S keep the cabin a little quieter than the higher grade on 18" wheels on some of the goat tracks masquerading as roads. They look great though and give the exterior a bit of extra polish. Headlights and tail lights have LEDs, including DTRLs.

It also makes better use of interior space. The cabin is incredibly spacious, and has grown in all directions, and has tons of added tech. Clever seats can be configured easily, especially the back row and as mentioned, there is a 7-seat option. Without the driver being aware of it, a dab of brake here and there is applied to individual wheels to make an average driver look more like Alan Jones the F1 driver, than Alan Jones the radio person. Genius. Apart from the CarPlay/Android Auto, there are some other natty inclusions. The centre console has a voluminous bin that can be configured 3 ways. It is deep enough to take a bag, or shallow enough for a

coffee cup. There is a raft of bins and cubby holes, and places to charge your devices.

The infotainment system on a 7" LCD responds reasonably. There are touch volume controls there, and more touch controls on the steering wheel. There is no DAB radio.

The 3rd row of seats if fitted, takes some of the boot space, but can be used for shorter occupants. If you don't like your oranges rolling around the boot, put these seats up.

It takes the boot down to a manageable 150L. Tumbling the 2nd row seats forward adds extra space if you need bigger items carried. All models get full size spare wheels.



By Alan Zurvas

There is a single engine/transmission option as well as the AWD is in two versions. This is the first time the CRV has been offered with 7 seats. The new car has more power and better fuel economy. The 1.5L Turbo does a decent 140kW at 5,600 rpm, but it is the torque of 240Nm at 2,000rpm that is somewhat astounding. They've managed this by sticking a bigger (single) turbo on the 4 cylinder used in the Civic.

That would normally make you feel like you were driving the slap-you-in-the-back-of-the-head 80's hot hatch. The power would come on one big whack, and catch the newbies off-guard. Not in this case. The delivery is incredibly smooth and linear. Although late to the turbo party, Honda does a fabulous engine. Their engineers reduced blades from 11 to 9 so the turbine spools up faster, and more smoothly. The turbo is boost set to 18.5 PSI max, and the engine will sip the cheap and cheerful 91RON juice.

Handling was sharp and predictable. Honda added noise control features, like sound proofing, thicker front window glass, and active noise cancelling across the range. Thankfully, Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto is standard and is easy to use. It integrates "Hey Siri" into full button-free motoring. This is probably the biggest safety advance since the seat belt. A car can travel a very long distance in the time it takes to deal with an SMS.

Honda CRV delivers the agility the company promised. Buyers like the high seating position afforded by SUVs. They like the extra space and the high ground clearance. The Honda CRV feels airy, with good visibility all round, and Honda's excellent lane watch safety feature. Indicating left will activate a rear pointing camera in the left hand door mirror. It looks right along the side of the car. You don't have to guess if someone is in your blind spot, because there is no blind spot. Buyers will not immediately notice the benefits of the Agile Handling system. It acts behind the scenes, like nanna watching the kids playing. It knows the car's pitch, yore, and speed, and makes cornering smoother and more competent.

The electric steering feels slightly odd at first, but you quickly settle in. Like all new things, it takes getting used to. Then, there is the electric brake assistance. This innovation replaces the vacuum power boosters in use since last century. Honda says it makes the car safer. There is a computer controlling every move the CRV makes.

The car can now work as a single unit overseen by a caring, and very smart, friend. Claims that the SUV is more engaging than the previous model are fairly accurate. It feels solid and sits on the road with the sturdiness of a Sherman tank. I like that. The CVT has been re jiggged to give better feel to the zippy engine. There are paddles, but frankly, what's the point?



By Alan Zurvas

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | Honda CRV Vti-S |
| Model Price | \$39,578 RDAP |
| Engine | 1.5 L 4 Cyl Petrol |
| Drivetrain | CVT AWD - demand |
| Power | 140kW @ 5,600rpm |
| Torque | 240Nm @ 2,000rpm |
| Safety | S Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 168g/km |
| Economy ADR | 7.4L/100 km |
| Servicing | Fixed Price |
| Tow Rating | 1,500kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 100kg |
| Warranty | 5 Yrs / Unlimited km 5 Yrs Roadside Assist |



Unless pushed, the revs are kept down to improve fuel economy. With your foot on the carpet, the engine screams for mercy as it steps through computer controlled ratios. Although it simulates gears, and the acceleration still feels somewhat leisurely.

The ride is brilliant. Since none of the old car was carried over, Honda could concentrate on a ground-up design to exactly suit the needs of 2018 buyers. As you turn in to corners, you feel the weight shift gently, but predictably. We encountered bumps in corners that you might have expect would have upset most cars. The CRV was not bothered.

The top model VTi-LX AWD as always, is the one with most goodies, and the only one with AEB (autonomous Emergency Braking) which will be required next year for 5-star safety ratings. Entry level models are evaluated during these tests. That's good news for us.

Honda says they will want to roll the full suite of safety gadgets across the range. They say there is no benefit in it trying to separate the AEB from the rest of the safety suite.

You probably won't take the CRV off-road, but you could if you wanted. AWD models benefit from extra grip. Towing is also not a priority. However the CRV is ideally suited to trips to the snow, active weekends and transporting the tribe to netball and soccer matches.

Japanese cars are bulletproof. The design is clever, with safety the prime consideration. Honda thinks of itself as a premium car maker. The Honda CRV VTi-S AWD is a surprise, especially at the price. It offers stunning internal space and flexibility, good ride and handling dynamics, a reasonable engine, great safety and is packed with features. This is an ideal family AWD SUV.



What's Good:

- Spacious cabin
- Lane watch system
- Value for money

What's Not:

- Some cheap plastic
- One dimensional CVT
- Some poor switch functionality

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 77/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 5 |
| Performance | 7 | Off Road Ability | 6 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 9 |

HYUNDAI KONA HIGHLANDER 1.6T

\$39,903 RDAP

The Hyundai Kona shows that small SUVs are not just about a one-dimensional image that inevitably has compromises. It is now rich in its offerings and deep in its character as it embraces the latest in comfort, performance and safety features.



by David Brown



There is so much in the Hyundai Kona that it is hard to know where to start. Hyundai was slow getting a small SUV onto the market but they have now come with a bang. The Kona shows that small SUVs are not just about a one-dimensional image that inevitably has compromises. It is now rich in its offerings and deep in its character, as it embraces the latest in comfort, performance and safety features.

It is available in three feature options: Active, Elite and Highlander, with an optional safety pack for Active. The two engines and two transmissions are available in every trim level. We are testing the top of the range Kona Highlander 1.6T DCT AWD here.

At the front the LED daylight running lights are placed at the top just below the bonnet line. The larger traditional headlights are halfway down. Kevin Teng the creative manager for Hyundai Design in North America spoke of the look as being "eager" with a touch of the "sinister". He went on to say that the long bonnet suggests the car has power like a speedboat or an animal leaping forward.

The black composite wheel arch extensions give the impression of the muscles of a predatory animal flexed in preparation to jump.



The shark fin C pillar is angled forward and works here in a hatchback style vehicle where it doesn't on a larger wagon SUV. The high mounted LED brake lights make for a strong but not over the top design for the back of the vehicle. It doesn't have an automatic tailgate. Our Highlander had 18-inch wheels with a fancy "20 spoke design". The boldness of the Kona design is emphasised with colours such as Blue Lagoon, Ceramic Blue, and Dark Knight. The top of the line Highlander has two additional colours, Acid Yellow and Tangerine Comet. Two dark coloured roof options add to the character of the vehicle.

by David Brown

The funky colour scheme is emphasised in the interior in the Highlander with colour inserts around the air-conditioning vents and gear lever. You sit high and comfortably in the Kona. It has a tablet style multimedia display with a 7-inch screen which is not huge but it's also not overpowering in this small SUV. There is a 4.2-inch display screen (colour in the Highlander) between the dials for the driver providing the usual amount of information.

The list of features is astounding, starting with cruise control, rear view camera and tyre pressure monitoring system, leather-appointed seats, climate control, rain sensing wipers and fog lights. Highlander specific features include a heated steering wheel, head up display, heated front seats and one of the great features for the Australian climate of air ventilated front seats. Modern features include Apple CarPlay or Android Auto and a phone charge pad so you can avoid an unsightly cable cluttering up your console. It even reminds occupants to remove their phone when leaving the car.

The cargo area is, not surprisingly, only 361 litres with the rear seats up and the rear floor in the cargo area set in the lower position, which means that you do not have a flat continuity when the rear seats are down. With the rear seats lowered you can get a maximum of 1143 litres of space.

I have expressed concern at the need and value of a wealth of information about real-time vehicle diagnostics that can be displayed while you are driving. Do we really benefit from seeing our instant fuel consumption or average speed? Enter Hyundai Auto Link. It connects the cars computer to your mobile phone via Bluetooth keeping analytical information and other useful performance information. How much better is this, to be able to sit down quietly in your own time and in your own place and review your cars statistics rather than do it within the confined environment of the car or even worse while you're driving. This would be particularly helpful for fleets.

The Highlander AWD is powered by the impressive 1.6 litre turbocharged petrol engine which has sporty power and torque and is linked to a 7-speed dual clutch transmission all-wheel drive system. This combination sips fuel at a miserly rating of 6.7 l/100km.

The turbocharged engine is a little gem. It is refined and does not feel strained when you are giving it some gun. It has good throttle response, good low-end torque and little turbo lag. It comes with 'Comfort', 'Eco' and 'Sport' modes. Because we had the AWD set up, our Highlander had the dual arm, multi-link rear suspension that has been tuned for "Australian Conditions" which is more of a tweak than a major overhaul. Overall it was impressive and gave you a sense of confidence. This was not a little pseudo all-wheel drive bouncing around on suburban roads but a very car-like driving experience.



HYUNDAI KONA HIGHLANDER 1.6T

\$39,903 RDAP

by David Brown

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | Hyundai Kona |
| Model Price | \$39,903 RDAP |
| Engine | 1.6T 4 Cyl |
| Drivetrain | 7 Sp DCT AWD |
| Power | 130 kW @ 5500 rpm |
| Torque | 265 Nm @ 1500 rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 175 g/km |
| Economy ADR | 6.7 L/100 km |
| Servicing | Capped Price |
| Tow Rating | 907 kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 90 kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



In terms of off-road capability Hyundai do not bother to mention rough terrain. They note that the "Ground clearance which is more generous than that of conventional small hatchbacks..." rather than compare it to a four-wheel-drive. Safety gives you another long list of features: Forward collision avoidance that detects other vehicles and pedestrians and gives audible and visual warnings then automatic emergency braking if you do not respond sufficiently; blind spot collision warning, operating at speeds above 30 km an hour that will also scan for vehicles approaching rapidly from behind and alert the driver.

Additionally there is rear cross traffic collision warning when reversing out of a perpendicular parking space; lane keeping assist for speeds over 60 km an hour to give audible and visual warnings if you wander in your lane but you can also select for steering wheel intervention up to the point of keeping the Kona in the centre of the lane; and driver attention warning which monitors your tracking within the lane and your brake pedal inputs and the last time the driver took a break.

It would appear as though being able to classify your vehicle as an SUV has traditionally allowed you to price it above a sedan even when it has less features. There's no doubt that you can get a very small sedan for half the price of the entry-level Kona. The top of the line Highlander is approaching the list price of a top of the range Camry, so you can get more space for your money. But these are different vehicles with different markets in mind.

The Kona shows that you do not have to compromise the comfort and safety features by getting an SUV. It is bold in its styling without going over the top in its quirkiness. It has class-leading safety and technology is well set out and the turbocharged engine makes you wonder how long it will be before all petrol engines are turbocharged.

The Hyundai Kona Highlander has created a benchmark for style and features in the small SUV category that others will emulate.



What's Good:

- Styling- Bold Urban Chic
- Sweet and efficient engine
- Extensive comfort and safety

What's Not:

- No diesel option
- Slightly pricey
- Poor off road ability

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 81/100

| | | | |
|------------------|----|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 7 |
| Comfort | 10 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 10 | Towing Ability | 5 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 6 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 8 |

JEEP RENEGADE TRAILHAWK

\$44,831 RDAP

There is a distinct lack of smaller 4WD vehicles on the market. There are a few that pretend to have 4WD credentials but few that have actual ability. Enter the Jeep Renegade Trailhawk.



by Anthony Hood



There is a distinct lack of smaller 4WD vehicles on the market. There are a few that pretend to have 4WD credentials but few that have actual ability. Enter the Jeep Renegade Trailhawk. Launched in October 2015 the all new Renegade has combined fresh and innovative design with true off road ability. The Trailhawk has totally different characteristics than the other models

This is an urban sized robust looking small 4WD that is equally at home around inner-city streets as it is on the Birdsville track. It does have the look of a stylish box on wheels with little overhang front and rear, high roof line, 17 inch wheel and tyre combinations, unusual X rear lights, an open feel with the My Sky open-air roof system and Jeep Active Drive Low 4x4 system and the traditional 7 slot Jeep grill. It looks quite the trendy little urban warrior on the outside but step inside the range topping Trailhawk and you are in for a surprise. The high design lends itself to an open airy feel with plenty of head room. Unusually on recent vehicles the 'A' pillars are reasonably thin and at the angle they are don't restrict visibility much. All around the visibility is excellent with no real blind spots, and the rear view camera and blind spot alerts on the large external mirrors assist greatly.



The front leather seats are very comfortable with multiple electronic adjustments and for extra comfort are heated as well. I found myself having more than enough room and with the height and reach adjustable steering wheel found the perfect 'for me' driving position. This was a bonus in a car this size. The rear seats are reasonably comfortable with plenty of head room.

However the seat squab is short, there is precious little knee room and are better suited to two occupants. However this is similar to other cars this size.

by Anthony Hood

The Renegade is designed with an efficient and flexible interior package that includes a removable, reversible and height-adjustable cargo floor panel and fold-forward front-passenger seat. The dash and door trims are a premium feel soft and to make sure all of the needed passenger gear fits, the Renegade is designed with an efficient and flexible interior package that includes a removable, reversible and height-adjustable cargo floor panel and fold-forward front-passenger seat.

The heated thick rimmed leather steering wheel felt great in the hands, had all the controls one has come to expect on it, with the traditional Jeep feel. The indicator and washer stalks are easily visible. The 7 inch fully customisable dash has two large dials on the outside with a multi adjustable display in-between that allows quite a lot of information for the driver without feeling cluttered. Again a big design tick here.

The centre console and stack again shows clever design. It all seems to flow and provides ease of use. The stack is highlighted by an in-vehicle hands-free communication, entertainment and navigation Uconnect system that includes a 6.5-inch touchscreen, Bluetooth connectivity, USB port and auxiliary audio jack. The Trailhawk comes with the awesome Beats 9 speaker audio system. The Jeep Active Drive Low 4x4 system on the Renegade Trailhawk helps it earn a Trail Rated badge - emblematic of its ability to perform under almost any conditions and features both a single speed power transfer unit and disconnecting rear axle. Seamlessly switching between two-wheel and four-wheel drive the rear axle disconnect reduces energy loss; improving fuel efficiency when 4x4 isn't needed and enhancing handling and traction when it is. Enhancing its 4WD credentials the Renegade Trailhawk has a 20:1 crawl ratio and Jeep Selec-Terrain system.

The Renegade is the first small SUV to feature a disconnecting rear axle and power take-off unit (PTU) – all to provide the Jeep Renegade Trailhawk with enhanced fuel economy. The system instantly engages when 4x4 traction is needed. The Renegade Trailhawk is also the first Jeep to integrate Koni's frequency selective damping (FSD) front and rear strut system.

Built on an all-new platform, and the first to feature Jeep's "small-wide 4x4 architecture", the Renegade combines best-in-class off-road capability with world-class on-road driving dynamics. It does display some torque driving characteristics under normal driving conditions and acceleration, but in general it handles pretty good on road. As a side issue the very first vehicle I ever drove was a left hand drive WW11 Willys Jeep and I have had a strong affiliation for Jeeps ever since. Jeep Active Drive Low includes the Jeep Selec-Terrain system, providing five modes (Auto, Snow, Sand, Mud and Rock mode) for the best four-wheel-drive performance on- or off-road and in any weather condition.



JEEP RENEGADE TRAILHAWK

\$44,831 RDAP

by Anthony Hood

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | Renegade Trailhawk |
| Model Price | \$44,831 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.4 L Tigershark |
| Drivetrain | 9 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 129kW @ 6,400rpm |
| Torque | 23 Nm @ 4,400rpm |
| Safety | TBA ANCAP |
| CO2 | 175g/km |
| Economy ADR | 7.5L/100 km |
| Servicing | Capped Price |
| Tow Rating | 900kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 90kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



The full package allows the Trail Hawk Trail Rated 4X4 capability. This comes from an increased ride height 30mm (1.2 inches) to a total of 211mm, skid plates, and rear red tow hook, fascia design delivers 30.5-degree approach, 25.7-degree breakover and 34.3-degree departure angles, 17-inch all-terrain tyres, fully independent suspension that allows up to 205mm (8.1 inches) of wheel articulation (rear) and 170mm at the front, hill-descent control, and up to 480mm (19 inches) of water fording.

The Trailhawk is powered by the 2.4-litre Tigershark engine delivering 129kW of power and 230Nm of torque. This mates to a clever and technologically advanced nine-speed transmission that is smooth and improves fuel economy. The economy for a petrol isn't bad and it makes the most of the available power. Safety and security are a key feature of the Jeep Renegade, with more than 60 available safety and security features – including the availability of Forward Collision Warning-Plus and LaneSense Departure Warning-Plus. In addition, engineers added both active and passive safety and security features, including available Blind-spot Monitoring with Rear Cross Path detection and a standard equipment list which includes a ParkView reverse parking camera complete with dynamic grid lines, electronic stability control (ESC) with electronic roll mitigation and seven air bags. The LaneSense Departure Warning Plus system at times is intrusive trying to overtake the steering. I have mixed feelings about such safety features. They have benefits but also override good driving techniques.

The Jeep Renegade Trailhawk is a mixture. It certainly provides a compact proper 4WD vehicle that has legendary Jeep capabilities, it is stylish and fits its urban warrior positioning perfectly, and it is packed with standard features. It unfortunately is pretty useless for towing anything more than small trailers and if it had a small powerful diesel motor it would be almost unbeatable in its class. Overall I really enjoyed the Trailhawk, more than I expected, I found myself looking forward to driving it and it was great in and around the inner-city.



What's Good:

- Styling - Urban Chic
- Real 4WD ability
- Packed with features

What's Not:

- No diesel option
- Storing My Sky roof
- Torque steer

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 80/100

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|------------------|----|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 8 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 10 | Towing Ability | 4 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 7 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 8 |

MAZDA CX3 AKARI 2.0L AT AWD**\$39,305 RDAP**

The driving force behind the Mazda CX-3 design is the 'KODO – Soul of Motion' concept which embodies athletic presence and simplistic elegance. The outward appearance of the CX-3 is car-like without being adventurous.

by David Brown



Fresh from the success of the CX5 Mazda launched the CX3 into the highly competitive small SUV market that has boomed in Australia in 2015. In 2017 it received a make-over with a good range of improvements that are not all visible. It was the bestselling small SUV in Australia in 2016 and was in second place in 2017, but is now facing stiffer competition especially with the latest Subaru XV and new kids on the block, the Toyota CH-R, the Suzuki Vitara and the Hyundai Kona. We tested to top of the range petrol engine Akari with all-wheel-drive.

The driving force behind the Mazda CX-3 design is the 'KODO – Soul of Motion' concept which embodies athletic presence and simplistic elegance. The outward appearance of the CX-3 is car-like without being adventurous. It mimics the Mazda sedans at the front with a sloping bonnet, prominent grille and stylish headlights. The most distinctive feature, down the side of the vehicle, is the waistline which rises significantly at the back of the car compared to the more station wagon look of Mazda's larger CX-5 and

CX-9. It reduces the size of the rear windows at the back and evokes the Range Rover Evoque.



The Akari features chrome exhaust, automatic LED headlights, a sunroof and The body colour lineup includes showy names such as Ceramic Metallic, Titanium Flash Mica, Jet Black Mica, Snowflake White Pearl Mica, Meteor Grey Mica and Dynamic Blue Mica but only Soul Red Metallic is approaching a flashy style.

Mazda describes the interior as having a "Spatial design blends snugness with openness" and mirrors the Japanese word Jinba-ittai, a feeling of oneness between car and driver. The overall feeling when getting into the car for the first time is,

by David Brown

however, confined. The more modern the vehicle the more efficiently it uses its interior space both in a physical reality and a general perception. In this way the CX-3 is showing its age no matter what the measurements say. The interior has black as the base colour to which you can add one of four coordinated panels such as black leather, white leather, black Maztex and grey fabric.

Mazda calls the 7-inch display screen as being "independently mounted" but to some extent looks like an add-on. The active driving display in the middle of the dials has been upgraded from monochrome to full colour. An important factor for the ongoing comfort and ease of use of the new Mazda CX 3 is its new steering wheel which was first introduced on the Mazda CX 9. Previously there were three levels of switches on the horizontal spokes but now they have integrated it into a single level. Mazda feels that this matches the natural finger movement and therefore is more usable. This may sound pedantic or just marketing speak, but the layout for the driver must be more than just an elegant look and must ultimately lead to the comfort and effectiveness of the driver. The CX-3's new steering wheel is a move in the right direction.

Rear seats are cramped like most in this size market segment. Better suited for two rather than three there is just adequate head, shoulder room with restricted knee and leg room. The boot area is easy to use with flat and low load area. The rear cargo capacity is 264 litres with the rear seats up which is relatively small, however the CX 3 does redeem itself when you fold down the rear seats to achieve 1174 litres of space

The Mazda CX-3 Akari AWD is powered by a 2.0L four cylinder petrol engine with i-stop technology paired with a 6-speed automatic transmission. It produces 109kW of power @ 6,000rpm and 192Nm of torque @ 2,800rpm. The torque kicking in at a lower range is noticeable. The fuel consumption of our tested vehicle was a stable 7.7L/100km This is by no means a rocket performer but the vehicle maintained its credibility as being a good car to drive. It was smooth and easy with a surefooted feel. It now has their g-vectoring control system as standard across the range. This technology adjusts the engine torque in response to steering wheel action to deliver a better control of acceleration forces. The vehicle has an electric power assisted steering which is as good as you could want in this style of vehicle.

In terms of road safety and advanced technologies the Mazda CX-3 has a few features that show up its competition. The Mazda CX-3 range achieved a 5 star ANCAP rating and the Akari boasts Blind Spot Monitoring and Lane Departure Warning, ABS, DSC, EBD, EBA, ESS, HLA and TSC. It also features a reverse camera with parking sensors and Driver Attention Alert, Rear Cross Traffic Alert, adaptive LED headlights.



by David Brown

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | Mazda CX3 Akari |
| Model Price | \$39,305 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.0 L Petrol |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp AT AWD |
| Power | 109kW @ 6,000rpm |
| Torque | 192Nm @ 2,800rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 160g/km |
| Economy ADR | 6.7 L/100 km |
| Servicing | 3 Yrs fixed price |
| Tow Rating | Max 1,200 kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 120 kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / Unlimited km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



The Automatic Emergency Braking that Mazda calls their Smart City Brake Support System has the unfortunate acronym of SCBS (pronounced "Scabs"??). The use of the word "City" indicates its restricted limit of operations which was previously only between speeds of 4-30 km/h. Fortunately, this has now increased to 4-80 km/h. Where the CX-3 stands out is that it works in both forward and reversing situations. One area where the CX-3 is leading the field is the addition of Traffic Sign Recognition which supplements information from your mapping system which can become out of date.

It can reasonably be assumed that most CX-3s will not be used in off-road situations. Like many vehicles in this segment the towing capability is limited and it really is a true city AWD SUV with extremely limited off road ability. Think of it as a safer SUV than a wagon with the benefits of space and flexibility over a sedan. It is an ideal urban SUV

Despite Mazda running zoom zoom advertising campaigns and backing motor racing activities particularly overseas, their image is often one of the quiet achiever. The CX-3 is not upmarket chic but it does come over with a degree of confidence and credibility. The model has been around now for several years even with a few makeover changes and in some areas lags some of the opposition. Its technology is credible although you do have to move up in the models in order to achieve the features particularly in the area of safety. The two top selling cars in this small SUV market, the Mitsubishi ASX and the Mazda CX-3 are both somewhat older models with a more conservative approach. This has been successful so far but with a new range of fashionable, bright coloured, bold design alternatives on the market, this segment could be in for a shakeup.

To conclude the Mazda CX-3 provides a favourable driving experience, externally is stylish yet the interior design seems to have a split personality. The CX3 features excellent safety technologies and is priced to provide value for money. Realistically, in this market segment vehicle personality plays an important part of the buying decision.



What's Good:

- Build quality
- Value for money
- Safety technology

What's Not:

- Hard plastic interior
- Poor performance
- Rear seat room

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 70/100

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|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | |
| Comfort | 7 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 7 | Towing Ability | 5 |
| Performance | 7 | Off Road Ability | 5 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 8 |



SUBARU XV 2.0i-S AWD

\$39,423 RDAP



With the launch in June 2017, the second generation MY18 Subaru XV went from boring to bold and is based on the recently developed and released Subaru Global Platform (SGP) first seen in Australia in the Impreza.



With the launch in June 2017, the second generation MY18 Subaru XV went from boring to bold and is based on the recently developed and released Subaru Global Platform (SGP) first seen in Australia in the Impreza. The top of the range is the XV 2.0i-S which we are testing here. Looking at the XV, it is obvious the external changes have dramatically freshened the styling. It is one of those cars whose appeal grows the longer you have it. It looks good from almost any angle, which is difficult for most cars.

Key external features are the sleek roof rails, rear roof spoiler, revised tail lights and the LED headlights. These LED headlights in Subaru XV 2.0i-S include advanced functions such as Steering Responsive Head lights (SRH) and LED daytime running lights (DRL). The MY18 XV is a little bit bolder, a little bit longer, a bit sharper and a little bit sleeker. This sums up the new XV exactly, little changes almost everywhere with some big changes adding up to a complete redesign.

The major difference with the new generation XV is the new SGP which transforms the vehicle. Body and chassis rigidity are increased significantly between 1.7 and 2-times that of the superseded model and huge improvements are made to the suspension and associated systems.

Subaru was previously always at the cutting edge with design and features for its segment.

They lost their way for a while but recently have surged ahead again. This is obviously displayed in its interior. It has a quality ambiance to it with soft touch fascia, leather accentuated trim, highlight stitching and a redesigned layout that focuses on the driver with a subtle sophistication beyond most others in the segment.



Rob Fraser Reviews

It's surprising how comfortable the driver's position feels. The front heated leather seats are very supportive, despite the lack of an adjustable lumbar support. The driver's seat is electronically adjusted and with the height and reach adjustable, relatively thick rimmed steering wheel, I found a really comfortable position.

The steering wheel has redesigned spoke controls, thick stalks that sit away from the steering wheel spokes for greater visibility and the clear instinctive dual dial dash that has a centre MFD. It all feels integrated and is clear and easy to read and use.

The centre console stack houses the really cool widescreen 6.5 inch MFD that provides a host of variable information including X Mode, which can be selected by the driver. Below that is a large 8 inch screen that allows smartphone connectivity based on Apple CarPlay™ and Android Auto™ services and is used to boost mobile connection functionality.

Visibility for the driver is excellent. The electro chromatic rear view mirror, along with the reasonably sized heated external mirrors, afford a clear view all around. The reversing camera is great and the large blind spot indicators are perfect.

Inside there is a feeling of more space and that is a direct result of the new global platform. The XV wheelbase has increased 30mm and the car is 20mm wider. Inside, cabin width is up 29mm at the front and 34mm rear with distance between seat centres up 20mm. Rear leg room also gains 26mm.

I am 190cm tall and considerably larger than the average bear and I felt comfortable in the front seats. I am not the typical rear seat passenger, especially behind myself, but for a normal sized couple there is adequate room for daytrip adventures etc. and is a comfortable four seater.

For the front occupants there is plenty of head, shoulder and leg room. I can even put my arm down the side of the driver's seat, which is not common on vehicles in this size segment. The boot is relatively large however it is shallow and I'm not sure why, considering the spare is a space saver. The rear seats fold flat easily to allow for a fairly long rear storage area.

The Subaru XV 2.0i-S is packed with features that you would normally associate with larger, more expensive vehicles. The list of additional standard features includes new generation touchscreen infotainment system with Apple CarPlay™ and Android Auto™ connectivity, front fog lights with steering responsive LED head lights with integrated DRLs, tyre pressure monitoring system, 18-inch alloy wheels and electric sunroof.





The 8-inch touchscreen has a factory fitted SatNav powered by TomTom and there's also dual zone fully automatic air conditioning, electric folding mirrors with integrated indicators, leather accented trim steering wheel and gear shift, automatic head lights with High Beam Assist and automatic front wipers.

Overall, inside there are some big ticks for the new XV: plenty of room, sophisticated styling, packed with features and it's comfortable for taller drivers.

The XV is powered by the 2.0-litre direct-injection normally aspirated four cylinder boxer engine, producing power of 115Kw @ 6000rpm and torque of 196Nm @ 4000rpm. This is mated to a seven speed CVT. I'm not normally a fan of a CVT and the previous model absolutely wasn't a favourite. My personal preference is that the XV had more power or at least a diesel engine option as well. The CVT is quiet and smooth in normal driving conditions and is definitely an improvement. It is a little noisy under stress and to maximise power delivery and economy it could be better matched to the engine. The Subaru XV is by no means a powerhouse, but when kept in its rev range, it is tractable enough for most situations. There is no manual option.

As mentioned, the new XV sits on Subaru's new global platform. Without going into too much detail, the new platform is a game changer for the segment. It leaps and bounds ahead of most of the competition. It allows dynamic handling, a smooth and complaint ride and is combined with revised suspension geometry. The steering feels solid, though a little vague, but with enough feedback. The XV feels planted to the road.

Road noise is minimised, especially on course chip bitumen and dirt roads. We've driven across a good mix of surfaces with many sections of dirt, corrugations and potholes. The XV only lost composure a few times and it was being pushed, more than most drivers would. The redesign has also reduced the NVH levels to a cut below others in the segment. The XV will surprise many with its genuine light off-road capabilities.

The XV is great for dirt roads and forest trails, heading down that track to get to your favourite mountain bike trail or on the beach for some fishing and surfing. It is ideally suited to the adventurous couple that wants more than a normal wagon can provide. However, the front approach and rear departure angles will limit how far off the road you can venture.

The features that provide the enhanced off road capability and handling are 220mm of ground clearance, Subaru Symmetrical AWD and X-Mode. The Subaru Symmetrical AWD system has been around for ages now and is brilliant. The extra ground clearance allows the XV to go many places others won't and X-Mode brings technology to the fore.

SUBARU XV 2.0i-S AWD

\$39,423 RDAP

Rob Fraser Reviews

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Model | Subaru XV 2.0i-S |
| Model Price | \$39,423 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.0L Boxer Petrol |
| Drivetrain | 7 Sp CVT AWD |
| Power | 115kW @ 6,000rpm |
| Torque | 196Nm @ 4,000rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 159g/km |
| Economy ADR | 7.0L/100 km |
| Servicing | 3 Yrs capped price |
| Tow Rating | Max 1,400 kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 140 kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / Unlimited km 1 Yrs Roadside Assist |



When X-Mode is engaged, at 40 km/h or less, status information is displayed on the MFD and instrument cluster, including Hill Descent Control and Vehicle Dynamics Control. X-Mode centralizes control of the engine, All-Wheel Drive, brakes and other critical components to help ensure safe driving even on poor surfaces. Hill Descent Control helps maintain a constant speed when the vehicle is travelling downhill. Having tested this on a number of occasions on dirt tracks I can attest to the effectiveness. It is as good as some of the heavy 4WD wagons I have tested.

The MY18 Subaru XV has a 5 star ANCAP safety rating with dual front, side, curtain and a driver's knee airbags. Every XV features Vehicle Dynamics Control and Active Torque Vectoring (ATV). ATV helps the car turn better and improves response with steering and control. When the car is turning, VDC applies brakes to the inner wheels, which routes more drive power to the outer wheels.

The 2.0i-S also features a suite of safety-enhancing Vision Assist features that include: blind spot detection (BSD), high beam assist, lane change assist (LCA), rear cross traffic alert (RCTA), reverse automatic braking (RAB), steering responsive headlights (SRH), rear view reversing camera and the latest third generation EyeSight driver assist system, pre-collision braking, adaptive cruise control (ACC) and emergency stop signal (ESS). You could be forgiven for simply glossing over these safety features, however a lot of these don't even feature on way more expensive cars. Their availability sets the Subaru XV apart.

The MY18 Subaru XV 2.0i-S AWD SUV is bloody good, but like most things, not perfect. It is a dramatic improvement on the previous generation model and is class-leading. Overall, I would say that Subaru has almost got it spot on for the young or older adventurous couple that don't need a full on 4WD wagon, but want to venture further afield than the main roads. The 2018 Subaru XV 2.0i-S AWD SUV has become a winner in its first year with the 2017 OzRoamer COTY Award for SUV Under \$45,000



What's Good:

- Stylish Looks
- Safety features
- Surprisingly fun to drive

What's Not:

- Engine slightly underpowered
- CVT mismatched to engine
- No diesel option

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 82/100

| | | | |
|------------------|----|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 10 | Towing Ability | 6 |
| Performance | 6 | Off Road Ability | 6 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |



SUZUKI VITARA S TURBO AWD

\$37,209 RDAP

"Vitara feels nippy and eager. Handling is good, especially for such a tall vehicle and ride is excellent."



by Alan Zurvas



Entry level SUVs are thick on the ground, so it's important that old hands like Suzuki keep up with the crowd. Suzuki Vitara has both two and four-wheel drive, manual and auto, and petrol and diesel drivetrains. We are testing here the Vitara S Turbo AWD SUV.

Two tone paint, red and black in our case, look great. Matched to 17" black wheels, 215/55 tyres give the exterior a bit of polish. LED headlights give the front end a touch of unexpected luxury. For such a small SUV, Vitara is set very high. With 185 mm ground clearance and a total height of 1610 mm, it is easy to step in to without having to stretch or bend. The tailgate raises high enough for all but the tallest users. Parking sensors all-round give the Suzuki a sense of ease when parking. Smart entry/start is used via small rubber buttons on the front door handles, meaning the key can stay in your pocket for the duration.



The cabin is surprisingly comfortable. There are plenty of bins, cubby holes, cup holders (2), and bottles holders (4). There are 2 isofix, and 3 child-restraint points across the rear seats, which fold 60/40 from a single lever on the seat back on each side. It takes only a moment to achieve an almost flat rear cargo hold.

S Turbo comes with "sporty" red stitching and partial leather upholstery. The support is enough for most people, and I found particularly comfortable. You won't be driving Vitara like a sporty red hatch anyway, but you'll still be able to have lots of fun. All instruments are easily useable without reaching, including the drive mode, and hill descent controls.

by Alan Zurvas

Steering wheel buttons are clearly laid out, as are the rest of the controls. There is both cruise control and speed limiting. Dash trim panels can be optioned with different colours to give the cabin a personal touch. Swivel circular vents allow air flow to be precisely directed, and is by far, the best way to handle ventilation. There is nothing worse than frozen elbows or hands.

Apple CarPlay/Android Auto is standard, and is displayed on a 7" touch screen. Touch screen LCD's have proved themselves as being the easiest interface, and one which almost anyone can use without trouble.

There is "privacy" tinted glass on all but the front windows and windscreen. It gives the cabin a feeling of wrapping the occupants. The cargo hold has an under floor section, and includes a space saver spare tyre. Of course, it means you have to empty the boot when you get a flat, but at least you won't be stranded.

Some of the plastics feel a little cheap, but then this is a fairly cheap car. The trade-off is vast amounts of space, and great tech. The sound from the audio system is rather good, though not outstanding. There are power windows all round, but no power tailgate. That's more than made up for by smart entry and start.

S Turbo has a 103kW/220Nm 1.4 turbo 4cyl petrol engine. It is coupled to a 6 speed auto, with either 2 front wheel drive, or all-wheel drive (Allgrip) with 4 modes. Although we didn't get a chance to try much in the way of off-roading, the hill hold and hill descent works the same as it does in other models.

It requires 95ron fuel. Fuel figures around 6.2 are claimed, but ours were slightly higher at 7.5L/100k. There is a 6-speed manual, a 1.6 petrol non-turbo 4 cyl, and a 1.6 turbo diesel in other models. The steering is light. It makes parking easy, and when coupled with sensors front and rear, city trips are dispatched with confidence. The sensors display distance in a graphic in the centre LCD touch screen.

Ride is excellent. It is far more compliant than I expected. You will probably use Vitara for its high driving position around town, so, a smooth experience is important. As you become familiar with the car, you find yourself able to throw it around like a small hatch. The handling is somewhere between SUV and sedan, with McPherson struts at the front, and a torsion beam rear end. Vitara feels light and easy, and a real pleasure. Not class leading, but certainly among the better small SUVs.



by Alan Zurvas

| | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Model | Suzuki Vitara S turbo |
| Model Price | \$37,209 RDAP |
| Engine | 1.4L Turbo Petrol |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp AT AWD |
| Power | 103kW @ 5,500rpm |
| Torque | 220Nm @ 1,500rpm |
| Safety | S Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 145g/km |
| Economy ADR | 6.2L/100 km |
| Servicing | 5 Yrs capped price |
| Tow Rating | Max 1,200kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 100kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km |



There are 4 drive modes: Sport, Snow, Auto and Lock, and are controlled by a push/turn knob setup. There are 7 airbags including a knee bag for the driver. Seatbelts have pretensioners and there is a suite of stability controls. These include: brake assist (ABS, EBD, ESC, and hill start assist).

Hill descent control is standard on the AllGrip models. A high seating position gives many drivers extra confidence by improving their view of traffic. Towing is limited to 1200 kg. 185 mm ground clearance, Approach 18.2 , Ramp over 17.7 , 28.2 , makes light off-roading possible. There is hill descent and hill start electronic assistance via the ABS. (hill descent selectable via a button).

For anyone wanting more space than a sedan or hatch, but don't want to spend too much, Vitara should be on the shopping list. I didn't expect to like it. I thought it would be a little too "lightweight" to be a serious contender, but as we got to know each other a little better, we became good mates.

CarPlay adds complete hands-free handling of phone/music/navigation functions while in cell range, and built in SatNav is available for use out bush if you want. The engine is more than enough for most drivers. There is only a small turbo-lag, but that's to be expected.

Vitara feels nippy and eager. Handling is good, especially for such a tall vehicle, and ride is excellent. This Suzuki is perfect for a 2nd car, or for a down-sizer. For long trips, I'd prefer something with more beef. Off-roading would be confined to lighter duties only, with the same applying to towing. The smaller external dimensions make ideal for the fringe city dwellers with a bit of extra land, but don't want the hassle and expense of a full-size SUV, but still want the driving position.



What's Good:

- Good looks
- Android Auto / Apple Car Play
- Economy

What's Not:

- Hard plastic interior
- Old fashioned inside
- Audio needs more bass

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 78/100

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|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 5 |
| Performance | 7 | Off Road Ability | 7 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 9 |

TOYOTA CH-R KOBA AWD**\$39,418 RDAP**

The Toyota C-HR Koba is certainly a statement. You should buy it if you want to be noticed. I do feel that the design will date quickly though, but then again I am not a vehicle designer. Some people love it some hate it. It isn't as polarising as the FJ Cruiser was, but close.



by Rob Fraser



It's unusual when there is a gap in the market that Toyota doesn't cover. Yet the small AWD SUV segment was such a gap. Fear no more Toyota launched in early 2017 the visually stunning C-HR. I never will understand what the theory behind naming some cars is, however the unusually named and looking Toyota C-HR has jumped headlong into the small SUV segment that is rapidly growing. It apparently stands for Coupe High Rider!

In this segment the preference of 2WD is similar to AWD as most of these are trendy urban run-arounds that often don't negotiate anything harder than running over the edge of the roundabout. We are however testing the Toyota C-HR Koba AWD SUV for this review. The C-HR is designed for the tough streets of Surry Hills with weekend excursions to the Hunter Valley (You can tell I am Sydney based). The looks are equally as important if not more important as the functionality. To say the C-HR is a different design is an understatement.

It takes on different personalities from different angles with a powerful lower body, raised ground clearance and muscular wheel arches housing 18 inch alloy wheels that project a certain strength. It also has a coupe like personality, enhanced by the sleek hidden rear door handles.



While C-HR looks compact from the outside, it is marginally longer and wider than a Corolla hatch, employing the higher ride height of an SUV and a longer wheelbase. It is 4,360mm long, 1,795mm wide, 1,565mm high and has a 2,640mm wheelbase.

Toyota C-HR Koba is fitted with LED daytime running lamps, fog lamps, and bi-LED headlamps with Toyota's first use of sequential turn indicators - 12 LEDs that illuminate in sequence over just 0.2 seconds.

by Rob Fraser

Side mirrors are electronically adjustable with an auto folding function and can be heated by using the rear-window demister switch. An LED "puddle lamp" illuminates the ground with the C-HR logo when unlocking the doors. The aggressive grill, wrap around headlights integrate with the sweeping roofline into a large, highly aerodynamic, skeletal-frame rear spoiler. To the rear, the strongly tapered cabin integrates a top-hinged tailgate that gives access to the 377-litre luggage area. Standing proud of the tapering body work, prominent taillight clusters endow the rear with an equally expressive visual signature. Brake lights are a single LED for the stop lamp and LEDs for the indicator and reverse lights.

Reinforcing its urban existence the Toyota C-HR takes vehicle customising to a whole new level with an extensive range of highlighted body garnishes, centre wheel caps and mirror covers that can be updated for enhanced personalisation. The new Toyota C-HR provides a 'blank canvas' for Toyota C-HR owners to express their individuality. Unique to Koba is the option of two-tone paint - adding a white roof to bronze, blue, yellow or teal body paint, or a black roof to white, yellow or silver cars. Add to that the ability to option up the C-HR with a range of Toyota genuine accessories.

Internally the C-HR Koba doesn't feel small. The low coupe style doesn't compromise headroom, thanks to the low seating positions made possible by the new platform. When you're getting in and out the low seats are noticeable, it is really more coupe like. There is plenty of room for the front occupants. Front seats are exceptionally comfortable, heated with electrical adjustment and lumbar support. The height and reach adjustable leather steering wheel houses the usual controls. The Koba does provide a cocooned drivers position with clear view of the dash and the 4.2 inch MFD. Funky interior lighting and soft touch surfaces add to the interior ambiance. It's one of those cars that you feel comfortable in the moment you sit in it.

Visibility is a mixed bag. Forward visibility is great with the extra 'A' frame quarter windows compensating for the thick 'A' pillars. External rear view mirrors also give good visibility. Over the shoulder and through the rear, the visibility is limited thanks to a small rear window and massively thick 'C' pillars. The rear mirror is auto dimming. Rear seats are restricted for anything other smaller adults and better suited for two passengers. However this is typical of most vehicles in this class. Rear headroom for taller passengers is also restricted. They fold in a 60/40 configuration to increase the boot area. Overall storage is adequate.

C-HR Koba features include: satellite navigation - SUNA Live Traffic*, safety alert, 4WD tracks, unsealed roads, dual-zone automatic air-conditioning, multimedia system with 6.1-inch display audio with six speakers, AM/FM radio, CD player, USB and AUX input, Bluetooth®, Toyota link** connected mobility, Pandora, travel times, rain sensing wipers, automatic high beam headlights, smart start and entry and illuminated sun visors. Toyota's refusal to incorporate Android Auto and Apple Car Play is a major limiting factor in this market segment. The Toyota Link system just can't match the functionality and ease of use of those two systems.



By Rob Fraser

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | Toyota CH-R Koba |
| Model Price | \$39,418 RDAP |
| Engine | 1.2 T 4 Cyl Petrol |
| Drivetrain | 7 Sp CVT AWD |
| Power | 85 kW @ 5600 rpm |
| Torque | 185 Nm @ 1500 rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 148 g/km |
| Economy ADR | 6.5 L/100 km |
| Servicing | Capped Price |
| Tow Rating | Max 600 kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 60 kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km OPT Roadside Assist |



The C-HR Koba comes with a 1.2-litre four-cylinder turbocharged petrol engine that has a constant peak torque of 185Nm between 1,500 and 4,000rpm and maximum power of 85kW at 5,600rpm. This transfers to the road through a seven speed sequential shift CVT and dynamic torque control part-time AWD system. Koba also has active cruise control. Fuel combined-cycle economy is a claimed 6.3 litres/100km and CO₂ emissions from 141 grams/km. Surprisingly the Koba has a sporty flavour. I say surprisingly, given the low power and torque figures. It is more fun to drive than a Corolla. Don't mistake it for a sport SUV, rather it has some character, more than a boring drive. This comes from a linear responsiveness to driver inputs. Taking the Koba any further than a dirt road, or weekends to the snow will quickly show limitations and towing is not a strong point. It is an urban warrior SUV.

The C-HR Koba has a five star ANCAP safety rating and safety features include: pre-collision safety system, autonomous emergency braking, active cruise control, lane departure alert with steering assist, sway warning system, blind spot monitor, rear cross-traffic alert, reversing camera, seven airbags, including driver's knee airbag, vehicle stability and traction control, trailer sway control, anti-skid brakes, hill-start assist control, brake assist, electronic brake-force distribution, brake hold, advanced pitching control, front (4) and rear (4) parking sensors.

The Toyota C-HR Koba is certainly a statement. You should buy it if you want to be noticed. I do feel that the design will date quickly though, but then again I am not a vehicle designer. Some people love it some hate it. It isn't as polarising as the FJ Cruiser was, but close.

Let's face it, the C-HR is a Toyota, which means great functionality, reliability, practicality, thrown in with edgy design and a sporty character. They will sell heaps.



What's Good:

- Style and design
- Ride & Handling
- Packed with features

What's Not:

- Some distracting technology
- Underpowered and CVT
- Poor towing and off road ability

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 70/100

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|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 8 |
| Comfort | 7 | Fit for Purpose | 8 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 3 |
| Performance | 7 | Off Road Ability | 5 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 8 |

OZROAMER 2017 AWD SUV \$45000 - \$60,000 AWARD

The \$45,000 - \$60,000 AWD SUV segment is probably one of the fastest growing and competitive segments with excellent AWD vehicles offered from any number of manufacturers.

We have selected what we believe represents the best of the vehicles on offer for this year's award.

The selected vehicles include two very strong competitors in the Kia Sportage GT Line (a previous winner in this segment) and the all new Hyundai Tucson, which has the style to lead the segment.

Audi has popped in with the stunning Q2, but just, as the options list will escalate the price easily.

Along side this we have included a variation of last year's winner. This year we have the 2.5i Premium petrol engine Outback, rather than the diesel.

Mazda CX5 Akari diesel is nominated, the best selling vehicle in the segment. The recently released, all new Honda CRV VT1-LX is packed with features, space and very affordable.

Finally we have the revamped VW Tiguan in Highline TSI format.

We have a new leader in the segment!



AUDI Q2 2.0L TDI QUATTRO SPORT**\$54,744 RDAP**

The Audi Q2 has something about it that differentiates it from the others. It immediately makes you feel at home with it when approaching. Style is a personal thing obviously but the Q2 really appealed to me. The Q2 is absolutely designed as an urban warrior.

by Rob Fraser



Audi launched the Q2 into the highly competitive small compact AWD SUV premium market segment. The compact segment has seen the most growth in recent years with almost all manufacturers having an entry level model. The vehicle we are testing here is the Audi Q2 2.0L TDi Quattro 7 speed S Tronic.

There is something quite special happening at Audi lately. Every new model they have released lately, they seem to just get it right in both design language and vehicle features etc. The Audi Q2 has something about it that differentiates it from the others. It immediately makes you feel at home with it when approaching. Style is a personal thing obviously but the Q2 really appealed to me. Audi's polygonal design style has got edgy spot on without being ugly, unlike one or two of Audi's main competitors. Externally the Q2 has that coupe style, while retaining plenty of internal space. It could arguably be the most stylish offering in this segment.



The vehicle measures 1.51 metres tall and 1.79 metres wide. The overhangs are short with a vehicle length of 4.19 metres and a wheelbase of 2.60 metres. While it is some 200mm shorter than the Q3 the wheelbases are almost identical with about 5mm difference from memory.

Where the Q2 differs is that it has less front and rear overhang. These measurements go a long way to the feeling of a sporty design.

This is the same platform that the brilliant A3 is built on. The Q2 is designed for the younger couple or maybe with a single child, maybe, while the Q3 is designed more for the entry traditional SUV buyer.

by Rob Fraser

Internally the stylish design continues with the overall ambience of quality and a subtle sporty feel. Again Audi is doing things just right with their excellent interiors. It offers comfortable (read higher than a sports car) entry and good visibility, but also a sporty seating position for the driver and front passenger. Both front seats are height adjustable. A power lumbar support and heated seats are available as options, with the centre armrest as standard. With the sport seats, standard with the sport line and S line sport package, the angle and length of the seat cushion can also be adjusted. The rear seats are also comfortably upholstered.

Despite the descending, coupe-like roof line, adults enjoy enough headroom, but in all SUV's this size the knee and leg room is limited. There are numerous storage compartments available for all seats but the overall nick knock storage is limited. The optional storage compartment and luggage compartment package provides additional storage space.

What is impressive is the flexibility and openness of the boot space. The side walls of the luggage compartment are vertical and plain and the loading sill low at 74 centimetres. Because the springs and dampers are installed separately, the compartment between the wheel arches measures exactly one metre. In the standard configuration, luggage capacity is 405 litres. The rear seats will fold almost flat and are operated by using a handle on the upper edge of the backrest. This gives a capacity of 1050 litres. The standard rear bench is split 60:40, an optional 40:20:40 three-way split version is also available. When folded down, the narrow centre section serves either as an armrest with cup holder or a through-loading facility. A power tailgate is available as an option.

Going back to the drivers position again, the Q2 provides a comfortable and engaging experience. The normal and sports seats are comfortable. Unfortunately lumbar support for the base seats is an option. Along with the very impressive Audi 'virtual cockpit' and convenient optional head-up display, the steering wheel perfectly frames the dash and being thick rimmed feels great in your hands. There is a very familiar and comfortable feel to the cockpit.

The centre console houses Audi's intelligent, intuitive Multi Media Interface (MMI), an infotainment and navigation system, which can be operated by a rotary/push-button scratch pad control and a touchpad (on MMI Navigation plus) on the central control element. I am never a big fan of these adornments, but the Audi scratch pad is better than most.

In addition, the system can be conveniently controlled by voice, known as natural language operation, and the integrated MMI search. Audi Connect, Google Earth and Google Search functionality, along with a Wi-Fi hotspot, enables surfing and streaming with mobile devices. The now prevalent scratch pad dial knob mostly works but is occasionally frustrating. I do particularly like the transmission lever in preference to the squarer style in some of Audi's larger vehicles.



by Rob Fraser



All round visibility is also good for this type of vehicle. To complement that, there are the driver assistance systems for the Audi Q2 that come directly from the upper luxury classes. The Audi pre sense plus (AEB) system recognises critical situations with other vehicles, as well as pedestrians crossing in front of the vehicle, while driving at speeds of up to 85 km/h. If necessary, Audi pre sense plus can initiate hard braking, to a standstill, at low speeds.

Other systems in the line-up include adaptive cruise control with Stop & Go function, the lane-departure warning system Audi side assist, the lane-keeping assistant Audi active lane assist, and cross-traffic assist rear which supports the driver while reversing out of tight situations. The all-new Q2 has been awarded a five- star ANCAP safety rating.

Driving the Q2 provides an integrated experience. The 2.0L TDi has figures of 110kW/340Nm and brings its 340Nm of torque in at a relatively low 1,750rpm which promotes a relaxed almost lazy driving style, allowing plenty of response when needed and excellent fuel economy of an ADR 5.0 l/100km. That is stunning and normal driving should see you get close to that.

The Quattro system on the 2.0 TDi has been explained many times before. It is simply brilliant and installs exemplary road manners and safety. The Q2 Quattro has a sporty seven-speed Stronic dual-clutch automatic transmission as standard.

We have managed to drive the Q2 over a multitude of driving experiences, from heavy city traffic, expressway driving, some dirt road and lots of hilly windy back roads that were a delight to drive the Q2 on. Throughout all the days driving, the thought running through my mind was that in the small compact segment there is nothing that rides and handles anywhere near as good as the Q2.

The electromechanical steering provides more than enough feedback and becomes more sensitive to input towards the limits of turning. The sport nature of the Q2 manifests itself in a firm but compliant ride. The 18 inch alloy wheels and tyres provide a good compromise between compliance and handling. There is a little road noise on the larger rims as well but noticeably little wind noise at all.

The Q2 is absolutely designed as an urban warrior. While it has a 147mm ground clearance, it is more suited to the trips to the ski fields (in quattro format) than any sort of adventurous dirt road driving and definitely NO off road driving. It will tow 1,600Kg with a tow ball weight of 160kg, which is ideal for the Jet Ski etc.

AUDI Q2 2.0L TDI QUATTRO SPORT

\$54,744 RDAP

by Rob Fraser

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|------------------------|---|
| Model | Audi Q2 2.0L TDi |
| Model Price | \$54,744 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.0 L 4 Cyl TDi |
| Drivetrain | 7 Sp Stronic QUATTRO |
| Power | 110kW @ 3,500rpm |
| Torque | 340Nm @ 1,750rpm |
| Safety | 5 STAR ANCAP |
| CO2 | 131g/km |
| Economy ADR | 5.0L/100 km |
| Servicing | Service Plan |
| Tow Rating | 1,800kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 180kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / Unlimited km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



The Q2 is not a sports SUV, nor is it an SUV for off road use. It is, as mentioned, an urban warrior that is aimed right at the younger, technologically advanced, upwardly mobile buyers that want more than a sedan or coupe. They want that quality and sporty nature but also the versatility and practicality of the SUV body shape. Personally I believe Audi has nailed the brief and I reckon they will sell like hotdogs at a baseball game. The entry level pricing for the Q2 is pretty sharp for the 2.0 TDI quattro sport for \$54,744 RDAP, especially when you consider the impressive level of standard inclusions. However, like most Audi's, there is an extensive and expensive options list with convenient packages that can add sometimes 20% or more to the price of the vehicle.

The list of standard inclusions feature : autonomous emergency braking (AEB), MMI Navigation, Bluetooth and smartphone interface, voice control and parking system plus with rear view camera. a utomatic air-conditioning with dualzone climate control, leather-appointed seats, auto-dimming interior mirror, a contrasting C-pillar blade and 18-inch alloy wheels round out the key highlights. The 2.0 TDI quattro also gains an electric tailgate, sport seats and Audi side assist as standard equipment.

While the ability to customise my vehicle has little appeal to me it is obviously an important feature to those much younger. Audi caters to this with an attractive 'Design line' styling package, including contrasting high-gloss elements, c pillar colour choice and 17-inch alloy wheels. Additional high-value option packages combining styling, technology, convenience features and driver assistance systems are also offered.

"The all-new Audi Q2 urban SUV will appeal to a new range of young and young-at heart buyers," said Andrew Doyle, Managing Director of Audi Australia. Disappointingly I was told I was euphemistically, firmly placed in the "young at heart" category. Apparently I am older than I feel and look much older than I am!



What's Good:

- Power and economy
- Ride and dynamic handling
- Style, design, quality

What's Not:

- Price can jump with options
- Limited storage areas
- Internal high waist on doors

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 82/100

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|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 6 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 5 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 8 |

HONDA CRV VTI-LX AWD

\$48,662 RDAP



In summary the CRV hits a sweet spot between conservative and exciting. The CRV VTI-LX AWD SUV has an almost unbeatable combination of practical use of very large internal space, comfort, ease of use and AWD capability, stacked with features and safety and excellent value for money.

by David Brown



There was a time when vehicles with power to all the wheels were called four-wheel drives. They were rough and tough. Made for the great outdoors. But in the second half of the 90s some small to medium four-wheel drives came onto the market and we were on our way to Sports Utility Vehicles. One of the earliest was the Honda CRV. No clearer indication than the move away from the bush bashing image was the CRV's all-wheel drive system which operated mostly in front-wheel-drive mode and gave power to the rear wheels only after the car sensed that you needed it to overcome slippage which horrified the purists.

Honda has now launched their 5th generation CRV to the market. The all new Honda CRV comes in 5 model variants, both 2WD and AWD, but with one engine and transmission combination. The previous Honda CRV 's have been very successful with over 9 million sold worldwide and over 170,000 sold in Australia. The 5th generation CRV is totally new with 0 % carryover.

We are testing here the VTI-LX AWD SUV. As a summary of what you get, features include smart keyless entry, an 8-speaker sound

system, electric parking brake with automatic brake hold, LED daylight running lights, 18 inch wheels, a power tailgate, satellite navigation, front and rear parking sensors and dusk sensing headlights. Continue with a sunroof, heated front seats and an electrically operated driver's seat. Top of the range specific features are LED headlights and active cornering lights, digital radio, privacy glass and auto dimming rear view mirror. It is only available in four-wheel drive and seats five people.

The exterior of the car is more evolution than revolution. It has a longer bonnet and short rear overhang that makes it look modern without going over the top with too many graphic design features



by David Brown

The nose is part way between a strong SUV and a sedan, the side and back of the vehicle are quite plain with most of its character coming from the shape of the windows. The rear window has just enough of a slope to avoid looking like a square, soulless station wagon. The increase in dimensions include wheelbase 44 mm, length 11 mm and width 35 mm. They have improved ground clearance with the all-wheel-drive versions 10 mm higher. Honda claims it to be the most aerodynamically efficient vehicle in its class which they achieve with narrow A-pillars, flush mounted glass, hidden windscreen wipers with flat bands and sealed hinges.

Once you step inside the overall impression is of space. Honda have maximised the internal space. Honda has designed an alternative dash that has digital readout and a host of information. It is unusual but easy to read and clear to understand. Stalks for the indicators are clear of the steering wheel spokes so are easy to see and access. The steering wheel houses what has now become familiar controls. Honda's continuing decision to mount the transmission lever on the centre stack allows a flexible and large centre console storage area. There is ample room for bottles in the door pockets and rear doors as well.

The black/grey interior with silver trim doesn't jump out at you but equally it didn't look cheap. There is a 7-inch touch screen which is a little small but fortunately it has Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto. The Advanced Display Audio system offers most popular audio formats, including AM/FM radio, Bluetooth® connectivity with audio streaming, digital radio (DAB+) and as mentioned compatibility with the Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto platforms.

One key feature is that the 'A' pillars are resigned to provide more visibility through roundabouts and corners etc. Visibility through the rear is pretty good, but another key feature is the reversing camera, which has three modes and provides excellent clarity. The general seating and driving position was extremely comfortable and there was good legroom in both the front and second row of seats. Visibility is also improved. And there is a fold down centre arm rest for drinks and two USB ports for the kid's electronic gadgets. The rear doors open 90 degrees to allow ease of access.. One failing for a family vehicle is the fact that child seat tethers are at the roof in the rear not on the seat backs. This severely restricts the flexibility of the vehicle and is a major flaw.

The rear seats also fold flat to give a rear boot area some 1.83m in length with plenty of volume as well. The cargo space with the second row of seats raised is 522 litres which is 34 litres less than the previous model. It would also be good to see some hooks or other restraints so your shopping doesn't float around in the luggage area. In the cargo area there were two half-decent lights, one on each side which is better than nothing. The boot area has an adjustable height rear door that has a safety sensor if someone's fingers are in the way or standing behind the door when it opens. The load area is lower and overall space is voluminous. There is a full size spare alloy as well.



HONDA CRV VTI-LX AWD

\$48,662 RDAP

by David Brown

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|-----------------|---|
| Model | Honda VTI-LX |
| Model Price | \$48,662 RDAP |
| Engine | 1.5L4 Cyl Turbo |
| Drivetrain | CVT AWD |
| Power | 140kW @ 5,600rpm |
| Torque | 240Nm @ 2,000rpm |
| Safety | 5 STAR ANCAP |
| CO2 | 168g/km |
| Economy ADR | 7.4 L/100 km |
| Servicing | 3 Years Free |
| Tow Rating | 1,500kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 100 kg |
| Warranty | 4 Yrs / 100,000 km 4 Yrs Roadside Assist |



The VTEC turbo in line 4-cylinder engine provides 140kW @ 5,600rpm of power and torque of 240Nm @ 2,000-5,000rpm through a new CVT and has either 2WD or Real Time AWD with Intelligent Control System™ available. The CVT doesn't like outright acceleration, but is responsive and with a flat torque delivery.

The new 5th generation CRV feels good from the start. It is a quiet, enjoyable ride and the handling has also been improved significantly. It holds the road well and turns in to corners with confidence. The steering is helped with a new dual-pinion, variable gear ratio Motion-Adaptive Electric Power Steering system.

Manoeuvring the vehicle is made easier and safer with a reversing cameras and Honda's LaneWatch. This provides a camera to give a broader view of the passenger-side roadway with a real-time picture on the center navigation screen when you put your left-hand blinker on or you can switch it on all the time. There are a number of new safety features on the CRV including: LED daytime running lights, front fog lights, driver attention monitor, tyre pressure monitoring system and trailer stability assist, front and rear parking sensors and rain sensing wipers. VTI-LX specifically features the Honda Sensing Suite of driver assist technologies which includes: adaptive cruise control with low speed follow; forward collision warning; collision mitigation braking system; lane departure warning; road departure mitigation system; and lane keeping assist system.

In summary the CRV hits a sweet spot between conservative and exciting. The CRV VTI-LX AWD SUV has an almost unbeatable combination of practical use of very large internal space, comfort, ease of use and AWD capability, stacked with features and safety and excellent value for money. Honda is back and the VTI-LX AWD SUV is a worthy winner of this year's award.



What's Good:

- Standard features
- Cavernous internal space
- Value for money

What's Not:

- Child seat fixing points
- Noisy CVT
- No diesel option

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 84/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 10 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 5 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 6 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 10 |

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HYUNDAI TUCSON HIGHLANDER 1.6T

\$50,021 RDAP

The Hyundai Tucson medium sized SUV epitomises how the Korean car industry has come of age. Quality design, well constructed products that offer practicality, comfort and safety.



by David Brown



The Hyundai Tucson medium sized SUV epitomises how the Korean car industry has come of age. Quality design, well constructed products that offer practicality, comfort and safety.

The current model is the third generation of a vehicle that we use to call the ix35 in Australia. Upgrading from the second generation was a big step in terms of the quality of what was offered and how it performed. The third generation was launched here in 2015 and has a few model touch-ups since but that doesn't mean that the Tucson is behind the times. The vehicle is available in four models: The Active; Active X; Elite; and Highlander.

It is usually seen as being a vehicle for families. Two parents, up to two kids and an occasional one of their friends doing the school pickup service, sports days or car loaded to the hilt on a family holiday. This idea is too limited. It has a versatility that provides for opportunities that need enough room for adventures and with a degree of non-bitumen conditions or the snow.



The outside looks are not earth shattering. It comes from a heritage of practicality and a solid character rather than having to make a fashion statement. It has moved beyond the look of a hard-driving, off-roader with square design lines but it is still more traditional than Hyundai's new smaller SUV, the Kona.

Part of its practical function is the back tailgate with headroom for most people when the tail gate is opened. The Highlander has an electric tailgate. Like the top model Sante Fe, the Tucson's electric tailgate is meant to open when you walk up to it with the car's key in your pocket. A great feature if you are carrying the groceries.

by David Brown

But its operation depends on certain other factors such as whether the car is locked. Several people tried to understand how and when it operates by using intuition and trying several variations but consistency could never be found. Like many things in modern cars you need to spend some time with the owner's manual.

Like the exterior, the interior is solid and functional. The base model gets a 7-inch touchscreen which increases to 8-inches in the Elite and Highlander specs. A newly developed satellite navigation unit brings range-wide Apple CarPlay™ and Android Auto compatibility that works well if you have your phone plugged in. One tester tried the sat-nav without a phone and got no-where. The layout of the switches and dials is good especially the cruise control with steering-wheel mounted controls. The Highlanders gets colour for its 4.2" LCD with trip computer & digital speedometer between the dials for the driver.

There are a couple of stylish touches in the Highlander such as chrome effect garnish on power window switches and alloy effect inserts (steering wheel) but the standout features for comfort and convenience are heated and ventilated front seats although I though the ventilation in the seats could have been a bit stronger when tested on a hot summer's day in Australia. There's good legroom in the front and rear and it is rated to take five adults. The fifth adult in the middle of the second row of seats is a bit of a squeeze and putting your seat belts on in the second row is a struggle. If you are going to have five adults in the car regularly then you might consider moving up to the Sante Fe.

The rear cargo area has 488 litres of space with the rear seats up and 1478 litres with the seats down. Folding the rear seats down so that they give a continuous flat surface from the back of the car needs the head rests put down as far as possible. The rear seats have a 60:40 split folding function with multi stage recline function.

The Tucson comes with a choice of three engines but they are not available on all trim levels. We drove the third option the 1.6 litre turbo petrol four cylinder which is only available on the Elite and Highlander and comes with a seven-speed dual clutch transmission. With 130 kW and 265 Nm it is a sweet engine that we enjoyed in the smaller Kona. In the Tucson Highlander with a kerb weight of 1690 kgs it was a little more conscious of its mass but still did admirably well. At times, however, it felt like it had severe turbo lag. This was more to do with the gearbox. In normal situations where the next change is fairly obvious it was fine, but in some situations the gearbox seemed to be in two minds. For example, when slowing down on the approach to a large roundabout and you see a gap and press the accelerator firmly, it seemed to wait an awful long time before it starts to move with the adequacy that you required.



by David Brown

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | Tucson Highlander |
| Model Price | \$50,021 RDAP |
| Engine | 1.6T 4 Cyl Petrol |
| Drivetrain | 7 Sp DCT AWD |
| Power | 130kW @ 5,500rpm |
| Torque | 265Nm @ 1,500rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 178g/km |
| Economy ADR | 6.7L/100 km |
| Servicing | Lifetime Servicing |
| Tow Rating | 1,600kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 100kg |
| Warranty | 5Yrs / Unlimited km 1Yrs Roadside Assist |



The handling, which has had a bit of a special tune for Australian conditions, was good for this type of vehicle however the road noise and the thumps when crossing bumps and cracks in the road were intrusively noticeable.

The result is that it is not as comfortable to travel long distances as it would be in a good sedan. Surprisingly over speed humps it was very good. When this third-generation model was crash tested by ANCAP in August 2015 it only achieved a four-star rating due to a poor result on the frontal offset test. The front footwell was compromised and in the crash there was some excessive movement of the brake pedal.

The results were controversy as the vehicle had received a five-star European crash test rating but nonetheless Hyundai reacted quickly and with some redesigning the car was retested in Australia in November 2015 and received a five-star rating with particularly good scores in the pole and side-impact tests.

All models get rear view camera with dynamic guidelines, rear parking assist system (4 sensors) with guidance, LED Daytime running lights, automatic dusk sensing headlights, front fog lights. For the highlander safety the list is quite extensive including: autonomous emergency braking, forward collision warning, lane keeping assist system with lane departure warning, blind spot detection incorporating lane change assist, rear cross traffic alert, emergency stop signal, trailer stability assist and front parking assist system (4 sensors) with guidance.

In summary, while competitors have, to some extent, caught up with the lead the Tucson set, Hyundai has continued to add features that justify its presence at the top or near the top of the medium sized SUVs.



What's Good:

- Value for Money
- Internal Comfort and features
- Smooth engine

What's Not:

- Slight hesitation at times
- Squeeze for five people
- Harsh suspension

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 79/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 5 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 7 |
| Ride & Handling | 7 | Value for Money | 9 |

KIA SPORTAGE 2.0R GT LINE

\$50,496 RDAP



In a market that is becoming increasingly popular with consumers, competitive from manufacturers and homogenised by designers, Kia launched the all new Sportage early in 2016. The good thing is that consumers will be buying a vehicle that will differentiate itself from the crowded segment.

by Rob Fraser



In a market that is becoming increasingly popular with consumers, competitive from manufacturers and homogenised by designers, Kia launched the all new Sportage early in 2016. A previous award winner on a number of occasions the third generation Sportage that was launched in 2010 was a revelation at the time. The all new fourth generation model is more a continuation of evolution.

Like a lot of us as we get a bit older the fourth generation Sportage has grown. The wheel base is longer by 30mm, and overall length by 40mm. This may not seem like much but internally, the extra room is very noticeable, especially for rear occupants. Overall height is the same. With wider wheel arches it takes on a more muscular appearance but tapers towards the rear. It definitely has enough differentiation in its design, mainly from the bold muscle bound front and grill which amongst onlookers tends to polarise opinion. From the side the appearance is longer and sleeker than the previous model with longer front overhang and tapering rear spoiler. The good thing is that consumers will be buying a vehicle that will differentiate itself from the crowded segment. One very noticeable feature on the GT Line is the quad fog light cluster.



Inside the story gets better. The first impression is one of a spacious and integrated interior with soft feel dash and quality ambiance. There is plenty of headroom, even in the GT Line with the sunroof. As this is a family wagon the rear seats are extremely important and as mentioned the extra wheelbase is noticeable here.

Even with the front seat fully slid back the rear occupants have reasonable head, shoulder, hip, knee and leg room, more so than many of its competitors. Rear seats can also recline through 37 degrees, which adds to the versatility. The seats are better and sculptured more for two rather than three.

by Rob Fraser

All seating is comfortable with the GT Line having leather and electric adjustment for the driver with lumbar support. Front seats are both heated and air cooled which is a luxury fast becoming an essential in Australian conditions. The height and reach adjustable steering wheel is thick rimmed, small diameter and on the GT Line flat bottomed. It feels great in the hands and contributes to the feeling of sporting (for an AWD SUV) handling. The indicator and wiper stalks sit slightly above the steering wheel spokes.

In front of the driver is a typical Kia dash with two large round dials and a MFD display between. All instruments are clear and easy to read at a glance. On the centre stack there is a 7-inch touchscreen infotainment screen featuring reversing camera display with dynamic parking lines, while satellite navigation is standard. All infotainment systems feature Bluetooth hands-free connectivity and aux-in and USB ports for smartphones and MP3 music players. The Kia also has Apple Car Play and Android Auto features for those that need to stay connected to their phones.

Below the infotainment screen are rows of buttons for everything from audio, air conditioning and on the Platinum seat warmers etc. The overall look is integrated, even if I feel that aesthetics took precedence over function in a couple of instances and the buttons could be more streamlined. There are a lot of buttons! The centre console in the GT Line has an electric brake button which allows a more functional layout. Around the park brake button you have the controls for automatic parking, parking sensors, centre diff lock, drive mode etc.

Below the numerous rows of buttons is a neat little section for the 2 x 12V plug and AUX and USB port. Unlike a lot of other vehicles, these are easy to access and more importantly for these old tired eyes, easy to see. Just in front of that is a handy spot for wireless recharging of your smart phone. There is plenty of storage areas for cups, bottles, sunglasses and other incidentals. Visibility is improved especially through the 'A' and 'C' pillars. The electrochromatic mirror and large external rear view mirrors also help to keep everything in plain sight. The rear seats fold almost flat to allow quite a large rear boot area. The capacity is between 466 and 1455L. Access is through the hands free smart tailgate opening, that I still find a little awkward to use but others seem to manage it well.

Additionally the GT Line features the smart parking assist system (SPAS) which will assist drivers into parallel or 90-degree parking spaces by measuring the available space, controlling steering and offering input instructions on the LCD display. Don't underestimate the weird feeling of a car parking itself. It really is an exercise in restraint and faith.

The Sportage is powered by the familiar 2.0L CRDi engine that produces power of 136 kW @ 4,000 rpm and torque of 400Nm @ 1,750 – 2,750 rpm. This is delivered to the wheels through a six speed automatic transmission. This diesel engine and transmission combination is amongst the best in class and even above. They match beautifully to maximise driving efficiency.



by Rob Fraser

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | Sportage GT Line |
| Model Price | \$50.496 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.0L 4 Cyl CRDi |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp AT AWD |
| Power | 136kW @ 4,000rpm |
| Torque | 400Nm @ 1,750rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 178g/km |
| Economy ADR | 6.8L/100 km |
| Servicing | 7 Year Capped Price |
| Tow Rating | 1,900kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 100kg |
| Warranty | 7 Yrs / Unlimited km 7 Yrs Roadside Assist |



The engine delivers an almost seamless linear power for the driver and like a lot of things Kia is doing at the moment, it simply works without fuss or complaint. GT Line models receive their own unique suspension characteristics, tuned to endow the Sportage with sharper, more athletic handling and a slightly firmer ride, crucially without compromising comfort too much. The column-mounted electric motor-driven power steering system Sportage has been upgraded with quicker steering responses and greater steering feel, particularly around the centre. The Kia AWD system has been around for a while now and is pretty effective. However off road driving is really off limits with a ground clearance of 172mm and low front spoiler etc. Keep the Sportage to some dirt roads and trips to the snow and utilise the AWD as a safety feature and you are driving within the vehicles limits. Towing with the Sportage is marginal.

Safety is a feature and the Sportage sets some benchmarks. The all-new Sportage has a five-star safety ANCAP rating. Improvements in integral body strength increases not only safety but helps with reducing NVH levels as well. A total of six airbags are standard, two ISOFIX child-seat tethers and three anchor points are fitted as standard to the second row of seats. Pedestrian safety is further improved with a lower leading edge on the bonnet and a larger impact absorption area. Kia's vehicle stability management (VSM) system helps ensure stability under braking and cornering. For Australian buyers the GT Line models will come standard with autonomous emergency braking (AEB) and forward collision warning system (FCWS), lane departure warning system (LDWS), blind spot detection (BSD) and lane change assist (LCA) and high beam assist (HBA). There is also downhill brake control (DBC) and hill start assist (HAC).

So to the overall first drive impressions. The fourth generation Sportage is better in all aspects than the previous model and that is saying something. As a mid-sized AWD SUV it is quiet, smooth to drive, has a quality spacious interior ambiance and enough design to differentiate itself from the mass offerings in the market. Definitely worth a look.



What's Good:

- Engine/transmission
- Standard features
- Warranty package

What's Not:

- Rear seat belt roof attached
- Limited AWD capability
- Interior a little overdone

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 81/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 5 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 5 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 8 |

MAZDA CX5 GT I-ACTIV AWD

\$51,912 RDAP



Mazda hit a home run with it's first CX5 becoming the bestselling SUV in the class and the new model only improves the vehicle. It is fun to drive in a spirited way, has a sumptuous interior, average interior space and practicality, and stylish looks. It gets a thumbs up from me!

by Anthony Hood



Since the original CX5 was launched some four or five years ago it has proved to be a sales success for Mazda with the public taking to its subtle style and feature packed value. Fast forward to 2017 and the all new CX5 has now been released and we chose the CX5 GT diesel for the nominee for COTY. Sitting just below the range topping Akera the GT is probably the best selling of the range.

There is no doubting that the CX5 has always been a stylish vehicle and the new model continues this trend. External features of the GT include: LED headlamps, power mirrors, advanced keyless entry, front parking sensors, 19-inch alloys, Adaptive Front-lighting System (AFS), a power operated tailgate and sunroof. The exterior looks fantastic. I love the rich colours that are available, eight in total, my favourites being, Soul Red Crystal Metallic and Deep Crystal Blue Mica combined with the smooth lines of the Mazda CX5. It does have a distinctive look that is definitely their own which separates them from the pack.



Inside the CX5 GT the first impression we had was the white leather seats contrasted with the black surrounds. It was quite stunning and inviting. The front seats proved to be extremely comfortable with electronic adjustment for the driver and both heated. There is also dual zone climate controlled air conditioning.

The leather steering wheel is both height and reach adjustable and adds to the sporty nature of the CX5 GT. It has the audio and cruise control buttons and the indicator and wiper stalks sit proud of the spokes for added visibility. The dash had three round dials, centre is speedo, left one is tacho and the right is the MFD.

by Anthony Hood

Note that the active driving display, or as others call it head up display, is great and doesn't polarise out with sunglasses and shows your speed and navigation, and adaptive cornering functionality for its LED headlights. Starting is by advanced keyless push button. On top of the centre stack protrudes the 7 inch colour screen. This houses the infotainment system with the Bose 249w amplifier and 10 speakers. Awesome sound. It also houses the sat nav, digital radio and Bluetooth as well as other features. It is controlled by either touch screen method or the multi-function dial controller on the centre console. This system from Mazda is really easy to use, intuitive and simple. Complicated doesn't mean better! Surprisingly the volume control is also here which takes a little getting used to.

The rear seats are sculptured for two people but will take three at a pinch and have a recline function. Again they are pretty comfortable and have adequate head, shoulder, and knee and foot room for normal sized passengers. The centre armrest and storage is handy. It's fair to say that the rear seats are amongst the most comfortable in the segment and the doors open wide for easy entry and exit. The rear wheel arch does restrict this slightly though.

There are air vents back there as well as USB ports. They will fold almost flat in a 60/40 configuration to increase the already adequate boot space. This ranges from 442 – 1342L of volumetric space. It was large enough for my cousins boyfriend to put his drum kit in there for his rock band. The electric tailgate is a bonus and there's a high-quality sliding cargo cover fitted, a rear 12V outlet and handy shopping hooks.

The Mazda CX-5 GT we tested came with a 2.2 litre SKYACTIV-D diesel, mated with a 6-speed SKYACTIV-Drive automatic transmission, and the impressive i-ACTIV AWD all-wheel drive system. The engine produces 136 kW @ 4,000 rpm of power and 400 Nm @ 1,750 – 2,750 of torque. These allow for a very relaxed and economical driving style. The diesel sips fuel at a combined ADR rate of just 6.8L/100K. The combination of torquey diesel engine and the inclusion of G-Vectoring Control, which adjusts torque flow to the wheels to transfer the car's weight, means that the CX5 ride and handling is even more dynamic and for an AWD SUV it is downright good. The differentially weighted steering is slightly heavy at parking speeds but comes into its own during spirited driving.

Diesel models also take on the High-Precision DE Boost Control, Natural Sound Smoother and Natural Sound Frequency Control technologies recently introduced on Mazda6, which combine to further evolve the level of driving performance and quietness. The Mazda CX5 dimensions are 4550mm long, 1840mm wide, 1675mm high and a wheelbase of 2700mm. This places it around the middle of the segment in size. Off road driving is limited also with a low hanging front spoiler and a ground clearance of 185mm.



MAZDA CX5 GT I-ACTIV AWD

\$51,912 RDAP

by Anthony Hood

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | CX5 GT AWD |
| Model Price | \$51,912 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.2 L I-Active diesel |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp AT AWD |
| Power | 129kW @ 4,500rpm |
| Torque | 420Nm @ 2,000rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 158g/km |
| Economy ADR | 6.0L/100 km |
| Servicing | Service plan |
| Tow Rating | 1,800kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 150kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / Unlimited km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



It will happily traverse forest trails, sandy entrances and of course loves going for weekends away to the snow. But any further than that and you will start leaving bits and pieces of your loved GT behind. However towing at 1800kg and a tow ball weight of 150kg means that it is more than useful for the jet skis or small boat or lightweight camper etc. It does promote an active lifestyle.

Also note that driving the Mazda CX5 GT is fun. It has a feeling about it that is engaging. Not in a sports car way, but as mentioned for an AWD SUV it feels more car of hatch like than many of the competitors. That comes from Mazda's KODO philosophy.

With a 5 star ANCAP safety rating, the Next-Gen CX-5 also offers an array of refined i-ACTIVESENSE safety technologies. The Next-Gen Mazda CX-5 GT features front (driver and passenger), side (front) and curtain (front and rear) SRS Airbags, with Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), Dynamic Stability Control (DSC), Emergency Brake Assist (EBA), Emergency Stop Signal (ESS), Hill Launch Assist (HLA), Traction Control System (TCS) Blind Spot Monitoring (BSM), Rear Cross Traffic Alert (RCTA) and Smart City Brake Support [Forward/Reverse] (SCBS F/R, Traffic Sign Recognition (TSR) and front and rear parking sensors and a reversing camera as standard.

Just for information the top of the range Akera offers Mazda Radar Cruise Control (MRCC) with a Stop and Go function, Adaptive LED Headlamps (ALH), Driver Attention Alert (DAA), Forward Obstruction Warning (Fow), Lane Keep Assist System (LAS) and Smart Brake Support (SBS), plus a side camera.

Mazda hit a home run with it's first CX5 becoming the bestselling SUV in the class and the new model only improves the vehicle. It is fun to drive in a spirited way, has a sumptuous interior, average interior space and practicality, and stylish looks. It gets a thumbs up from me!



What's Good:

- Slick styling - Urban Chic
- Road handling and agility
- Flexible cargo space

What's Not:

- Premium pricing for diesel
- Tiptronic reversed
- No Apple Car Play or Android

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 82/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 8 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 6 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 5 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |

SUBARU OUTBACK 2.5i PREMIUM

\$46,788 RDAP



by Rob Fraser



Subaru can justifiably lay claim to the fact that they started the AWD SUV revolution way back in the last century. It was in the 70's with the Subaru Leone AWD wagon. This has now seen, in Australia, the SUV segment account for some 54% of all passenger vehicle sales and Subaru has maintained its presence in that market.

We are testing the latest version of the Subaru Outback in 2.5i Premium form. While it forsakes the current high body design trend for its traditional wagon style, the Outback is every bit as capable as its SUV counterparts and, for the most part, way more capable than many. The 2.0D Outback was the winner in the OzRoamer AWD SUV \$45,000 - \$60,000 segment in 2016, and while the Subaru Outback remains relevant and has been updated, the market has moved so fast the Outback now has a few weaknesses, that I'm sure will be addressed in the upcoming model revamp. In late 2014, Subaru launched its fifth generation All-Wheel Drive



Outback Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV). In early 2016, Subaru updated the Outback with more safety features including their EyeSight® system, giving us the version we have today.

I like the style of the Outback wagon. It has a presence about it and while many call it sedate, I call it subtle. The bold bonnet and chrome surround grill exude purpose without being overbearing. The sweeping headlight surrounds follow the same clever lines as in the bonnet. The front fog lights now have integrated halogen Daytime Running Lights (DRLs) and the low beam lights are LED's too.

by Rob Fraser

From the side, there is a high and again subtle hip line, 18 inch alloy wheels and roof rails. The colour coded mirrors and door handles blend into the body work. From the rear, the wagon doesn't have the slab back appearance that can prevail in other wagons, which is refreshing and modern. The wheel arches add a bolder, more muscular appearance. It's very much a look that says I am good but I don't have to brag about it.

Internally, the Subaru Outback again exudes subtle style and luxury beyond its price. The interior is elegant, with soft touch surfaces and user friendly ergonomics that convey a luxurious impression for the occupants. The electronically adjustable heated leather driver's seat is really very comfortable, enjoys plenty of seat travel and with the height and reach adjustable leather steering wheel, it is simple to arrange a desired driving position. For my ageing back there is also an electronic lumbar support.

Even with the sunroof there is adequate head room for taller drivers. The driver's foot rest for the left foot is comfortably positioned. Wider opening doors and higher seats allow easier access. While not everyone tests out the horn, I unfortunately had the need to use it and found it lacking in authority!

The dash in front of the driver is the familiar two dial style with a practical and informative dual multi-function display in-between. The centre stack has been redesigned and carries the subtle and stylish theme. It contains a feature-packed infotainment system with a wide array of functions plus speech recognition which again, is easy to use. This screen also houses the reversing camera display. However, this is one area where the fast paced development of technology has seen Subaru waiting for the next upgrade, hopefully. Many vehicles now have Android Auto and Apple Car Play as standard features, and the more vehicles that do, the more noticeable those cars that don't have these features are.

The Outback 2.5i Premium comes with factory fitted satellite navigation which is subject to the new Subaru Map Update Program. Also included is the Three Year Map Update Guarantee – a complimentary yearly map update during the program period, subject to the vehicle having its scheduled services performed through an authorised Subaru Service Centre?

Rear seats have a cool recline function and are comfortable but suited more for two occupants rather than three. There is adequate head, shoulder, knee and leg room for normal sized passengers. There are two a/c vents in the rear but no USB ports.



by Rob Fraser

Storage front and back is plentiful with door bottle holders, cup holders centre console and a handy spot below the centre stack that holds wallet, phones keys etc. The automatic boot lid is a nice touch and the boot space with automatic 60/40 split fold down seats provides a relatively large and versatile cargo space. Adjustable roof rails are another clever idea as is the rear door-space step that makes roof loading and unloading of the integrated crossbars easier.

Other features include Bluetooth/MP3/WMA/AUX/CD/voice command, compatible six-speaker audio touchscreen system, climate control air conditioning – dual zone with rear vents - electric parking brake, dual map lights, rain sensing auto windscreen wipers, light sensing headlights with auto on/off, DataDot security technology and a cool front wiper de-icer.

Safety has always been a feature of Subaru with their model range having a 5 star ANCAP safety rating for a number of years now but the latest Outback has taken safety to another level. There is the usual airbags complement including: curtain airbags – full length, driver's knee airbag, dual front airbags, and dual front side airbags. In practice, the Outback has a myriad of electronic safety features that beep and ding at you when you wander over lane lines or when a car or object is too close in front.

Sometimes, it beeps or dings at you and you have no idea why. Every new CVT Outback is also equipped with the award-winning EyeSight® driver assist system, which can help reduce fatigue, avoid accidents or reduce impact. Key Functions of EyeSight® driver assist system include Adaptive Cruise Control, Pre-Collision Braking, Pre-Collision Braking Assist, Pre-Collision Steering Assist, Lane Departure Warning, and Front Vehicle Start Alert.

Highlights of the current third-generation EyeSight® in Outback include: colour recognition – can see and interpret brake lights, pre collision steering assist – augmented collision prevention, using Vehicle Dynamics Control (VDC). If the possibility of collision with a vehicle or obstacle in front occurs, VDC activates to assist the driver in potentially avoiding it.

The stereo camera achieves better active safety and less driver load. EyeSight® features four levels of inter-vehicle distance setting. The display of the driver's own car appears when Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC) is turned on. Thankfully for some who find it a little touchy, the driver can choose not to activate the ACC. The system features a large 5-inch LCD display.

External sensor and 3D image processing performance mean the system can easily recognise lateral and distant vehicles, stabilizing control in all speed zones and improving pedestrian pre-collision detection.



by Rob Fraser



And in further proof of Subaru's safety commitment, Vision Assist features are also added to Outback, comprising: Blind Spot Monitoring, Lane Change Assist, Auto dimming rear view mirror, High Beam Assist and Rear Cross Traffic Alert which detects passing vehicles when reversing from parking spaces.

Another safety development is the addition of an Emergency Stop Signal (ESS), which detects an emergency brake situation and flashes the hazard lights automatically, to warn following vehicles. One feature I liked is the unintended start prevention. This activates if an obstacle is detected in front of the vehicle, restricting sudden movement by unintended depression of the accelerator, providing a warning display and sound.

Vehicle Dynamics Control (VDC) constantly monitors vehicle movement. It flexibly controls the Antilock Brake System (ABS), Traction Control System (TCS, engine and brake LSD control), and VDC (engine and brake control for side slip prevention). VDC is also tuned for towing with the Subaru towbar. ATV is introduced to improve cornering performance and vehicle steering response. While cornering, brake is applied to inside wheels, while distributing less torque to them; but more torque to outside wheels.

All that theory is good to know, but it's on and off the road where the Subaru Outback shines. On road, the Outback is a relaxed, capable family wagon which transports its passengers in safety and comfort. Subaru's combination of its Boxer engine, low centre of gravity and AWD powertrain creates stability and on-road handling that is amongst the best for this class of vehicle. Off road, the Outback is ideally suited to the adventurous family. Driving on forest trails, beach driving, trips to the snow, around the farm etc. are all easily accomplished. If the mood takes the driver, more adventurous off road driving can be undertaken with extreme care. The limiting factors are the approach and departure angles.

Subaru's active torque split Symmetrical All Wheel drive system has been perfected over a number of years now and works a treat. It provides active safety and a degree of off road capability and is enhanced with the X-Mode feature that enhances driver safety and confidence on steep hills off-road, where the optimum ride height of 213mm is also a significant advantage.

The petrol engine is a 2.5-litre horizontally opposed 4 cylinder Boxer engine that produces maximum power output of 129kW @ 5800rpm and maximum torque of 235Nm @ 4000rpm. This is line ball with the Audi Q2 1.4t petrol and the Honda CRV 1.5T VTI. If you want more there is the 3.6L version available. The power and torque peaks relatively high but the delivery is smooth and provides enough real world power.

SUBARU OUTBACK 2.5i PREMIUM

\$46,788 RDAP

by Rob Fraser

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | Outback Premium |
| Model Price | \$46,788 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.5i Boxer |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp CVT 4WD |
| Power | 129kW @ 5,800rpm |
| Torque | 235Nm @ 4,000rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 165g/km |
| Economy ADR | 9.0L/100 km |
| Servicing | Fixed Price Lifetime |
| Tow Rating | 1,500kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 150kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / Unlimited km 1 Yrs Roadside Assist |



The Outback has a 6 speed Lineartronic™ CVT that is matched well enough to the engine characteristics to extract the best efficiency. There is also a two mode Si-Drive system. Fuel economy is ok and on test we achieved around 10L/100K with a mix of urban, freeway and off road driving.

Towing isn't a really strong point but more than adequate compared to others in the segment, with a limit of 1500kg and 150kg tow ball weight for the 2.5i Premium. This is however enough for a small camper trailer, a seadoo or bike trailer which suits the adventurous lifestyle aspirations of buyers.

Every new Subaru is eligible for the Capped Price Servicing program, which applies throughout the vehicle's lifetime – not just the three-year warranty period. Subaru, once the leader in warranty offering, is now behind its competitors with a 3 year unlimited km warranty. Compare this to Kia's 7 year unlimited km warranty and Hyundai and Honda with their 5 year unlimited warranty. It is however the same as Audi Q2. It's lucky not much ever goes wrong with them.

The Outback is one of those vehicles that grows on you the more you drive it. This is because the subtle luxuries and safety features are not intrusive but become apparent as time progresses. That is the essence of great design. On and off road, the ride, handling and quietness is amongst the best in class.

The Subaru Outback should definitely be near the top of your list for a AWD SUV wagon that has the level of luxury and sophistication of many European vehicles that cost many thousands more. It is comfortable and enjoyable to drive and its subtle features, both safety and luxury, reveal themselves as you live with the vehicle longer.



What's Good:

- Build quality / Style
- Value for money
- AWD capability

What's Not:

- Front seats a little short
- No Apple Car Play or Android
- No head up display

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 82/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 6 |
| Performance | 7 | Off Road Ability | 6 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |

VW TIGUAN HIGHLINE 162 TSI

\$54,432 RDAP

Tiguan continues to be a success story for VW. The handsome mid-size SUV is capable of light off-roading, and light towing work. The cabin is spacious and has a premium feel. VW has really lifted its game in all respects.



by Alan Zurvas



VW Tiguan continues to be a success story for VW. The handsome mid-size SUV is capable of light off-roading, and light towing work. The cabin is spacious and has a premium feel. VW has really lifted its game in all respects.

We drove the top Highline model complete with the R-Line package. It has big 20" wheels, a powerful engine, and a look that is a little squarer and more aggressive than before. It is handsome, and masculine, and modern. You might need different wheels for serious fun. It's Tonka-toy exterior is further accentuated by hi-tech LED headlights that look like ice cubes in a G & T.

Around the back the LED story continues. There are several groups of LEDs. The top line of LEDs remains steadily lit while the engine is on. The bottom two horizontal pairs turn vertical, and become more intense when the brake is applied. It is eye-catching, the first time you see it. Roof rails can take an optional travel pod should you fill the boot with your unbridled enthusiasm.

The R-Line package, brings some extra goodies to the Highline. There are soft Vienna leather seats which have R-Line stitched into them. In fact, R-Line garnishes have been lavished on every available surface, inside and out. The latest incarnation of the VW infotainment system has Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. All models get an 8" touch screen, with the top 2 models getting voice control for Satnav and audio operations.

Many users don't know they can use "Hey Siri" to perform tasks hands free. For example, you don't need to press the voice button to play music, or make a call. More importantly, messaging is also completely handsfree. Pressing then releasing the voice button activates the car's voice controls, pressing and holding will activate Siri instead. I see Siri as the greatest safety feature since the seat belt.



by Alan Zurvas

Many accidents have been caused by inattention. You can switch from CarPlay back to the car's system anytime. The infotainment menu auto-bar hides when not in use. It gives the user more real estate for viewing maps, radio stations, and other functions. This is carried over from previous units. The sound is rich and dark. It makes an already-elegant cabin even moodier. It looks particularly enchanting after dark.

All materials feel soft and expensive, including the plastics. All Knobs, buttons, and levers, have a slight resistance to their smooth operation. You usually only expect from cars that cost the GDP of a small African nation. The soft grip rim on the climate control dials give an impression that thought has gone into their design. Not only is attractive, but it feels good to touch.

The Highline has a "running clearance" of 200mm, that gives you a good deal of leeway over uncooperative landscapes. The cargo hold has 615L worth of space for your bags too. This expands greatly with rear seats that fold almost completely flat. The space then becomes very useful.

The active cruise control (ACC) keeps an eye on the road ahead. It slows you down when the traffic slows down, all the way to stop. When the traffic moves off, you either hit the "Resume" button, or blip the accelerator to get going again.

Tiguan has a "virtual dashboard". All driver's dials have been replaced by a single 12" LCD wide-view screen. Steering wheel buttons allow you to scroll through the driver's LCD menu. You can even display the SatNav there. The speedo and tacho shrink in size when the map is displayed. There is a digital speedo too. The electric rear door isn't exactly unusual today, but it makes things much easier none the less.

There is a 7 speed DSG in the Highline, or a 6 speed manual/7speed DSG in the base model. The Golf GTI engine has been shoehorned in for added zap. A 0-100 time of 6.5 seconds means the Tiguan is every bit a hot hatch. 8.1L/100k for the petrol engine is quite good given what SUVs did only a few years ago.

Steering is very light. It varies depending on chassis setting, which also alters the dampers. Handling becomes sports-like when in sports mode. The road manners are as impeccable as the immaculate cabin. The ride is superb. It gets firmer of course, the second you enter sports mode.



by Alan Zurvas

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Model | Tiguan Highline |
| Model Price | \$54,4328 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.0l 4 Cyl TSI |
| Drivetrain | 7 Sp DSG AWD |
| Power | 162kW @ 6,200rpm |
| Torque | 330Nm @ 1,500rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 186g/km |
| Economy ADR | 8.1L/100 km |
| Servicing | VW Service Plan |
| Tow Rating | 2,500kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 100kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / Unlimited km Full Roadside Assist |



However, even in the hardest setting, the suspension won't be uncomfortable as it tackles rough roads. The driving position is high-set, and you sit upright to. 4 adults fitted with room to spare. The 4motion AWD shuffles power to give the best grip. while the chassis control adjusts the dampers up to 1,000 times a second. You can feel the weight of the Tiguan make a controlled shift as you enter corners.

There is all the usual safety gear, including AEB. From next year, AEB will be required on the base models of cars to get a 5-star safety rating. Automated parking lets the system does it for you. Press the parking button, and the car searches for a spot. You indicate if you want to park on the driver's side, otherwise it parks on the passenger's side.

Then, all you have to do is follow directions by shifting in to D or R. You control the speed, but the steering is done by the computer, and it is very good at it. The sensors know exactly where the obstacles are. The reversing camera is high quality too. The lines show where you're going, and how close you can get to an obstacle and still be able to open the tailgate.

The off-roading capabilities are greatly enhanced by the addition of extra settings. They're controlled by a console-mounted control dial, which also houses the variable chassis controls. I have it on good authority that the off-road settings make a decent fist of light cross-country work. You probably won't want to tow much, but for those rare times when you do, hiring a bigger rig is an option.

VW Tiguan is a pleasure to drive. The sharp lines make it pleasing to look at, and the cabin is a very nice place to be. Although it is pricey, VW have aimed high, and got there.



What's Good:

- Design style
- Technology
- Classy interior

What's Not:

- No manual
- Relatively expensive
- Rear seat room

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 78/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 5 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 6 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 8 |

OZROAMER 2017 4WD \$45,000 - \$60,000 AWARD



Perhaps the segment that is dwindling the most in the 4WD sphere is the 5 seat 4WD between \$45,000 - \$60,000 price range. It appears that there aren't many choices and that is a shame and worrying.

You have the pure 4WD in the Jeep Wrangler Rubicon, that is unapologetically aimed at true off road driving and only for the adventurous for on road driving! Off road it has few peers.

Also from Jeep is a former winner, the Jeep Cherokee Trailhawk. Here we have a SUV style body that is trail rated by Jeep, so you know it is capable. It also has a degree of comfort and luxury that many buyers are looking for.

Then you have two vehicles that are based on their Ute brethren. Firstly, the Mitsubishi Pajero Sport GLX, a 5 seat wagon. Ironically the Pajero Sport works better in this seating configuration and is popular with the Grey Nomads.

Secondly we have Ford's Everest Ambiente, again a 5 seat configuration, aimed at the entry level buyers. It has all the benefits of the Ranger donor, without all the bling of the Trend or Titanium.

It is my personal hope that this segment continues. Buyers need affordable, true 4WD wagons that have a reasonable degree of on road manners, sitting alongside their off road capability. All of these nominees have the ability to take owners well and truly off the beaten track. One does it in more comfort than the rest.

Like their 7 seat cousins, these vehicles offer a genuine alternative for the adventurous family that wishes to do more than drive on dirt roads. These will allow families to take that outback touring holiday at a reasonable price.



FORD EVEREST AMBIENTE 4WD

\$58,107 RDAP



The Ford Everest Ambiente has a decent cloth interior, and while I wouldn't call it luxurious, it certainly feels comfortable and sturdy. The design is familiar to anyone who has been in a ranger

by Alan Zurvas



In recent years, LCVs (light commercial vehicles) like Ford's Ranger, have been turned into SUVs. Everest is one such result.

I saw Ford demonstrate their Ranger where they had set up a display by stacking shipping containers. With several together at angles and 45° ramps at each end, drivers took us up the ramp, along the top of the containers and down the other side. They stopped half way down, then reversed up again before completing the downward leg. While few of us will want to drive along shipping containers 007-style, some of us might fancy a steep slope or two, but only in the 4WD version. Ambiente also comes in a RWD version.

The Ambiente has a decent cloth interior, and while I wouldn't call it luxurious, it certainly feels comfortable and sturdy. The design is familiar to anyone who has been in a ranger. The exterior has a handsome and aggressive grille, and broad bulging wheel arches with 17" wheels that are off-road ready.



I don't know why car makers go to all the trouble to make wondrous mountain-conquering master pieces, only to saddle them with tyres that would be taxed by little more than an Eastern Suburbs gravel driveway.

The bigger the wheel, the lower the tyre, and the greater the risk of either the rim or rubber being damaged. 17" strikes a balance between off-road capability, and on-road glamour.

The interior is the same as a Ranger with one or two little tweaks.

by Alan Zurvas

The Sync III makes life a bit easier with voice control that actually works, even in Sat Nav mode. The Sync III infotainment system makes all functions available from the home screen which is split into 4 functions: climate, audio, phone and navigation, and has Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto.

Even more brilliantly, each screen is directly selectable from any of the other mode screens leaving an icon in each corner. From the home screen you can press any of 6 radio station buttons, and you can see some of your phone functions without having to faff about going between functions. That's one of the few systems with such flexibility. The climate and audio functions are repeated in buttons below the LCD screen.

There is a shedload of tech and here is a short sample (note: some tech is an optional extra): active noise cancelling for the cabin, automatic high beam, electric third row seats for freeloaders, electric tailgate. The active noise cancelling samples cabin noise and plays the opposite wave back through the audio system.

I've seen this before and it can be a bit hit and miss. This one works well. It's a shame you can't turn it off just to see the difference because that would really make a good story. The active noise cancelling makes the cabin spookily quiet, though not as quiet as the superb Sahara.

The real surprise is the 5 cylinder 143kw/470Nm 3.2 turbo diesel which feels effortless at all speeds. It doesn't hit in the back of the head with the punch of a lusty V8, rather it pushes you urgently forward with its mountainous of torque. Like most big diesels, it is excellent at cruising while getting impressive fuel economy.

We took another Everest up the M1 to Newcastle, just for a lark. I thought it might feel awkward being so big but instead it felt free and eager. It was so comfortable that we both said we could have easily kept going. A few hundred kilometres each way felt like a doddle.

The (solid rear axle) Watts-Link suspension made it supremely smooth. To help the driver further, the electric steering detects uneven or crowned roads or cross winds, and will then apply a little corrective torque to compensate. The stability control will detect rollover and intervenes so you don't make a feckless tit of yourself.

It all works off-road too. There, hill start assist and descent control, plus a selection of pre-programmed off-road settings (4WD models) make driving feel like "you've got an expert onboard".



FORD EVEREST AMBIENTE 4WD

\$58,107 RDAP

by Alan Zurvas

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Model | Everest Ambiente |
| Model Price | \$58,107 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.2L 5 Cyl TD |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 143kW @ 3,000rpm |
| Torque | 470Nm @ 1,750 pm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 224g/km |
| Economy ADR | 8.5L/100 km |
| Servicing | Capped Price |
| Tow Rating | 3,00 kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 300kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 1 Yrs Roadside Assist |



The torque will switch between driving wheels in "auto", and will even put all torque just to the one wheel with grip if needed. You can choose to lock the diff with another button forcing full torque to both rear wheels even if one is off the ground. I hasten to add we did no off-roading in the Everest but have done it before in a Ranger.

It's delicious. Everest drives like an SUV rather than a car, but all serious off-roaders do. Most of the SUVs on the road now, even the luxury ones, are nothing more than pumped up station wagons. They may have all-wheel-drive (AWD), but this is very far from pucker the mudding capability people think they're getting.

They don't have high and low range or locking diffs and are often built on car platforms. They are simply not rugged enough to survive long in the wilds of the outback. Decades ago manufacturers realised most people don't want to go bush bashing, and only a tiny percentage of owners do.

Even fewer actually will take their pride and joy onto sand or into the rocks. Even proper four-wheel-drive (4WD) buyers probably won't want to take a 300 grand Rangie where the Duco will be history before it gets into second gear. A second hand Lexus, Sahara or Range Rover make attractive propositions but for anyone wanting a new option, the Everest Ambiente comes fully loaded.

If there is one fault, it might be the 6 speed auto where I'd hope for an 8 speed. Although the auto is smooth, the engine would be even more economical especially at cruising speed with those few extra cogs. I liked it a lot as did my co-driver who is an ex-army truck driver. Would I buy one? To my surprise, yes.



What's Good:

- Sync 111 Technology
- Real 4WD ability
- Safety features

What's Not:

- Reasonably pricey
- Reliability issues
- Rough riding

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 81/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 8 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 7 | Towing Ability | 9 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 8 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 8 |



JEEP CHEROKEE TRAILHAWK

\$54,922 RDAP



To be honest almost all owners will never try something as hard as we put it through and if they do the Trailhawk will accommodate them.

Overall the Jeep Cherokee Trailhawk is actually outstanding.



by Rob Fraser



Launched in 2014 and due for an update in 2018 the Cherokee has a heritage that dates back to 1974 the Jeep Cherokee. The Trailhawk is the Cherokee for true 4WD enthusiasts. Now the style of the Cherokee is more in the AWD SUV style and being based on the Alfa Romeo Giulietta there are some question marks about its suitability for hard terrain. However being Rubicon rated the Trailhawk easily fills the 4WD role at the top of the model line-up.

Externally the Jeep Cherokee style is polarising, especially the interpretation of the traditional 7 slot Jeep Grill. Personally I like it and the overall style is like so many other midsize SUV's, yet distinct as well. The designers have a design that is fluid, and has remained fresh through its life cycle and retains essential elements of Jeep DNA. Stylish design elements, such as slimline daytime running lights as 'eyebrows' with lower headlights, combine with traditional DNA elements such as the peaked seven-slot grille, trapezoidal wheel arches and the functional 'kink' in the beltline mated to a tough, durable lower body, provide the Jeep Cherokee

Trailhawk with a commanding road presence.

Internally the design has a luxurious European feel with a blend of fluid shapes, high-quality soft touch materials, innovative colour and material choices, precision craftsmanship, state-of-the-art technology and clever features. Truly unlike what we would expect from an American design, but then expected after the Grand Cherokee.

The leather seats are comfortable, power adjustable, heated/ventilated with memory function and despite first impressions they are supportive over long hours. In front of the driver is a thick rimmed, well designed three-spoke Jeep steering wheel with audio, voice and speed controls.



by Rob Fraser

The dash harks back to a simpler day when clarity was paramount. The round dials are clear with white on black design and a seven-inch, full-colour re-configurable instrument cluster that allows the driver to enjoy a customised user experience. The instrument cluster displays basic information at the driver's fingertips, but also allows them to add information they desire; similar to an Apple iPhone. The driver can select from a multitude of information features that can be displayed in the centre of the gauge cluster including turn-by-turn navigation, speed, real-time fuel economy, safety warnings, available Adaptive Cruise Control-Plus, audio information and Jeep-specific features including Selec-Terrain.

The centre stack bezel is inspired by the outline of the front grille of the 1940s Willys Jeep (which incidentally was the first car I ever drove). The 8.4-inch touchscreen multimedia command centre houses the navigation system and the Uconnect system that allows the driver to control the audio, climate controls, heated/ventilated seats and much more from the touchscreen. Additional controls are located on the centre stack below the touchscreen or with voice commands. A premium Alpine 506-watt sound system is available with nine speakers and a subwoofer. The clever thing is that there is also a wireless charging system for the phone when in the cradle.

Storage is a key feature with a covered top bin located above the centre stack on top of the instrument panel and a huge glove box that accommodates an iPad. A small storage slot is located between the cup holders and the centre console armrest. The centre console hosts the integrated phone docking station, USB and SD ports and auxiliary power source. The front passenger seat in the Jeep Cherokee folds flat and offers hidden, in-seat storage, by flipping up the passenger seat cushion. Front doors are able to accommodate maps and bottles. Second-row seats recline and move fore/ aft 15 centimetres to increase legroom or storage room as needed. Boot space is adequate and a universal module rack is mounted on the side in the rear cargo area and provides for hooks and a removable grocery bag.

Safety features, that lead to a five star ANCAP safety rating, include both active and passive safety security features, including ParkSense Parallel/Perpendicular Park Assist – a first for a Chrysler Group vehicle; ACC, FCW, LaneSense departure warning, ATCS, ABS, BTCS, EBD, ESC and BLDS. There is also Electronic roll mitigation, Blind-spot Monitoring, Rear Cross Path detection, ParkView rear backup camera with dynamic grid lines and dual frontal, side chest and side head airbags (curtains) and a driver knee airbag are standard.

Trailhawk model specific features include: unique off-road front and rear fascias, off-road wheel flares, tow hooks, 4 underbody skid plates, off-road suspension with one-inch increased ride height, heavy-duty engine cooling and auxiliary transmission oil cooler, Jeep Active Drive Lock 4x4 system with low range and locking rear axle. Selec-Speed Control features Hill-ascent Control and Hill-descent Control. Features also include accent colour mirrors, grille surrounds, lower fascia appliques and roof rails,



by Rob Fraser

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | Cherokee Trailhawk |
| Model Price | \$54,922 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.2L Diesel V6 |
| Drivetrain | 9 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 200kW @ 6,500rpm |
| Torque | 310Nm @ 4,300rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 235g/km |
| Economy ADR | 10.1L/100 km |
| Servicing | Capped Price |
| Tow Rating | Max 2,200kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 220kg |
| Warranty | 5 Yrs / Unlimited km 5 Yrs Roadside Assist |



Red "Trail Rated" and "Trailhawk" badges, new 17-inch polished aluminium wheels with black painted pockets, Matte black hood decal, all-season tyres, leather, heated, power front seats, red accent stitching on instrument panel brow, seats, door armrests, centre console lid, shifter boot and console netting, red "Trailhawk" tag on console netting.

We have driven the Trailhawk over a variety of surfaces, tar roads, loose gravel fire trails, sandy dunes, a mixture of creek crossings, rocky sections, steep climbs and declines, valleys etc. Given this diversity of road surfaces we had the opportunity to try the various applications of Selec-Terrain as well as the locking rear diff and hill descent. All were competent when used but we also just left the Selec-Terrain in auto and just drove. The Jeep Cherokee Trailhawk, despite its Alfa underpinnings and SUV styling is great in this type of trail driving. To be honest almost all owners will never try something as hard as we put it through and if they do the Trailhawk will accommodate them. The interesting thing about the electronics off road is that they are much quieter than many other systems. The downhill descent control worked without all the pings and grinding of other systems and allowed the driver to control the speed of descent with the transmission lever. It's one of the better systems on the market.

Once we were on the tar the driving experience was just as satisfying. The V6 engine allowed plenty of power and the super smooth 9 speed transmission the economy with a number of overdrive gears. The steering was a little light and there was a little tyre noise at speed but the Jeep Cherokee is probably the quietest car on road in its class. The quietness is extraordinary for the price range. There are better handling on road AWD SUV's in the class but not by much.

Overall the Jeep Cherokee Trailhawk is actually outstanding. There are no SUV style vehicles in the class that are better off road and few that are better on road, none that are quieter and none that represent the astounding value proposition. If only there was a diesel version.



What's Good:

- Stylish design
- Real 4WD capability
- Slick transmission

What's Not:

- "C" pillar visibility
- No diesel option power
- Rear seat room

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 84/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 7 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 9 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |



JEEP WRANGLER UNLIMITED RUBICON

\$59,162 RDAP

The jeep Wrangler Unlimited Rubicon is as good as anything off road. Often it's not until you swap cars and go over the same track that you realise just how easily and comfortable the Jeep Wrangler Rubicon handled it. It doesn't even raise a sweat over terrain that other highly rated 4WD's sometimes can't cover.



by Pete Wilson



Long overdue for an overhaul, the Jeep Wrangler Rubicon nominated here is still an awesome off-road beast. The all-new 2018 Wrangler is sure to be better in most aspects and we will bring you a review of that as soon as we get our hands on one. Externally the Rubicon can trace its heritage way back to the Willys jeep of WW11. Despite many upgrades over the years it retains the box on wheels basic design that has as many advantages as disadvantages.

A key feature of the Jeep is the ability to have the open-air experience with the removable three-piece modular hardtop. Although it's not a 20 second job (more like a half hour job with two people) you can remove the top and in fact the doors and windscreen to have just about as much fun as is legally possible. It will take you forever to remove all these but it's an awesome feeling when you do. Freedom not experienced with any other vehicle.

The front seats could do with more travel but are soft and very comfortable which is surprising. The leather steering wheel with multiple controls is a beauty in the hands and in fact the redesign of the instrument cluster and centre stack all works pretty good. Storage is still at a premium but improved, with a lockable centre console, glove box and a convenient storage area above the media centre.



Two rear seat passengers are also comfortable with adequate leg, shoulder and headroom. The door straps are a pain. Don't be deceived by its bulky appearance outside, the Jeep is definitely mid-sized inside. It is however versatile with 60/40 folding rear seats and quite reasonable boot space with a removable storage bin underneath.

by Pete Wilson

The standard Media Centre with Audio Jack can blast out the required noise for teenagers and with speakers on the centre roll bar and all around they had some fun with the top off. Features include: heated front leather seats, removable hard top, freedom panels, black hard top, body colour fender flares, body colour grille with silver accents, 6.5-Inch touchscreen radio, satellite navigation, reverse parking camera, 9-Speaker Alpine premium audio system including subwoofer, deep tint sunscreen glass, rock rails and Rubicon hood decal.

Safety features include: advanced multistage driver and front-passenger airbags, supplemental side seat-mounted airbags for front occupants, electronic stability control, four-wheel anti-lock, with on and off road calibrations, four-channel, active wheel speed, vehicle speed, steering wheel angle, yaw-rate and lateral acceleration sensors, vehicle stability management with three-stage activation switch, all-speed traction control (ASTC), brake assist, electronic roll mitigation (ERM) and ABS with electronic brakeforce distribution (EBD), and VDC (vehicle dynamic control). HDC (hill descent control).

The 3.6L Pentastar® V6 engine provides 209kW @ 6,350rpm of power and 347Nm @ 4,300rpm of torque. It drives through a 5-speed automatic transmission. While these figures are good it requires work to extract the most from the engine and that translates to thirsty work. The ADR figure combined is 11.9L/100k but around town you can easily add another half again. While the on road dynamics have improved it is off road where the Jeep Wrangler Rubicon shines. It is built for the adventurous driver and features include heavy-duty Dana 44 axles, Rock-Trac® four-wheel drive system with shift on the fly capability, Quadra-Coil™ suspension with front and rear axle 5-link solid axle with heavy-duty monotube gas charged shock absorbers, transfer case and fuel tank skid plates. Wrangler's Electronic Throttle Control (ETC) system helps prevent the "pedal bobble" that often occurs when in 4WD-low mode. In short its built almost solely for 4WD driving.

At the heart of the 4WD capability of Wrangler Rubicon is the Rock-Trac® 4x4 System. It delivers extreme rock crawling ability, thanks to the 4:1 low-gear ratio. With the low crawl speed on Rock-Trac®, it's easy to ascend or descend sharp hills and crawl over obstacles with the added protection of rock rails for body protection. The Rubicon benefits from the Tru-Lok® Front & Rear Locking Differentials. Front and rear Tru-Lok® electronic locking differentials lock power and distribute it evenly between the wheels for unbelievable traction. Combine this with the electronic front stabiliser bar disconnect and heavy duty front & rear axles there isn't many places the Rubicon can't go. There also isn't many standard vehicles that can match it off road.



JEEP WRANGLER UNLIMITED RUBICON

\$59,162 RDAP

by Pete Wilson

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Model | Triton Exceed |
| Model Price | \$53,131 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.4L DT-D 4Cyl |
| Drivetrain | 4WD 5 speed Auto |
| Power | 209kW @ 6,350rpm |
| Torque | 347Nm @ 4,300rpm |
| Safety | TBA ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 276g/km |
| Economy ADR | 11.9L/100km |
| Tow Capacity | Max 2,000kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 200kg |
| Servicing | Capped Price |
| Warranty | 5 yr/ 100,000 km 5 Yr roadside assist |



Flip a switch and the available sway bar disengages when driving under 28 kph in 4WD-low (4LO) mode. This allows the front suspension to travel up to 25 percent farther on Rubicon than on Sport and Overland models. The Rubicon has an approach angle of 35 degrees, rampover angle of 18 degrees and departure angle of 28 degrees, a wading depth of 760mm and a ground clearance of 242mm. These are pretty impressive.

On the sand it simply glides over the dunes. One annoying trait is the propensity to override the switch off button for the traction control. As an experienced 4WD driver, I turn it off on the sand for a reason and it is annoying when the electronics believes it should turn itself back on. The tyre pressure monitors are a handy feature as we found out when we put air in the tyres after driving on Stockton Beach. The tyre gauge at the garage obviously was a little out because as we drove out the tyre monitor was flashing telling us that the tyres still needed more air.

So what is the Rubicon really like? Similar to all Wranglers, it has certain attributes that only the faithful can love. It has a lack of effective storage spaces other than the centre console and glove box, it has doors that swing freely in the wind and have a habit of swinging back on your shins as you are getting out, a hard top that takes two people to remove it, no reach adjustable steering wheel. Its ride on the road can be a little unsettled, especially in strong crosswinds and the four door has a turning circle like the Queen Mary as well as a number of other unique 'characteristics'. However turn off the bitumen and head to the bush and all those idiosyncrasies are quickly forgiven and forgotten.

The jeep is as good as anything off road and often it's not until you swap cars and go over the same track that you realise just how easily and comfortable the Jeep Wrangler Rubicon handled it. It doesn't even raise a sweat over terrain that other highly rated 4WD's sometimes can't cover.



What's Good:

- 4WD capability
- Improved internal comfort
- Street cool

What's Not:

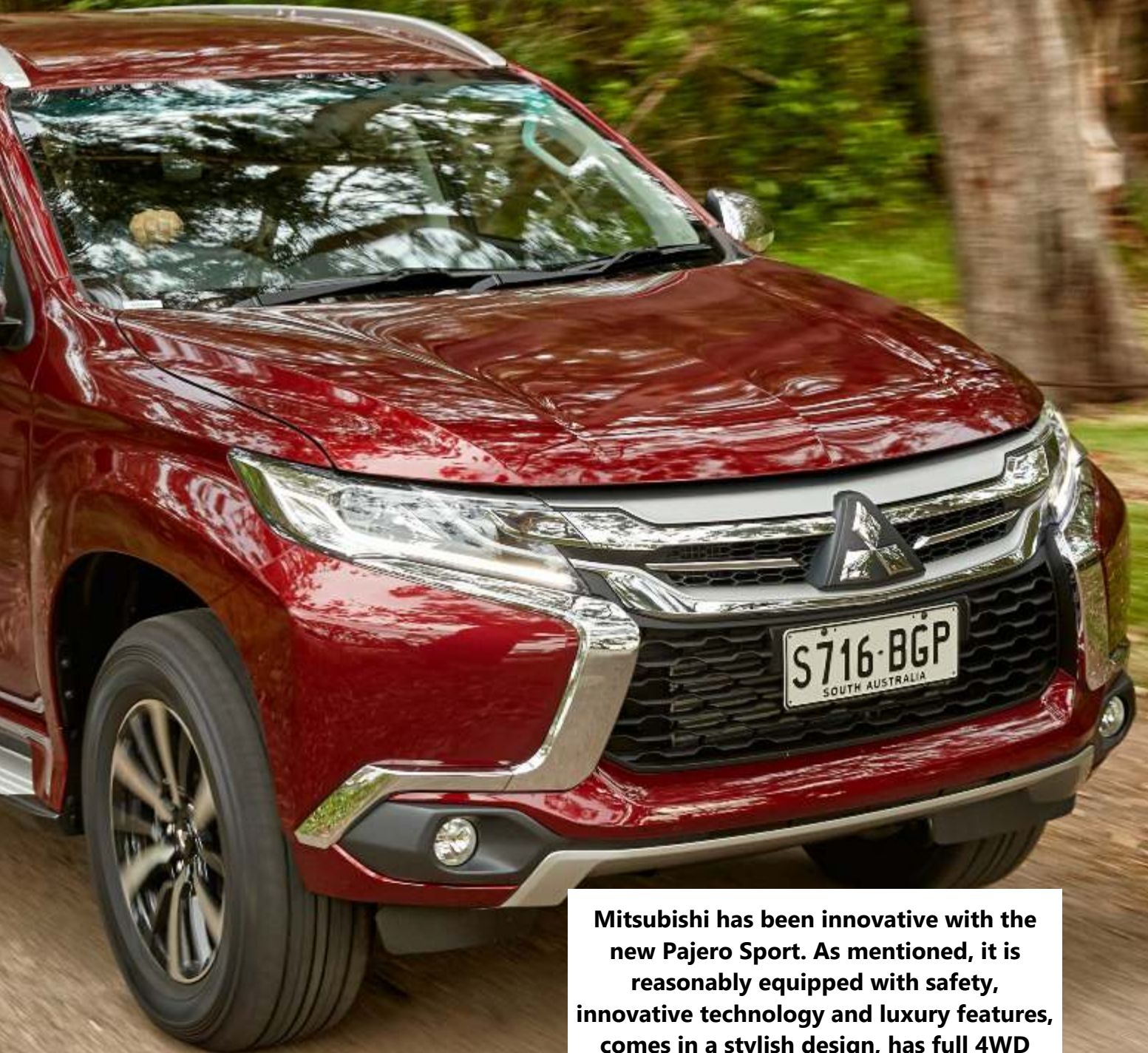
- Thirsty petrol engine
- Drives like you're drunk
- Wrangler idiosyncrasies

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 80/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 7 | Practicality | 8 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 7 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 7 | Value for Money | 8 |

MITSUBISHI PAJERO SPORT GLX

\$49,722 RDAP



Mitsubishi has been innovative with the new Pajero Sport. As mentioned, it is reasonably equipped with safety, innovative technology and luxury features, comes in a stylish design, has full 4WD capability and can tow what most will want to as well as take the luggage.

by Pete Wilson



Mitsubishi has its version of the Ute based wagon and the GLX is the entry level model. This is a 5 seat version and ironically that configuration is the best in the range. This gives it a competitive advantage over the competitors. The seven seat versions suffer from poor seat fold up design.

Based on the Triton, the entry level Mitsubishi Pajero Sport GLX is reasonably equipped with features and safety, combined with legendary off road ability and a large boot area. Adequate Gross Combination Mass between payload and towing capacity and pretty good value for money. It is ideally suited to 4WD enthusiasts, the adventurous as well as the Grey Nomads who like to tow.

Externally, the Pajero Sport follows the new dynamic styling theme which features bumpers that wrap around the front from the left and right guards and are bordered by a bright silver garnish. From the side, the Pajero Sport is sharply contoured by a crease running through the front guard and rear quarter panel and taillight. Integrated roof rails, 18-inch alloy wheels, side sill garnish and side step reinforce Pajero Sport's bold off-road SUV image.



The front styling is further enhanced by LED headlights and Daylight Running Lamps, which function as dimming position lamps when the headlights are on. The rear design is both sporty and stylish with iconic LED rear combination lamps that have a unique vertical design, which is even more striking when illuminated.

Unfortunately, to me the rear end evokes memories of a Lancer wagon or the older Grandis 7 seat wagon. This does however provide plenty of height and cover from the tail gate.

by Pete Wilson

Internally, the Pajero Sport cocoons the driver and front passenger with wrap around dash and centre console. The sleek style is complimented by the electric handbrake and off road mode switch. The two dial dash with centre MFD is clear and easy to read, the sleek leather steering wheel - that is both height and reach adjustable - allows the driver to find a comfortable position. The front cloth seats are comfortable for long drives but I would like an adjustable lumbar support. Rear passengers have adequate head, shoulder, and knee and leg room with heavily padded seats. Cargo space varies from 673L to a massive 1,624L capacity. It is here where the Pajero Sport GLX has it over the higher models. The lack of the third row seats and the inconvenience of folding them up means that the boot space is unencumbered and quite large for the market segment. It's exceptionally practical.

Mitsubishi's new Smartphone link Display Audio (SDA) enables compatible smartphone connectivity through Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto systems. Users can connect to selected apps, including navigation, stored on their smartphone through the system's 7-inch colour touch screen or via voice control. The system also allows users to make calls or send SMS messages hands free. SDA is a standard feature on all Pajero Sport models. While this makes use of the latest technology it also creates a problem for navigation in areas of poor or no phone reception, somewhere 4WD enthusiasts would be quite often I would imagine. The Pajero Sport GLX is also fitted with Digital Audio Broadcast (DAB), along with traditional AM/FM tuner. Other features include keyless entry with push button start, speed sensing auto door locking, climate control a/c.

The Pajero Sport is powered by the new 2.4L DiD engine from the Triton but combines with a new 8 speed AT that maximises the engine characteristics as well as minimising fuel usage. The EURO 5 compliant diesel engine produces maximum torque of 430Nm at 2,500rpm, while peak power is 133kW at 3,500rpm. Like the Triton, most of the torque comes in at a low 1,500rpm that enhances everyday driving and towing ability. The engine transmission combination is responsive and adaptive yet frugal.

Another feature is the Super Select II 4WD system which is operated via a selector dial in the centre console. Super Select II allows the driver to switch between four drive modes and centre differential. The system has four operating modes – 2H, 4H, 4HLc and 4LLc – and the driver can change between 2H and 4H at speeds under 100km/h. Off-road Mode is a new terrain control system developed exclusively for Pajero Sport. It provides the driver with four driving modes: Gravel, Mud/Snow, Sand and Rock. It works a treat and has been developed and tested over the harshest of conditions. There is also a rear diff lock.

The Pajero Sport's handling and ride balance comes from its redesigned suspension geometry and upgraded suspension components. The suspension is a double wishbone with coil spring set up at the front and 3-link rigid axle with coil spring suspension at the rear.



by Pete Wilson

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | Pajero Sport GLX |
| Model Price | \$49,722 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.4L CRD 4 Cyl |
| Drivetrain | 8 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 133kW @ 3,500rpm |
| Torque | 430Nm @ 2,500rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 212g/km |
| Economy ADR | 8.0L/100 km |
| Servicing | TBA Price |
| Tow Rating | 3,100kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 310kg |
| Warranty | 5 Yrs / 100,000 km 1 Yrs Roadside Assist |



At the front, a larger diameter stabiliser bar helps reduce body roll through corners, while front and rear damper rates are re-tuned to improve ride. Rear suspension mount points and the structure of the lateral rod mounts, have been changed to improve vehicle straight line and mid-corner stability. The Pajero Sport has long stroke suspension for superior off-road performance. A class leading 11.2m turning circle helps the nimble and tractable handling with surprisingly high levels of ride comfort. It also boasts a clever front-end design that dramatically decreases water splash over the windscreen when driving through water.

Awarded the 5 Star ANCAP Safety rating, the Pajero Sport features a comprehensive passive safety architecture based on Mitsubishi's RISE (Reinforced Impact Safety Evolution) impact safety body and seven SRS airbag arrangement. This includes SRS airbags fitted in front driver and passenger, side, side curtain and driver's knee positions.

In addition, the Pajero Sport has a range of active safety features which are fast becoming standard on passenger SUVs. A rear view camera, reversing sensors and speed sensing auto door locking feature are fitted to every Pajero Sport, The GLX does however miss out on some of the advanced safety technologies such as forward collision mitigation (FCM), blind spot warning (BSW), adaptive cruise control (ACC), Ultrasonic misacceleration mitigation system (UMS), multi around monitor system (MMS), and front parking sensors. What it does have is a heap of passenger airbags, ABS with EBD is fitted, along with Emergency Stop Signal, Active Stability and Traction Control, Hill Start Assist, and Hill Descent Control, Trailer Stability Assist and an Electric Park Brake.

Mitsubishi has been innovative with the new Pajero Sport. As mentioned, it is reasonably equipped with safety, innovative technology and luxury features, comes in a stylish design, has full 4WD capability and can tow what most will want to as well as take the luggage.



What's Good:

- 4WD Capability
- Towing Capability
- Power and Torque/transmission

What's Not:

- Sat Nav based on smartphone
- No lumbar driver support
- Doesn't get all the safety features

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 83/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 7 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 7 | Towing Ability | 9 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 9 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 9 |

OZROAMER 2017 7 SEAT 4WD \$45,000 - \$60,000 AWARD



One of the hottest market segments in 2017 is the 7 seat 4WD Ute based wagons with entrants from Isuzu, Ford, Holden, Toyota and Mitsubishi. With all this competition, the winning margin has reduced to a single point. If you go back 6 years there was only the Mitsubishi Challenger. Now there is a complete new segment. This is great news for 4WD consumers, as the availability of affordable 4WD family wagons was diminishing dramatically.

The four finalists include the multiple previous winner, the excellent and recently revamped Isuzu MU-X LST, Toyota's complete entrant the Fortuner GXL, Mitsubishi's Pajero Sport Exceed and Holden's all new Trailblazer LTZ .

Thankfully this segment exists as otherwise the genuine 4WD wagons would also be non existent. These vehicles offer a genuine alternative for the adventurous family that wishes to do more than drive on dirt roads. These will allow families to take that outback touring holiday at a reasonable price.

All four of these have similar philosophies in design and intended use and in reality if you bought any of them you would be happy with your purchase. There are a couple of slight differences though. It should be noted that this was a hotly contested category and the winner is by a very slim margin, such is the competitive nature of the segment. It often depends on where the vehicle is in it's model life cycle as to the competitive advantage.

HOLDEN TRAILBLAZER LTZ

\$57,591 RDAP



On test we drove the Trailblazer over fire trails, some heavier 4WD tracks, on sand and on the farm. It performed without missing a beat. In standard format there was reasonable articulation for the off road sections and reasonably good damping of rough road surfaces on road.

by Anthony Hood



If you go back five or six years the only 4WD wagon on the market that was based on a Ute was the Mitsubishi Challenger. Since then the market has changed dramatically with Isuzu and Holden starting the new trend, then Toyota and Ford followed and Mitsubishi replaced the Challenger. Now there is a good choice of robust, quality 4WD wagons for buyers to choose from.

The Trailblazer was launched in October 2016 and follows on from the re-launched Colorado earlier in the year. While it still resembles the Colorado7 and is almost identical to the Isuzu MU-X, the Trailblazer is dramatically improved in a number of key areas. Externally the Trailblazer is fairly stylish with styling enhancements including LED tail lights, signature LED daytime running lamps combined with chrome accents, complementing a stylish front fascia and more muscular bonnet design. A clever and practical touch that simply combines form and function. It has an upright, bold design and clean lines that look good from any angle, especially with the 18 inch alloy wheels. There is also a full sized underslung spare. The Trailblazer, along with the Isuzu MU-X is the most stylish of the new breed of 4WD wagon.



Internally the Trailblazer LTZ follows on from the Colorado with upgraded design. The front leather premium heated seats are very comfortable and stylish. They have multiple electronic adjustments and along with the height and reach adjustable steering wheel, allows drivers to tailor their driving position.

The thick rimmed steering wheel feels good in the hand, has all the usual controls and provides good feedback for driving. In front of the driver is a redesigned dash with two large dials, centre MFD and dials above that. It is actually clear and easy to read providing all the information the driver needs. The redesigned dash and door trims have soft touch feel, and has a premium feel to it with subtle styling.

by Anthony Hood

One thing though is a rough edge below the ridge above the centre stack that is a little sharp. The centre stack houses a new 8 inch colour touch screen with the latest Holden MyLink infotainment system and Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto, designed for seamless integration with the driver. This system features integrated satellite navigation and voice recognition, is pretty good and relatively easy to use.

The middle row of seats are comfortable for three people, have adequate head, shoulder and knee room. The third row of seats are bigger and better than most competitors in the segment but still only good for shorter passengers for short trips. The seats fold flat to reveal a large 1830L boot area. When all three rows of seats are used there isn't much room behind for luggage though. This is the same for all the Ute based wagons.

Adding to interior cabin comfort, remote vehicle start allows Trailblazer to reach a comfortable cabin temperature before passengers climb in. This combines with electronic climate control for passenger comfort. The remote window operation (via keyfob) is a great design feature allowing easier door closing but is prone to haphazard working which is annoying. Other comfort features include heated and power folding exterior mirrors, electrochromatic (light sensitive) rear view mirror and rain sensing windscreen wipers.

Driving the Trailblazer LTZ reveals improvements to the ride and handling, internal noise reduction and better matching of the transmission to the engine, to maximise use of all available torque. When trying to describe the driving experience on road the words – more refined - come to mind. It still isn't as good as the MU-X but much better than the Colorado7. It's like a jigsaw puzzle. There are a myriad of little things that have been improved that all add up to the smoother quieter ride and improved handling. The Trailblazer is powered by the 2.8L Duramax diesel engine which produces 147kW of power @ 3,600rpm and a healthy 500Nm of torque at an impressive 2,000rpm. Previously the Colorado7 had similar figures, but was mismatched with the transmission. Now it feels that you can access every one of those 500Nm of torque and the vehicle is better for it. This power and torque is transferred through a dual range 4WD system and a 6 speed sports automatic transmission and a LSD. This combination works equally as well on and off road. In fact the Trailblazer has excellent off road ability. Additionally the Trailblazer provides great feedback to the driver through its electric power steering with revised steering calibration, co-developed between Holden and Brazilian engineers giving a more precise steering feel thanks to a faster steering rack ratio and less turns lock-to-lock. It actually feels quite nimble on road.

On test we drove the Trailblazer over fire trails, some heavier 4WD tracks, on sand and on the farm. It performed without missing a beat. In standard format there was reasonable articulation for the off road sections and reasonably good damping of rough road surfaces on road. It was however slightly rougher on road than the Isuzu MU-X which is class leading.



HOLDEN TRAILBLAZER LTZ

\$57,591 RDAP

by Anthony Hood

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Model | Trailblazer LTZ |
| Model Price | \$57,591 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.8 L DT 4 Cyl |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 147kW @ 3,600rpm |
| Torque | 500Nm @ 2,000rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 228g/km |
| Economy ADR | 8.6L/100 km |
| Servicing | Capped Price |
| Tow Rating | 3,000kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 300kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 1 Yrs Roadside Assist |



We also towed some trailers and the Trailblazer easily handles its 3,000kg tow limit with a 300kg tow ball rating. It now equals the MU-X for ease of towing. Holden has a great payload calculator on its website. You really should check it out. They have been excellent in educating the drivers about the variances in what can be towed and carried etc.

Holden engineers introduced something quite clever called the Centrifugal Pendulum Absorber (CPA) torque converter. This basically in simple English, counteracts and smoothes torsional vibrations in the drive line normally felt in the cabin. Combine this with all new engine mounts, all new chassis tune and you feel the quietness inside while idling and driving.

Holden has significantly upgraded the safety features of the Trailblazer LTZ with a five star ANCAP safety rating. The active and passive safety features include 7 Airbags (driver, pass., front. seats, curtain, and driver's knee), electronic stability control (ESC), system, hill start assist (HSA), trailer sway control (TSC) and hill descent control (HDC), side blind zone alert (SBZA) and rear cross traffic alert (RCTA). Further technology includes rear park assist and reversing cameras standard as well as front park assist (FPA), tyre pressure monitoring system (TPMS), forward collision alert (FCA) lane departure warning (LDW).

Impressively the Trailblazer comes with Lifetime Capped Price Service program and Australian based Customer Care. Additionally Holden has an almost complete range of accessories that compete with aftermarket products yet retain the full manufacturer's warranty that includes: bull bars, safari bar, bash plates, extended rail sports bars, steel rear step, tubular steel side steps, led driving lights, fender flares, nudge bar, snorkel, 18 in wheels and all terrain tyres.

Holden's Trailblazer LTZ is a worthy nominee of this year's award but it came in second. It should be noted it was by the slimmest of margins and the segment just keeps getting better. It also won the award in 2016.



What's Good:

- Towing Capability
- 4WD Capability and robustness
- Value for money

What's Not:

- Front windows don't always close
- Small boot space when using 7 seats
- Some sharp edges on dash

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 88/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 9 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 9 |



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ISUZU MU-X LST 4WD**\$53,707 RDAP**

The competitive advantage that the Isuzu MU-X has always had is its stylish good looks, exemplary road manners, rugged off road capability, outstanding reliability, durability, longevity and renowned value for money. There have been some shortcomings but overall it has been extremely successful and rightly so.

by Rob Fraser



The Isuzu MU-X LST has long been a favourite here at OzRoamer, having won the coveted '7 Seat 4WD \$45,000- \$60,000' three times since it was originally launched. It has always been a well-balanced 4WD that had outstanding ride and handling considering it is Ute based. The problem is that over the ensuing years the competition has moved forward and the Isuzu has stayed the same.

The competitive advantage that the Isuzu MU-X has always had is its stylish good looks, exemplary road manners, rugged off road capability, outstanding reliability, durability, longevity and renowned value for money. There have been some shortcomings but overall it has been extremely successful and rightly so.

Enter the revised 2017 model update that addresses many of the shortcomings of the previous model but with the improvements there are still some areas that need attention. More on that later. Externally there is a redesigned grille and headlight assembly that has a more assertive appearance and houses the new Bi-LED projector and provide increased night visibility. One impressive

feature, especially given that the MU-X is often used as a tow vehicle, is the fact that the new Bi-LED projector headlights are also equipped with an auto-levelling feature, which automatically adjust the headlight beam to the appropriate angle whenever the MU-X is loaded with a complete complement of passengers, heavy cargo and towing.

This, combined with excellent high beam, ensures safe driver vision when driving at night, and increases safety for all road users by reducing oncoming glare.

New design front fog lights allow for increased driver visibility at night or during inclement weather. Complementing the fresh exterior look, is a stylish new design 18-inch alloy wheel with All-Terrain (AT) tyres.



by Rob Fraser

One area where the previous MU-X needed improved was internal styling. The interior was a little basic previously with hard plastic surfaces everywhere. The MU-X's interior styling has been extensively refined, with the passenger cabin now featuring a dual-tone dashboard with some soft touch finishes, new chrome and piano-black trimming, and new soft touch armrests and console coverings providing a more refined ambience.

In addition, new quilted design leather-accented seats feature in LS-T variants. These seats are a vast improvement over the previous model that were a little hard and flat and left you with a numb bum after a full days driving. Unfortunately, there is still no lumbar adjustment nor tilt feature for the seat squab. The long leg drivers will need to stretch for the steering wheel as there is no reach adjustment for it.

Another improvement is the new an 8-inch touch screen display audio system, with in-built Sat Nav and reversing camera. For those audiophiles amongst buyers, the 17MY MU-X LST now houses eight speakers delivering crisp, clear audio for all occupants: two roof mounted speakers in addition to the two front door mounted speakers, two dash mounted tweeters and two rear door mounted speakers. LS-T variants also boast a fold-down roof-mounted 10-inch DVD screen which can be easily viewed by both the second and third row occupants. The remote control unit allows both the DVD and audio functions to be conveniently controlled from anywhere in the vehicle.

For the plug in people there are three USB ports, two are located in the front dash and one in the rear, providing convenient charge points for mobile phones and other portable devices with USB charge ports. The covers are a little finicky to remove and if I owned the MU-X, I would probably just remove them altogether. For heavier-duty power requirements, there are three 12 Volt power outlets, located in the centre dash console, glove-box and rear cargo area.

Storage is another highlight with 12 cup holders and 18 storage solutions! I am so glad that Isuzu kept the clever slide out cup holders in front of the side air vents. Unfortunately Holden has removed them, which in my opinion is daft. There are cup holders everywhere, plenty of good storage bins and no shortage of places to put things. It is really well laid out.

Front seat occupants are well catered for with comfortable seats and plenty of room. Middle row passengers have adequate leg, head and shoulder room, however if the front seats are all the way back the knee room is restricted. For access to the rear seats there is a clever folding-rolling second row seat arrangement that makes passenger access to the third row seating relatively easy.



by Rob Fraser



The third row seats are okay for taller passengers but better for children or early teens. I just can't help the feeling that the third row of seats in all the Ute based wagons are an afterthought, although these do fold flat to provide a long and spacious storage area. The storage bin behind the seats just seems like it doesn't fit. Isuzu aren't alone in this. The Toyota Fortuner has those ridiculous fold up seats, the Mitsubishi Pajero Sport rear seats simply don't work well and the Trailblazer and Everest have issues.

One of the big features on the MY17 MU-X is the significant improvement in NVH (Noise, Vibration and Harshness) comfort levels that have been achieved. This, in large, is thanks to the addition of new sound and vibration insulation across the vehicle, including to the dash console, floor transmission tunnel, windscreen seal, firewall and floorplan. Road noise is noticeably quieter, less overall wind noise (although still a little around the rear view mirrors) and less noticeable engine rumble, although still enough to be pleasant if you like diesel rumble as I do.

The other big news item is the improved engine capability. The new Euro 5 compliant engine was introduced when the revised D-Max was launched earlier this year. Although the Isuzu engine was rarely found lacking, it was lagging behind competitors in figures not application. We should be extremely thankful to the Isuzu staff here in Australia because they fought hard to retain the 3.0L engine and make the improvements needed.

It will prove to be a very clever business decision I'm sure as we Aussies like our capacity in our engines. The new Euro5 emission compliant 3.0 litre 4JJ1-TC Hi-Power turbo-diesel power plant is a world first for Isuzu. It was developed exclusively for the Australian market, after exhaustive local research and testing into the use and demands of existing Australian Isuzu owners, and no other market currently features an Isuzu 3.0 litre Euro5 compliant engine.

The key feature is that maximum torque output has been increased to 430Nm from the previous engine's output of 380Nm to meet the demands of Australian operating conditions and customer's expectations. However, being Isuzu and having all that truck experience, they understand that a shallow peak torque figure, while sounding good, often translates poorly to the real world use. In comparison to the previous engine, 380Nm of torque (previous maximum) is now on tap from 1,700 – 3,500rpm – which is 100 rpm lower and continues 700 rpm higher – meaning the same engine rpm provides more power and the same torque can be generated at lower engine rpm.

By producing more power at lower engine rpm and more torque, the new Euro 5 engine is not only more fuel efficient and produces less toxic exhaust emissions, but still delivers relaxed almost lazy drive-ability, especially when under load.

by Rob Fraser



To cope with the increased torque Isuzu has introduced a new Aisin AWR6B45 6-Speed Automatic Transmission with “lock-up” torque converter. This ensures that drivers of the MU-X are provided the most efficient gear selection to suit a wide variety of driving conditions – further improving fuel efficiency and lowering CO2 emissions. What all this means in real terms is that the Isuzu MU-X is now an even better 4WD and tow vehicle.

All variants of the MU-X are equipped with a reversing camera and rear park assist (RPA). They offer an extensive and impressive level of occupant protection; six airbags (dual front, side and full-length curtain), 4-channel 4-sensor anti-skid brake system (ABS) with electronic brakeforce distribution (EBD), electronic stability control (ESC), traction control system (TCS) and emergency brake assist (EBA), as well as hill start assist (HSA) and hill descent control (HDC).

There are height adjustable head restraints for all occupants and dual pre-tensioners with load limiters for the front seatbelts, along with ISO-FIX child restraint points in the second row. What the MU-X is lacking are some of the more recent additions to competitors like the Holden Trailblazer, with blind spot indicators, forward collision warning and rear cross traffic alert etc.

The Isuzu MU-X has always been a robust reliable 4WD wagon. Front independent double wishbone suspension with coil springs, gas shocks and stabiliser bar, allows the driver positive feedback and steering control regardless of the terrain underfoot, and a rear five-link suspension configuration also with coil springs, stabiliser bar and gas shocks, provide stability and generous wheel articulation when traversing off road.

All 4x4 variants of the MU-X offer a reasonable level of ground clearance, for true off-road capability. For added protection, 4x4 models are also equipped with a 2mm steel front skid plate, steel sump and transfer case guards plus protection for the leading edge of the fuel tank when travelling off-road.

Further confidence is provided with hill descent control (HDC) which assists driver control by controlling the vehicle’s brakes to maintain a constant low speed when descending steep slopes or on slippery off-road surfaces. Increased driver control means increased safety, and importantly, HDC is offered on all Isuzu MU-X variants, including 4x2 models.

by Rob Fraser

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Model | Isuzu MU-X LST |
| Model Price | \$53,707 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.0 L 4 Cyl TDi |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 130kW @ 3,600rpm |
| Torque | 430Nm @ 2,000rpm |
| Safety | 5 STAR ANCAP |
| CO2 | 214g/km |
| Economy ADR | 8.1L/100 km |
| Servicing | 5 Yr Service Plan |
| Tow Rating | 3,000kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 300kg |
| Warranty | 5 Yrs / 130,000 km 5 Yrs Roadside Assist |



We tried this on the launch on two occasions, once descending the 45 degree ramp that was set up and another time on a fairly steep rugged trail descent. Both times the HDC performed effortlessly and without much noise or fuss. There is however no real diff lock option that seems to be prevalent on the MU-X competitors.

So overall the MY 17 updates are a significant improvement over the outgoing model, with more torque from the Euro 5 engine and a better delivery spread, better NVH comfort levels, redesigned interior, upgrades to the headlights, a new 6 speed AT transmission and improvements to the audio and Sat Nav systems.

There are however some shortcomings that remain, especially as the market place expects more from its vehicles every year. Simple things like reach adjustable steering wheel, lumbar support, blind spot indicators and forward collision warning, rear diff lock, auto headlights and wipers, air conditioned front seats etc. These are features that seem to be becoming standard on this class of vehicle now and hopefully can be introduced on the MU-X before too long.

If you are looking for a robust, honest, durable, reliable 4WD or tow vehicle you would find it hard to pass the MU-X LST over. The Isuzu MU-X remains a firm favourite here at OzRoamer, simply because of its capabilities and no fuss attitude to delivering a relaxed driving experience. It has the smoothest ride of all the Ute based wagons.

All Isuzu vehicles now come with the Isuzu Service Plus 555. This includes a 5 year warranty, 5 years Roadside Assistance and 5 year/50,000 kilometre Capped Price Servicing program – which adds further peace of mind when it comes to protecting your investment and your wallet.



What's Good:

- Towing performance
- Ride and handling
- Robustness

What's Not:

- Some safety features missing
- No reach adjustable steering wheel
- No driver lumbar adjustment

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 91/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 10 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 9 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |



MITSUBISHI PAJERO SPORT EXCEED

\$57,755 RDAP



Mitsubishi has been innovative with the design of the new Pajero Sport. It is packed full of safety, innovative technology and luxury features, comes in a stylish design, has full 4WD capability and can tow what most will want to as well as take the luggage.



by Rob Fraser



The Mitsubishi Pajero Sport has been a previous winner of this award, but when it was a 5 seat version only. Now that the Exceed only comes in a seven seat version, the poor configuration of the rear seats is a limiting factor. Based on the recently launched Triton, itself an award winner in previous years, the range topping Mitsubishi Pajero Sport Exceed is packed full of features and safety, combined with practical off road ability and a reasonable boot area, good Gross Combination Mass between payload and towing capacity and reasonable value for money. It is ideally suited to 4WD enthusiasts, adventurous families as well as the Grey Nomads who like to tow.

Externally, the Pajero Sport follows the new dynamic styling theme which features bumpers that wrap around the front from the left and right guards and are bordered by a bright silver garnish. From the side, the Pajero Sport is sharply contoured by a crease running through the front guard and rear quarter panel and taillight. Integrated roof rails, 8-inch alloy wheels, side sill garnish and side step reinforce Pajero Sport's bold off-road SUV image. The front styling is further enhanced by LED headlights and daylight running lamps, which function as dimming position lamps when the headlights are on. The rear design is both sporty and stylish with iconic LED rear combination lamps that have a unique vertical design, which is even more striking when illuminated. Unfortunately, to me the rear end evokes memories of a Grandis wagon. This does however provide plenty of height and cover from the tail gate.



Internally, the Pajero Sport cocoons the driver and front passenger with wrap around dash and centre console. The sleek style is complimented by the electric handbrake and off road mode switch.

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by Rob Fraser

The two dial dash with centre MFD is clear and easy to read, the sleek leather steering wheel - that is both height and reach adjustable, allows the driver to find a comfortable position along with the heated electrically adjustable drivers seat. The seats are very comfortable for long drives. Rear passengers have adequate head, shoulder, knee and leg room with heavily padded seats. Cargo space varies from 673L to a massive 1,624L capacity.

Mitsubishi's new Smartphone link display audio (SDA) enables compatible smartphone connectivity through Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto systems. Users can connect to selected apps, including navigation, stored on their smartphone through the system's 7-inch colour touch screen or via voice control. The system also allows users to make calls or send SMS messages hands free. SDA is a standard feature on all Pajero Sport models. While this makes use of the latest technology it also creates a problem for navigation in areas of poor or no phone reception, somewhere 4WD enthusiasts would be quite often I would imagine!

The Pajero Sport Exceed is also fitted with Digital Audio Broadcast (DAB), along with traditional AM/FM tuner. There is a rear seat entertainment unit with DVD player and high definition 9-inch roof-mounted colour display and 8-speaker audio. Other features include keyless entry with push button start, speed sensing auto door locking, dusk sensing headlamps, rain sensing wipers, electrochromatic rear view mirror, dual zone A/C, leather interior trim and Multi around Monitor System,

The Pajero Sport is powered by the new 2.4L DiD engine from the Triton but combines with a new 8 speed AT that maximises the engine characteristics as well as minimising fuel usage. The EURO 5 compliant diesel engine produces maximum torque of 430Nm at 2,500rpm, while peak power is 133kW at 3,500rpm. Like the Triton, most of the torque comes in at a low 1,500rpm that enhances everyday driving and towing ability. The engine transmission combination is responsive and adaptive yet frugal.

Another feature is the Super Select II 4WD system which is operated via a selector dial in the centre console. Super Select II allows the driver to switch between four drive modes and centre differential. The system has four operating modes – 2H, 4H, 4HLc and 4LLc – and the driver can change between 2H and 4H at speeds under 100km/h. Off-road Mode is a new terrain control system developed exclusively for Pajero Sport. It provides the driver with four driving modes: Gravel, Mud/Snow, Sand and Rock. It works a treat and has been developed and tested over the harshest of conditions. There is also a rear diff lock.

The Pajero Sport's handling and ride balance comes from its redesigned suspension geometry and upgraded suspension components. The suspension is a double wishbone with coil spring set up at the front and 3-link rigid axle with coil spring suspension at the rear.



by Rob Fraser

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Model | Pajero Sport Exceed |
| Model Price | \$57,755 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.4L CRD 4 Cyl |
| Drivetrain | 8 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 133kW @ 3,500rpm |
| Torque | 430Nm @ 2,500rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 212g/km |
| Economy ADR | 8.0L/100 km |
| Servicing | TBA Price |
| Tow Rating | 3,100kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 310kg |
| Warranty | 5 Yrs / 100,000 km 1 Yrs Roadside Assist |



At the front, a larger diameter stabiliser bar helps reduce body roll through corners, while front and rear damper rates are re-tuned to improve ride. Rear suspension mount points and the structure of the lateral rod mounts, have been changed to improve vehicle straight line and mid-corner stability.

The Pajero Sport has long stroke suspension for superior off-road performance. A class leading 11.2m turning circle helps the nimble and tractable handling with surprisingly high levels of ride comfort. It also boasts a clever front-end design that dramatically decreases water splash over the windscreen when driving through water.

Awarded the 5 Star ANCAP Safety rating, the Pajero Sport features a comprehensive passive safety architecture based on Mitsubishi's RISE (Reinforced Impact Safety Evolution) impact safety body and seven SRS airbag arrangement. This includes SRS airbags fitted in front driver and passenger, side, side curtain and driver's knee positions. In addition, the Pajero Sport has a range of active safety features which are fast becoming standard on passenger SUVs. A rear view camera, reversing sensors and speed sensing auto door locking feature are fitted to every Pajero Sport, while Exceed models are equipped with the following advanced safety technologies: Forward Collision Mitigation (FCM), Blind Spot Warning (BSW), Ultrasonic misacceleration Mitigation System (UMS), Multi around Monitor System (MMS), ABS with EBD is fitted, along with emergency stop signal, active stability and traction control, hill start assist, and hill descent control, trailer stability assist and an electric park brake.

Mitsubishi has been innovative with the design of the new Pajero Sport. It is packed full of safety, innovative technology and luxury features, comes in a stylish design, has full 4WD capability and can tow what most will want to as well as take the luggage. All this comes for the outstanding value of \$57,755 RDAP. It won the award previously but this year was piped at the post but the value proposition makes it difficult to pass up.



What's Good:

- 4WD Ability
- Ride & Handling
- Value for money

What's Not:

- Rear end like a Lancer wagon
- Rear seat configuration doesn't work
- Sat Nav based on smart phone reception

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 89/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 8 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 9 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |

TOYOTA FORTUNER GXL 4WD**\$54,422 RDAP**

This is a great alternative to either a Prado or a Kluger for families. In addition to its prodigious off-road ability, the Fortuner delivers a compliant and quiet ride, a spacious interior, convenient features and premium quality expected in a modern SUV.



by Rob Fraser



Ute based wagon variants have become very popular and yet another of these, the unfortunately named Toyota Fortuner is based on the Hilux chassis, with heavy modifications to make it more car like for family buyers with genuine 4WD credentials. We are testing the middle range GXL, which is popular with buyers.

The development process has a strong Australian DNA with its unique body, wiring and key underpinnings having been designed or extensively developed and evaluated by local engineers. The rugged frame, high-torque engine, all-coil suspension and strong upper body have been proven in Australia under the world's toughest conditions, on tarmac and off the beaten track.

Externally, the Fortuner is actually quite a pleasant design with bold front end and grill, sweeping uplift side profile and integrated rear end. The GXL features projector-type headlamps, LED tail lamps and side steps, alloy wheels, fog lamps, roof rails and privacy glass. The tailgate has a maximum height is 191cm – which enables 90 per cent of Australian men to stand under it and ensures the pull down is still within reach of 90 per cent of Australian women. At 190cm I just fit under the tailgate.



Internally the Fortuner raises the bar a bit for a Hilux. It exudes premium SUV ambiance with elegant and flowing lines, soft touch materials on high touch areas, especially the centre console, which is flanked by vertical columns that also provide leg support for the driver and front passenger.

Front fabric seats are very comfortable and with height and reach adjustment for the thick rimmed steering wheel, it is easy to find a comfortable driving position even for taller drivers.

by Rob Fraser

The GXL features a high-precision, full-colour 4.2-inch MID with information including trip meters, vehicle checks and data to support economical driving. Steering-wheel controls operate the MID menu.

There is seating for seven people over three rows with sports front seats that are flared at the shoulders and fitted with firm bolsters for maximum support. Features include seven-inch touch-screen display audio systems with six speakers, auxiliary/USB port, AM/FM radio and a CD player.

The screen also displays the reversing camera image and provides access to Toyota Link connected mobility. Toyota Link can provide access to Pandora Internet radio and help find fuel, a destination, weather and other assistance. Convenience features include Bluetooth connectivity, voice recognition, steering-wheel audio and telephone controls and power door locks, windows and mirrors. There is no Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto.

The GXL has air-conditioning with separate air-flow controls for second-row passengers. Storage space is generous with a number of cup and bottle holders, compartments, trays, pockets and consoles. Toyota has adopted the clever slide out cup/bottle holder under the air vents. An air-conditioned compartment above the glovebox can be used to cool or warm items with the capacity for two 600ml bottles. Convenient shopping-bag hooks are fitted to the front seat-backs. All models feature three 12-volt accessory sockets – under the centre cluster, in the rear of the centre console for second-row seat passengers and in the rear luggage area. Crusade also has a 100w/AC220-volt accessory socket in the centre console.

Fortuner's seven seats are arranged in a 2-3-2 configuration. The 60/40 split-fold second-row seat has a one-touch slide and tumble feature, while the 50/50 third-row seats are fold-to-the-side style that severely limits available storage space. These are just crap. Cargo capacity ranges from 200 litres to 1,080 litres when packed to the top of the seat backs.

The Fortuner GXL is powered by a high-torque 2.8-litre four-cylinder common-rail direct-injection turbo-diesel engine with a choice of six-speed manual or automatic transmissions. Either transmission is good and works well with the engine. In fact, previously we have driven a manual version over a dirt road that has been part of the World Rally Championship years ago and it was a huge amount of fun. We have driven the GXL over forest trails, sand dunes, heavy 4WD tracks, fire roads, highways and freeways and throughout, it has impressed with its ease of driving, ride and handling, tractability and quietness. Toyota have done an excellent job of designing a vehicle for Australian conditions.



TOYOTA FORTUNER GXL 4WD

\$54,422 RDAP

by Rob Fraser

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Model | Fortuner GXL |
| Model Price | \$54,422 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.8L DiD 4 Cyl |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 130kW @ 3,400rpm |
| Torque | 450Nm @ 1,600rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 228g/km |
| Economy ADR | 8.6L/100 km |
| Servicing | Optional package |
| Tow Rating | 2,800kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 280kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



Maximum power is 130kW @ 3,400rpm and peak torque is 450Nm @ 1,600rpm for the automatic and 420Nm for the manual. Braked towing capacity is 3,000kg for the manual and 2,800kg for the auto. Tow ball rating is 10% of either weight. The key here is that while the power figure is probably a little low, the available torque at 1,600rpm is plenty. It provides an easy driving environment and towing is a breeze, especially with the trailer sway control. It also means that Fortuner is economical at around 8.6 L/100k for the auto version.

The Fortuner has strong off-road ability, as you would expect using the base Hilux 4WD transmission. This includes rear differential lock, approach angle of 30 degrees, departure angle of 25 degrees, ramp-over angle of 23.5 degrees, ground clearance of 225mm, wading depth of 700mm, electronic transfer case dial, A-TRC (active traction control) and locally developed underbody protection. All Fortuner models have an electronically controlled transfer case for 'on-the-fly' changes from 4x2 to 4x4 high, using Toyota's unique disconnecting differential. The GXL runs 17 inch alloy wheels with all terrain tyres.

Safety is a key feature with a five-star ANCAP safety rating. The GXL is equipped with stability and active traction control, seven airbags, reversing camera, trailer sway control, downhill assist control, hill-start assist control and rake-and-reach adjustments for the steering column. It includes three top-tether anchors and two ISOFIX child-seat mounts. A comprehensive range of Toyota Genuine accessories is available including airbag-compatible bull bars and newly developed towbar and load distribution hitch.

This is a great alternative to either a Prado or a Kluger for families. In addition to its prodigious off-road ability, the Fortuner delivers a compliant and quiet ride, a spacious interior, convenient features and premium quality expected in a modern SUV. It was just beaten for the award this year but remains a class vehicle.



What's Good:

- 4WD ability
- Ride & Handling
- Rear diff lock

What's Not:

- Fold up 3rd row seats - seriously
- Towing rating
- No Apple CarPlay®/Android® Auto

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 88/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 8 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 8 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |

OZROAMER 2017 7 SEAT AWD SUV \$45,000 - \$60,000 AWARD

If any market segment sits right in the middle of the surge of AWD SUVs it would be the 7 seat AWD SUV \$45,000 - \$60,000 segment.

This is where the majority of family buyers sit in price and hence the decision is paramount to them as to what they buy.

This is also where the choice becomes difficult with many manufacturers participating. Also do you as a buyer go for the top of the range with all the extras and higher price tag, or select the next model specification down with slightly less features with the lower price.

Picking four nominees was difficult and easy all at the same time. There are really four standout vehicles in the category for quality and features. Here are our four best for the final choice.

Ironically enough all four have been previous winners of the category over the last 7 years.

First up is the Hyundai Santa Fe Elite 2.2 CRDi. This vehicle is long on its life cycle now with an upgraded version due 2018, but still manages to compete at the top level.

Next is the brilliant Kia Sorento Sli 2.2 CRDi AWD that was completely upgraded in 2017 and leads the way for the segment.

Last years winner is again represented in the Mazda CX-9 Touring with its stylish looks, clever engine and technology features.

As always there is the Toyota Kluger GX which almost reads buyers minds about what they want. It also had a revamp late in 2017 but again is long in its life cycle now.

Remember these vehicles are not 4WD's rather they have an AWD capability for added safety and some all road adventures. Their primary purpose is to transport families in comfort and safety.

As usual the segment was close but there is only one winner!



HYUNDAI SANTA FE ELITE 2.2R CRDI

\$55,836 RDAP

The Hyundai Santa Fe Elite is a soft-roader but I don't like the expression. It speaks of compromise when it is really well targeted at the comfortable, practical and easy-to-drive family vehicle. The term AWD SUV better suits the category.



by David Brown



In Australia there are 22 models in the medium to large SUV category under \$70,000 that are still trying to stay on the market although some at the bottom end of the sales chart are barely troubling the scorer. But you could divide the category into serious four-wheel drives and soft-roaders. Seven seat capacity is one of the critical features of the large soft-roaders more than any rugged off-road capability.

The Hyundai Santa Fe Elite is a soft-roader but I don't like the expression. It speaks of compromise when it is really well targeted at the comfortable, practical and easy-to-drive family vehicle. The term AWD SUV better suits the category. The current generation Santa Fe has been around for six years with a few make-overs along the way. There is a new generation model due early next year but the current one has kept up quite well.

The exterior is more car-like than say a Toyota Prado. Less of the square shoulders, tough look. It has a sloping bonnet; the side and the slightly sloping back window gives a bit of sporty station wagon to its appearance. The rear of the vehicle has a bit of Star Wars stormtrooper look to it.



When the tail gate goes up it gives good headroom for those walking around the back. We were driving the middle of the line Elite with an electric tailgate and an automatic opening feature which we struggled to get to work consistently. The theory is that if you stand at the back with the key in your pocket it will open.

The Elite runs LED headlights and tail lights, indicators along with front and rear fog lamps, a high mount LED stop light and courtesy light in the door handles.

by David Brown

Tyres on the Elite are 5 spoke alloy design with 235/60 R18 tyres and there is a full-size spare on all models. The Santa Fe Elite measures 4,700mm long, 1,880mm wide, 1,690mm high and a wheel base of 2,700mm. The approach angle is 16.9 degrees, rampover of 17.1 degrees and departure angle of 21.5 degrees. These dimensions clearly put the vehicle in the medium category.

Getting into the driver's seat you are met with a stylish design that gives clarity to the controls which, in most cases, are easy to use. Syncing your phone was simple. The fascia around the dials in front of the driver were angled to add a bit of style while the dials were clear. The information between the two main dials was small and had to look hard to make out the numbers but it was manageable.

The seats did not hug you like a racing car but were better than many others in support. The Elite has electric seats with heating but no ventilation, which is on the Highlander and a great feature for Australia. There were seat adjustment memory buttons and the driver's seat retracts when you open the door to make getting in and out easier. It had an easy to use electric parking brake. The beige and black interior, with prominent stitching on the seats and a few bits of faux carbon fibre, looked like it was designed rather than a few trendy elements randomly stuck together. This plush interior spoke of warnings to the children about not having mud on their shoes.

The Santa Fe's second-row seating locked into place when folded down and had a triple-split fold arrangement. The third-row of seats were typically for smaller people although they did get vents on either side. One weakness is that with the third row of seats raised there is very little luggage room and the head rests were only millimetres away from the rear window glass. I never know what to do with the privacy screen when you don't want it but the Santa Fe provided storage for it under the boot floor behind the folding seats. A great idea that means you don't leave the screen in the garage at home.

Unlike some of the other big selling soft-roaders in this class, the Santa Fe has a diesel option, which is the dominant engine. The engine is a gem producing 147kW @ 3,800rpm of power and 440Nm @ 1,750-2,750rpm of torque. This drives through a 6 speed automatic transmission that is smooth and well suited to the engine. The diesel engine was very good. It was quiet, practically no turbo lag and performed more than adequately. It has various driving modes from eco to sport but above all it gave the feeling of confidence and being well matched to its six-speed automatic gearbox.

When I first drove it, I found that I checked the tachometer a few times to confirm it was actually a diesel. Hyundai also provided latex gloves to keep your hands clean when filling the tank. This is an awesome idea as many people dread the filling procedure with oily and smelly diesel pumps.



HYUNDAI SANTA FE ELITE 2.2R CRDI

\$55,836 RDAP

by David Brown

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | Santa Fe Elite |
| Model Price | \$55,836 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.2L CRDI 4 Cyl |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp AT AWD |
| Power | 147kW @ 3,800rpm |
| Torque | 44 Nm @ 1,750rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 205g/km |
| Economy ADR | 7.9L/100 km |
| Servicing | Free service offer |
| Tow Rating | 2,000kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 100 kg |
| Warranty | 5 Yrs / unlimited km 1 Yrs Roadside Assist |



The Santa Fe did not have the jarring feel on bumps that can come with vehicles more tuned to off-road capers; it was easy and comfortable to drive with good steering and no torque steer. Interestingly it did have some off-road technology including hill descent and centre diff lock control.

The four-wheel drive system, however, is "Active on-demand" with 50/50 split up to 30km/hr, which is not for the purists. Perhaps the best balance between car-like feel and a four-wheel drive system in this category is the Subaru Outback although that does come with a fuel consumption penalty.

Safety gets a good nod with rear view camera, lane departure warning system, autonomous emergency braking system, forward collision warning, blind spot detection, lane change assist and rear cross traffic alert are standard across the range. The adaptive cruise control worked reasonably well. The Santa Fe has a five-star ANCAP safety rating.

Hyundai may have started out as with offerings that were cheap and cheerful but it has now positioned itself as having high-quality products. Yet with the Santa Fe it is significantly cheaper than the Mazda CX-9 and the Toyota Kluger.

So in summary the Santa Fe is a well-equipped, good driving, large SUV suited for the family. Early next year you can expect the new model to be better, most likely including the 8-speed automatic that you can now get on the Kia Sorento. Car sales for this year up to November 2017 show the tough Toyota Prado in first place but then a stack of soft-roaders: Toyota Kluger; Subaru Outback; Holden Captiva (yes!); Mazda CX-9 with the Hyundai Santa Fe coming 6th. It deserves better.



What's Good:

- Diesel engine and transmission
- Standard features
- Pricing and value

What's Not:

- Reversing camera screen dull
- Touch screen little insensitive
- Rear and C panel visibility

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 80/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 8 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 5 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 7 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 9 |

KIA SORENTO SLI 2.2 CRDI AWD

\$55,167 RDAP



It's rare that a car does nothing wrong, but the Kia Sorento 2.2 CRDi AWD SUV is one such car. I've been saying this for a decade: How do they do it for the price?

by Alan Zurvas



Kia recently released the updated version of its much awarded Sorento. Upgrades are highlighted by an 8 speed "in house" (made by Kia) auto, and the addition of the several equipment upgrades. The SLi 2.2 diesel, 7 seats, and afore mentioned 8 speed auto. Sorento SLi weighs 1985 kilos, and tows up to 2,000 kilos with a ball limit of 100kg. Wheels are 18" with all-weather road tyres.

Interiors are functional, with an air of elegance and spaciousness. Materials and finishes are of a standard those new to Kia might not expect. And that highlights the reason for the year-on-year sales increases for the brand. Added to that, there is Kia's permanent 7 year warranty, roadside assist and capped price servicing.

Access to the 3rd row of seats is via the rear doors. 2nd row seats slide forward slightly, while the seat back folds. It is easiest for smaller humans to get in, as is the case for most 7 seater SUVs. The older, more generously proportioned peeps might prefer the



1st and 2nd rows. Kia has a party trick for vehicles fitted with the auto-open feature for hatches or bootlids: you need to do nothing but stand there.

A series of beeps heralds a majestic sweep as the boot opens. You can use the button under the exterior handle, or on the dashboard if you prefer.

Closing is via the buttons, or by manually pulling the door down. For those with tighter garages, you can move the door to whatever level you like, then by pressing and holding the button, program that position as the upper limit. It avoids low hanging objects.

by Alan Zurvas

New Sorentos gain active lane control which applies torque to the steering to help keep you in the lane. It beeps too, and both can be disabled.

There is AEB (autonomous emergency braking) and a range of other crash mitigation electronics that have become somewhat ubiquitous over recent years. There is a cracking audio system too. It is powerful, and clever, and has 10 speakers. The 8" LCD centre screen is hi-res and has DAB radio, and, Hallelujah, Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto, operated by voice control.

There is vehicle-based voice control for car functions, but "hey Siri" adds another layer by allowing the driver to speak instructions without having to press a button. You can handle calls, texts, music, and navigation without lifting a finger. These functions need cell range of course.

The real strength of Sorento is the value for money it brings to car purchasing. Kia is no longer the cheap and cheerful compromise it used to be. In fact, that hasn't been true for more than a decade, but is something buyers still think of the Koreans. All Kias are chock full features that could cost much more if there was a Euro-badge glued on the bonnet.

There are 6 cup, and 2 bottle holders, 2 coat hooks, a 7" driver's instrument LCD info system, and all of the interior lighting is LED. The power windows have a safety function which reverse if there is an obstruction. There are 3 12v charging points as well as 2 USB charging spots. The front one gives access to the audio system, and CarPlay.

The drive is sensational. Kia Sorento is smooth, and although there is a move away from diesels even in SUV cars, Kia's 2.2 power plant is excellent. Rather than brut force, Sorento delivers a linear acceleration with a mere 147kw and impressive 441Nm behind it. The diesel is also frugal as well.

The experience is regal, a word you might not expect to be used, but that is the way it feels. Steering uses a rack-mounted electric system which gives tuners a chance to inject excellent calibration and feel. While road feel with all electric steering is simulated, Kia's Graham Gambold has made sure there is plenty of feedback to the driver. He is also the person responsible for tuning the suspension (Macpherson at the front and multi-link at the rear) with tyres especially suited to Australian roads.



by Alan Zurvas

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Model | Sorento SLI |
| Model Price | \$55,167 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.2 L 'R' 4 Cyl |
| Drivetrain | AWD 6 speed Auto |
| Power | 147kW @ 3,80 rpm |
| Torque | 441Nm @ 1,750 rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 192g/km |
| Economy ADR | 7.3L/100km |
| Tow Capacity | 2,000kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 100kg |
| Servicing | 7 Years Capped |
| Warranty | 7 yr/Unlimited km full roadside assist |



You might be surprised to hear that many car companies tune their cars especially for Australia, but it is necessary because of the huge variance of surfaces. Not only that, Australians prefer a slightly tighter steering, and firmer suspension to that of both Korean and American buyers. Drive the same car in those countries, and the experience is very different, so I'm told.

When Kia launched Sorento, we saw a lot of different road surfaces, including dirt. Diesel models have part time AWD with lock mode. There is no question the AWD handled questionable roads with greater aplomb, but falso or most conditions. The top models have an electrochromatic rear view mirror, while the entry models make do with a manual day/night do-it-yourself setup.

All models get parking sensors and rear cameras, smart cruise control and Sat Nav. The latter works extremely well, but I prefer to use Google Maps. For me, the traffic alerts seemed a bit more helpful. The SLI remains the sweet spot between entry level and the full shebang. It costs \$50,490 +ORC, and our car added a \$595 "gravity blue" paint job.

I enjoyed Sorento because, although it is a very big vehicle, it doesn't feel it. The auto lights and wipers work well, and there are a bunch of included features that make it worthwhile. It is lovely on the highway, where I feel it is most at home. Although the 3rd row of seats takes up space in the boot, most of the time you won't notice it.

It is a shame you can option it out, as the savings in both money and space would be appreciated. It's rare that a car does nothing wrong, but Sorento is one such car. I've been saying this for a decade: How do they do it for the price?



What's Good:

- Engine Transmission combination
- Apple Car Play/Android Auto
- Value for money

What's Not:

- AWD not 4WD
- Lacking some goodies from GT
- Low tow ball rating

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 81/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 5 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 7 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |

MAZDA CX-9 TOURING I-ACTIV

\$59,157 RDAP



The first thing to note is that there is no diesel option, a fact that would ordinarily lower our expectations but the Mazda I ACTIV engine range is impressive enough to warrant being a contender for the COTY. Note that this vehicle won the category last year as well.

by Anthony Hood



Mazda launched its new CX-9 in mid July 2016 and the vehicle has proved to be a bit of a revelation. The CX-9 comes in four variants and the model that we are testing here is the Touring. It is the volume seller in the range. The first thing to note is that there is no diesel option, a fact that would ordinarily lower our expectations but the Mazda I ACTIV engine range is impressive enough to warrant being a contender for the COTY. Note that this vehicle won the category last year as well.

Externally the CX-9 could be described as a good looking car. The designers have really excelled. The front grill design gives the vehicle a bold imposing stature with flowing lines to the rear. It displays a curved style but retains plenty of interior space. The high roofline allows large window sizing and the rear allows great visibility. External features include 18 inch alloy wheels, LED headlamps, bold grill and front fog lights. Let's just say it looks imposing and pretty dam good.

Step inside and the story keeps getting better. This is the second from the bottom spec model but it has the same sense of space, comfort and stylish ambience. The leather driver's seat is comfortable with 6 way electric adjustment for the driver, including great lumbar support. They are also heated for those cold winter mornings. In front of the driver is a small thick rimmed leather steering wheel that frames a three dial dash.



The centre dial is the speedo and the outside contain ancillary information. The instruments are clear and easy to read. One good feature is that the indicator stalks are visible over the steering wheel spokes, always helpful. My rather lanky 195cm frame can get comfortable with enough seat slide and height and reach adjustable steering wheel.

by Anthony Hood

The middle row passenger seats again are fairly comfortable with adequate head, shoulder knee and leg room, better suited for two but comfortable for three. The third row seats are amongst the best in the market segment with enough leg room for tall passengers but the head room is tight. There are air-conditioning controls for the middle row of seats and USB ports but strangely there isn't any vents for the third row of seats.

The centre stack houses the 8 inch touch screen display for the satellite navigation, in a backdrop of soft touch dashboard. Again, the ease of use and clarity are two immediate impressions. The whole centre console is well laid out and easy to use but the centre storage bin is small. Other than that, storage is generally adequate with cup holders everywhere and door bottle holders.

With the rear seats folded, the boot area is cavernous and you can appreciate how spacious the CX-9 actually is. Like most of the vehicles in this class there is very little room behind the third row seats when they are in use. The rear seats fold in a split configuration and fold nearly flat. You could sleep in there.

Little features that make everyday use more comfortable include: rear view mirror with auto dimming function, auto on/off headlights, rain sensing wipers, slide forward rear seats, simple lever controls for folding seats and wide opening doors etc. The central story of the CX-9 is the an all-new 2.5 litre direct-injection turbo charged petrol engine, with both i-stop and i-ELOOP technology, that produces 170kW of power at 5,000rpm and 420Nm of torque at a low 2,000 rpm. This power and torque drives all four wheels using the i-ACTIV AWD all-wheel drive system, through a 6 speed automatic transmission. Economy is heavy compared to a diesel. The ADR economy is stated at 8.8 l/100k however we experienced somewhere nearer 13.5 l/100km around town, albeit with some enthusiastic driving and that dropped to closer to 11.5 l/100 on the freeway. The good thing is that the engine will happily run on standard unleaded (91 RON) or with E10.

This engine transmission combination is well suited and the torque coming in at the relatively low 2000rpm means that the driving style is smooth, relaxed and almost diesel like, but with acceleration when needed. The SKYACTIV-G 2.5T technology removes almost any sign of turbo lag providing linear acceleration.

There is plenty of mid rage grunt and extra passengers have little effect on the performance. As good as it is though I still am wanting a diesel option. The stop-start can be a little slow to kick off and can provide some 'interesting' moments at roundabouts. The automatic transmission is mated brilliantly to the engine and if you switch to 'sport' mode the driving becomes an engaging experience. It's better than most SUV's in the class. Mazda continues its tradition of providing direct steering feel and rewarding driving experience.



by Anthony Hood

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Model | Mazda CX-9 Touring |
| Model Price | \$57,124 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.5L 4 Cyl I-ACTIV |
| Drivetrain | AWD 6 speed Auto |
| Power | 170kW @ 6,000rpm |
| Torque | 420Nm @ 2,000rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 206 g/km |
| Economy ADR | 8.8L/100km |
| Tow Capacity | 2,000kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 100kg |
| Servicing | Fixed price |
| Warranty | 3 yr/Unlimited km full roadside assist |



The suspension can be a little harsh though and can be upset by mid corner bumps etc. The front end seems to understeer when pushed, more than some of its competitors and running on the blacktop the ride can feel a little flat. As this is an all road vehicle the ride and handling on dirt roads and corrugations is smooth. Mazda's i-ACTIV AWD system is integral to the CX-9's impressive handling while enhancing safety and provides all road capabilities, including forest trails and snow conditions, for the adventurous family. It is also quiet on all surfaces. Overall it aims towards a sporty ride rather than a soft ride. It will please almost all the drivers that sit behind the wheel. One thing that was disappointing though, for an AWD SUV that aims at the adventurous family lifestyle is the poor towing capability. Yes it will tow 2000kg but is let down by the low 100kg tow ball rating.

Safety is a key feature with the CX-9 achieving a 5 Star ANCAP safety rating. The key here is that all the safety features are standard and went a long way to the eventual winning of the award. Features of the standard i-ACTIVSENSE safety technologies include: reverse camera with rear parking sensors, pedestrian detection and smart city brake support (Forward/Reverse), LED headlamps, front fog-lamps, advanced blind spot monitoring (ABSM), rear cross traffic alert (RCTA), six airbags (dual front, front side and full-length curtain). Mazda's i-ACTIVSENSE advanced safety technologies are designed to help drivers recognise potential hazards, avoid collisions and minimise the severity of accidents when they are unavoidable.

Overall the all new Mazda CX-9 provides prospective buyers a choice in the segment that is arguably the best looking vehicle, full of standard features, has a five star ANCAP safety rating and provides an engaging driving experience and full of advanced technology. Mazda's new CX9 is a revelation in design implementation. It is a deserving winner of the OzRoamer 2017 AWD SUV \$45,000 - \$60,000 Award, but by a super slim margin from the Kia Sorento.



What's Good:

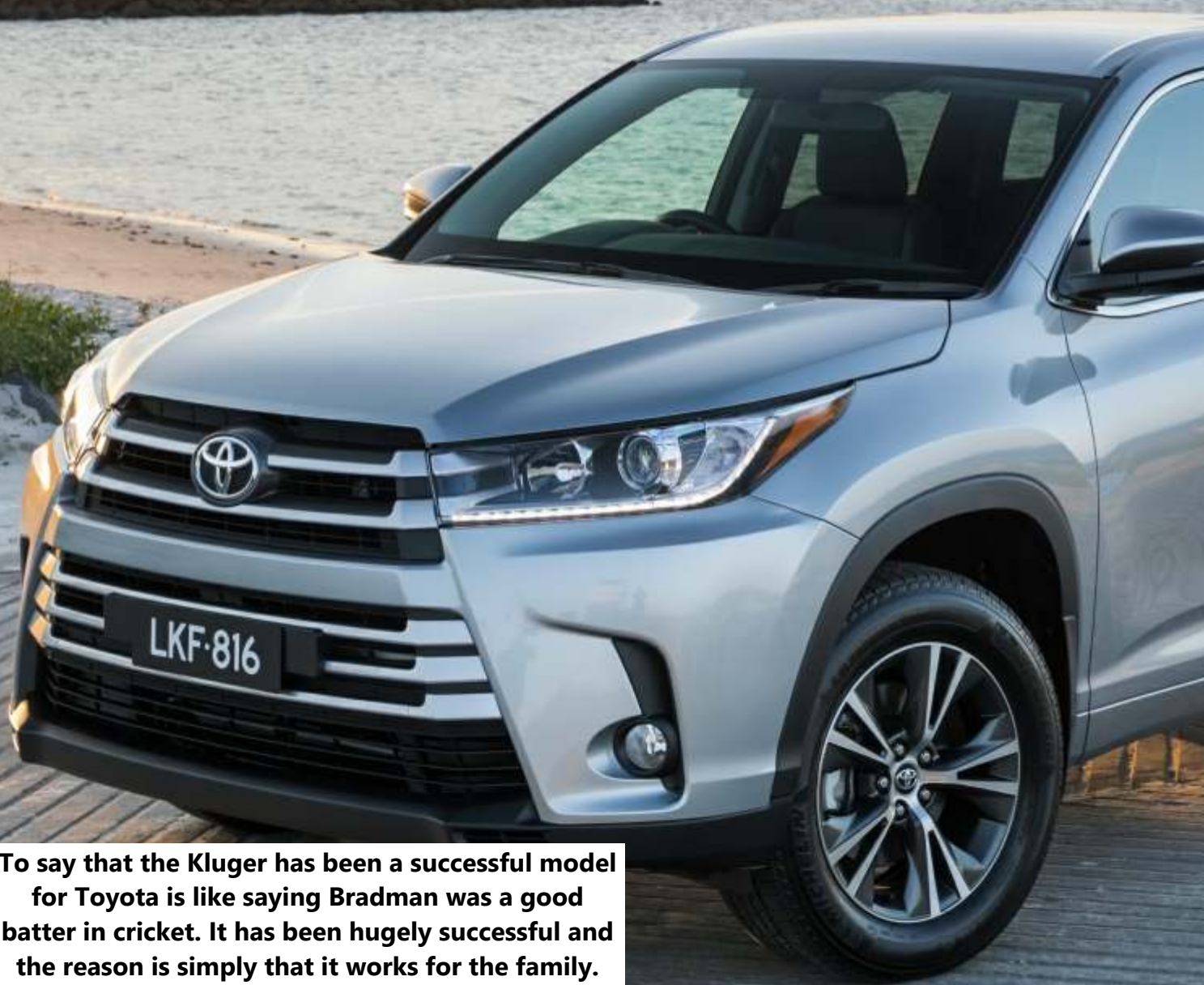
- Engine Transmission combination
- Stylish Looks
- Internal space

What's Not:

- Harsh front end
- Bit heavy on fuel
- No third row vents

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 82/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 5 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 6 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |

TOYOTA KLUGER GX V6 AWD**\$52,292 RDAP**

To say that the Kluger has been a successful model for Toyota is like saying Bradman was a good batter in cricket. It has been hugely successful and the reason is simply that it works for the family.

by Rob Fraser



Toyota Kluger was first released to Australia in 2003 and the latest version of the Kluger was first introduced in 2014 with a significant upgrade in early 2017. We had on test the GX model which is the range entry version.

To say that the Kluger has been a successful model for Toyota is like saying Bradman was a good batter in cricket. It has been hugely successful and the reason is simply that it works for the family. Every time I drive the Toyota Kluger I can't help but think that somehow they got inside a women's mind and worked out what they want in a family SUV because they know what they want. That is not meant to be sexist, it's just that they are often the deciders when buying this type of vehicle.

We have previously reviewed the Kluger a number of times so let's just go with a quick overview to start. It is a 7 seat 2WD and AWD SUV featuring a 3.5L V6 engine (upgraded 2017) with practical versatility and amazing internal space.



The Kluger looks good for a family wagon, drives with almost car like handling and ride, has an abundance of standard comfort and safety features and sells in droves for Toyota.

The 2017 updates for the Kluger included: revised engine with direct injection technology, now producing 218kW of power and 350Nm of torque and a new 8 speed automatic transmission. Toyota claim a 10% improvement in fuel economy, meaning up to 85 more kilometres from a tank of fuel. There is also refreshed styling, especially the front and rear lights and Improved safety features across the range.

by Rob Fraser

Jumping inside the Kluger GX produces an immediate feeling of space. The fabric seats are reasonably comfortable but lack adjustable lumbar support. They do give you enough slide for taller drivers and the height and reach adjustable steering wheel allows every driver to be able to find their perfect driving position.

The dash is easy to read and simple to navigate. The centre stack houses the infotainment system that again is easy to read and use. Unlike a lot of the Toyota systems this looks integrated in to the dash. It also does look a little plastic though. Bluetooth connection is a breeze. Toyota's insistence on not using Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto is a limiting factor in the range. Unfortunately there is no satellite navigation system.

For a fairly large SUV there is good visibility for the driver with good reversing camera, large external rear view mirrors and decent internal mirror. Even for taller drivers such as myself there is ample head and shoulder room. The second row of seats are again comfortable, even for three. Again ample head shoulder room. With the flat floor there is room for the middle passenger feet as well. With the driver's seat fully back there is enough room for me to sit behind myself in comfort.

The third row of seats is amongst the best in class and both rear rows from air-conditioning vents. In line with the perfect SUV theory there are cup holders and storage bins everywhere. The centre console is probably the biggest and best designed in any vehicle. It serves as a great arm rest and is cavernous as well as practical.

The list of standard features on the GX is impressive even though it is the entry level model. It includes electric power steering, six-speaker display audio with Toyota Link connected mobility, illuminated vanity mirrors for both front occupants, front fog lamps, privacy glass and power-adjustable exterior mirrors, air-conditioning, keyless entry and ignition.

In what is becoming a new sales trend the Kluger is becoming more popular as a 2WD as well as its traditional AWD roots. Buyers are looking for the benefits of the SUV body style but don't necessarily want or need the benefits of AWD. The recent upgrade has seen the safety of the GX improved. Standard features include seven airbags, reversing camera, reverse-parking sensors, anti-skid brakes with brake assist and electronic brake-force distribution, vehicle stability and traction control.

Toyota has persisted with the V6 petrol engine. It obviously is what the market will accept, but with so many efficient powerful diesel engines on the market today in competitors SUVs I would have thought that they would have at least offered it as an option.



TOYOTA KLUGER GX V6 AWD

\$52,292 RDAP

by Rob Fraser

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Model | Kluger GX AWD V6 |
| Model Price | \$52,292 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.5 L DOHC V6 |
| Drivetrain | AWD 8 speed Auto |
| Power | 218 kW @ 6,600 rpm |
| Torque | 350 Nm @ 4,700 rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 221 g/km |
| Economy ADR | 9.5 L/100km |
| Tow Capacity | Max 2000 kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 200 kg |
| Servicing | Optional package |
| Warranty | 3 yr/ 100,000 km with 1 Yr roadside assist |



The 3.5L V6 petrol engine produces 218kW @ 6,600rpm of power and 350Nm @ 4,700rpm of torque. The Kluger, in an effort to improve driveability and economy, now has an 8 speed Automatic transmission. It isn't a powerhouse or exciting but neither does it lag the traffic or feel sluggish. It is adequate for the job. As mentioned the Kluger now is available in both 2WD and AWD versions.

Even though the Kluger 2WD sales are increasing it at heart is an AWD SUV and that is its roots I guess you could say. It has a ground clearance of 200 mm but doesn't have good approach, ramp over or departure angles. It is really an AWD SUV for forest trails, down to the snow for a weekend, some sand driving and towing the Jet Ski. The AWD system in the Kluger is the Dynamic Torque Control AWD. It really is a safety feature as much as anything.

The AWD system helps maximise traction, cornering stability and driver control while also saving fuel. The compact, lightweight system uses information on vehicle speed, yaw rate and steering and throttle angles to control torque distribution automatically between the front and rear axles. It saves fuel by driving only the front wheels when the vehicle is cruising, switching to AWD when needed ensuring an ideal torque split - up to a maximum of 50 per cent

So to sum up the Toyota Kluger GX. It could be described as the perfect family wagon. It does everything with a minimum of fuss, isn't fazed by anything in its daily life and transports the family in comfort and safety. It is limited in some safety and comfort features and lacks sat nav.

For the family it isn't too expensive. It is however a little boring and still is a bit heavier on fuel than alternative diesel engine SUV's. However Toyota continue to sell heaps of the Kluger but not so many of the GX version.



What's Good:

- Internal space
- Practicality
- Fit for purpose

What's Not:

- No diesel option
- No Apple CarPlay®/Android® Auto
- No adjustable lumbar support

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 80/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 7 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 10 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 7 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 5 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |

OZROAMER 2017 AWD SUV \$60,000 - \$80,000 AWARD



The world of AWD SUV vehicles in the price range of \$60,000 - \$80,000 starts to become very brand specific and aspirational. Brand desire often overrides selective choice.

These days this price bracket is achievable by many consumers and the prestige brands are all clamouring over potential purchasers. The reason is to introduce them to the brand and build long term loyalty.

It is for this reason that this category is so important, not only for buyers but manufacturers as well. This is often the first time potential buyers are able to buy the brand, more than the car, that they have been keen on for a while.

Amongst the ever increasing plethora of participating brands, we have selected four outstanding nominees.

The first of these is the recently launched Audi Q5 2.0 TDI Sport Quattro. The Q5 has been extremely successful for Audi over the years, being the biggest selling vehicle in their Q range.

The BMW X3 4xDrive 20d was released mid 2017 as an all new model. It was a previous winner of this category as a different model. How will it go against stiff competition.

Lexus gives us the third nomination, with their all new NX range. We have the NX 300 F Sport here as the nominee. Again a previous winner of the category, the all new NX has improved a lot over the previously good model.

Lastly is the Landrover Discovery Sport. From the humble Freelander the Discovery Sport has evolved as an all new vehicle. In this price range the Discovery Sport has the best off road credentials and is packed with LR luxury features.

Four alternative designs and philosophies, four excellent nominees, one winner!



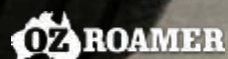


AUDI Q5 2.0L TDI SPORT QUATTRO

\$78,428 RDAP



The Audi Q5 2.0L TDI Sport Quattro is brilliant. It provides the latest in Quattro technology combined with a powerful and economical diesel engine that drives through a smooth 7 speed dual clutch transmission. In terms of a practical, luxury AWD SUV that can transport the family around town and still head to the snow for the holiday it is definitely worth a test drive.



AUDI Q5 2.0L TDI SPORT QUATTRO

\$78,428 RDAP

by Rob Fraser



Audi has now launched the second generation of its very successful Q5 and SQ5 models in mid-2017. The Audi Q range in general is extremely important to Audi with one in three sales a Q model. The Q5 range is the most successful of all the Q range. Externally the second-generation Audi Q5 boasts a muscular new design that is more taut and sculpted than ever, with a broader stance and sharply defined creases that accentuate the new car's proportions. The new model is also as much as 90kg lighter in direct comparison with its predecessor, affording significant improvements in handling, ride comfort and of course, fuel efficiency. I would have to say I am a fan of the proportions of the Q5. It just seems to flow and everything looks in place.

Sitting inside the all new Audi Q5 range, the front occupants are treated to an exceptionally comfortable cabin. There is more than enough room, even for someone my size, and the ergonomics are first class, as is the ambience. The front sport leather seats are generously comfortable, with electronic adjustments allowing adaptive driving positions. The leather sports steering wheel is also height and reach adjustable. The Audi 12.3 inch virtual cockpit is awesome as is the centre stack display. The cockpit can be customised to suit individual tastes, however once you find what you like you tend to just leave it. The clarity is first class.



I am not a fan of the transmission lever and the coffee cup holders are a little small and buried deep, but otherwise the cockpit is spot on. I also never use the scratch pad in front of the transmission lever. These gadgets seem clever, but like the mouse in Lexus, they rarely translate to daily practicality. Sitting at the top of the centre stack is the MMI Navigation plus with larger 8.3-inch high-resolution screen, MMI touch, DVD player and 5 included map updates, Audi premium sound system with 10 speakers, subwoofer and 180w output.

by Rob Fraser

In addition, every Q5 comes equipped with Audi Connect, which enables a high-speed 4G LTE connection via a regular data SIM card, as well as Google Earth and Google Search functionality. Audi smartphone interface allows connectivity via Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto and is standard on all Q5 models.

The rear seat passengers, two are more comfortable than three, are also treated to a relaxed ride and with the front seat positioned for a normal height driver, there is ample head, shoulder, knee and foot room. There are A/C vents and USB ports there for passenger convenience. The all-new Audi Q5 offers an additional 10 litres of luggage space in comparison with its predecessor, meaning between 550-610 litres of space is available, depending on how the optional sliding rear seat bench is positioned. With the 40/20/40 rear seats folded, a spacious 1550 litres of luggage space is available. The all-new Audi Q5 comes standard with an electric tailgate, activated by a sensor-controlled 'kick motion'. A myriad of Audi genuine accessories are also available to allow owners to integrate their active lifestyle with their Q5, like a luggage-securing kit with load rails in the boot floor, bike racks, a kayak holder, aerodynamic roof box and many others.

Of special importance to OzRoamer readers, is the fact that the Q5 range also boasts a game changing new Quattro technology that swaps from 2WD to AWD as needed and is predictive in nature. In other words it anticipates when you will need AWD and is ready for you. The changes from 2WD to AWD are totally imperceptible and as it turns out the ratio of 2WD to AWD is about 70/30 for most drivers under most conditions. This use of AWD for only about 30% of the driving time saves money for the driver. To complement this new Quattro system, a new drive select program has been developed. In 'auto' mode, the drive select provides the best possible traction and balanced handling. In dynamic mode, power is actively sent to the rear axle sooner and to a larger degree, which improves handling in slippery conditions. In the new 'offroad' setting, the all-wheel drive system is always engaged. To be honest I simply marvel at the lengths that Audi have gone to, to improve what was already an awesome Quattro system. The Audi Q5 is perfect for dirt roads, ski trips on snowy or icy roads and towing the family toy. I don't know what it is like on the sand yet but will also test this later.

The Q5 AWD SUV is ideally suited to those families or couples that harbour some adventurous spirit. In normal fit out the Q5 boasts 200mm of ground clearance but poor approach and departure angles. With the adaptive air suspension the vehicle sits at a normal ground clearance of 175mm but can be lowered 50mm for ease of loading and raised another 50mm to have a ground clearance of 225mm. For those adventurous Q5 owners that like to tow jet skis, camper trailers or smaller boats the tow rating for the Q5 is 2000kg, with a tow ball rating of 200kg. The adaptive suspension has a self-levelling feature when loaded and towing.



AUDI Q5 2.0L TDI SPORT QUATTRO

\$78,428 RDAP

by Rob Fraser

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|-----------------|--|
| Model | Q5 2.0L TFSi Sport |
| Model Price | \$78,428 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.0L 4 Cyl TDI |
| Drivetrain | 7 Sp DCT Quattro |
| Power | 140kW @ 3,800rpm |
| Torque | 400Nm @ 1,750rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 139g/km |
| Economy ADR | 5.3L/100km |
| Tow Capacity | Max 2,000kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 200kg |
| Servicing | 3 Yr Service Plan |
| Warranty | 3 yr/ Unlimited km 3 Yr roadside assist |



The Q5 TDI Sport Quattro comes with the 2.0 L TDI engine that produces 140kW of power @ 3,800 – 4,200rpm and 400Nm of torque @ 1,750 – 3,000rpm. This engine will sip fuel at 5.3L/100km. It will accelerate from 0-100kmh in 7.9 seconds and has a top speed of 218kmh. The feeling of low down torque provides a linear acceleration feeling. The diesel engine is a gem, very easy to drive around the city and plenty of power on the open road and freeway. The engine benefits from an advanced start-stop system and meets EU 6 standards.

The Q5 comes with a 7-speed dual-clutch transmission that provides maximum use of available power and smooth driving. I am never a big fan of the dual clutch transmissions around town in stop start traffic as they often seem to be clunky and not smooth. However the transmission in the Q5 seems to overcome that jerkiness.

The all-new Audi Q5 has been awarded a 5-star ANCAP safety rating, thanks to an impressive array of standard safety features on all models. These include: Audi pre-sense city with autonomous emergency braking (AEB) and pedestrian detection (up to 85 km/h), exit warning system, cross traffic assist, Audi side assist blind spot warning system, Audi pre-sense basic (belt tensioning, window closing and other preventative measures if an emergency is detected), Audi pre-sense rear (warns following traffic if they are at risk of running into the rear of the car) and parking system plus with rear-view camera. In addition, the following safety features are standard equipment in the high-end sport models: adaptive cruise control with stop & go, turn assist, Audi pre-sense front (collision warning up to 250km/h), predictive efficiency assistant and high-beam assist.

The Audi Q5 2.0L TDI Sport is brilliant. It provides the latest in Quattro technology combined with a powerful and economical petrol engine that drives through a smooth 7 speed dual clutch transmission. In terms of a family, practical luxury AWD SUV that can transport the family around town and still head to the snow for the holiday it is a worthy winner of this category.



What's Good:

- Quattro system
- Engine / transmission
- Dynamic ride and handling

What's Not:

- Not a fan of the scratch pad
- Some option packs expensive
- Small coffee cup holders

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 88/100

| | | | |
|------------------|----|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 10 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 10 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 7 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 7 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |

BMW X3 XDRIVE 20d AWD SUV

\$76,917 RDAP



I have always been a fan of the BMW X3 series and apart from the design, which I find just plain ugly, I am a fan of this series as well. They always have exemplary quality interiors, display sporty driving dynamics and provide the owner with a sense of pride. What more could you as an owner ask for?

by Rob Fraser



The booming mid-size premium AWD SUV segment is full of a diverse array of offerings from almost all manufacturers and honing that selection down to just a few that suit your needs is a difficult task. That is why we have this magazine. Launched in June 2017 the BMW X3 xDrive20d continues the long tradition in this segment. The BMW X3 is a previous winner of this category.

Externally the new X3 styling is quite unusual. The distinctive front face guarantees it is immediately recognisable as a member of the BMW X family. In profile, the low coupé-style roofline extending slightly into the rear provides a wagon capability. However the side profile is where the difference of opinions comes in. Some feel the design is like a smaller car that has been grabbed at both ends and stretched without changing the proportions of the ends, others like the low squat curved side profile. To me it just doesn't hold it's proportions well. It looks odd! BMW's xLine exterior line is offered as standard-fit on the new X3, featuring prominent highlights in a sleek matt aluminium finish.



New design 19-inch light alloy wheels are fitted as standard to the BMW X3 xDrive20d, fitted with 245/50R19 run-flat tyres.

Internally the X3 is mainly aimed at the driver. A typical BMW cockpit faces the driver, where every control element is angled towards the driver for optimal ergonomics.

Both front seats are exceptionally comfortable for long trips. Despite its low coupé-style roofline the front seats still allow the driver an elevated driving position and feel.

You are either a fan of the Oak Brown leather interior or not. However there is no disputing the quality or comfort. Interior craftsmanship is superb.

by Rob Fraser

The rear seat bench has two slightly sculptured seats that are a little hard in the squab but reasonably comfortable and although it will fit 3 at a squeeze it is better suited to two occupants. There is really good headroom, shoulder, knee and leg room. This allows family buyers to have this as an option in their choices.

A couple of minor points. The mirrors in the sun visors are impossibly small yet the interior lights above the centre dash display are intrusively large. The surround view camera is an invaluable tool - top, front and back view. Once you have it, you'll never want to drive a car without it again

The X3 offers the latest iDrive6 infotainment system, accessed via a new 6.5-inch central screen with the navigation system Business package fitted as standard to the xDrive20d. Additionally the easy to read heads up display clearly displays useful information (particularly it clearly communicates navigation). The speed also turns red when you go over the speed limit - great as a safety feature but can be annoying/off-putting for those who sit a couple of KM's over.

The new BMW X3 xDrive20d also boasts an impressive array of specification and style as standard. Equipment highlights include: xLine exterior trim with matt aluminium design elements, 19-inch light alloy wheels, eight-speed automatic transmission, electric folding exterior mirrors, roof rails, sport leather steering wheel, electric sports front seats trimmed in combination cloth and leather upholstery, LED headlights with extended contents, full colour Head-Up Display, parking assistant with front and rear park distance control and rear view camera, Driving Assistant with Lane Departure Warning, wireless phone charging, navigation system Business with Real-Time Traffic Information and Speed Limit Info.

The BMW X3xDrive20d comes equipped with 40:20:40 split fold rear seats which allows for a flexible luggage compartment capacity of between 550 and 1,600 litres. Overall storage is pretty good with a range of handy storage and luggage carrying features, like 1L bottles in the doors etc. as also standard.

The heart of the X3xDrive20d is a 2.0 litre, four cylinder engine, with BMW Turbo technology. This produces 140kW and 400Nm for a zero-100km/h time in 8.0 seconds, with fuel economy of 5.7L/100km on the combined cycle. The power and torque is about average for the entry level of the segment. However there is a smooth and consistent delivery of power without ever feeling a struggle or jostling/noise in the cabin - typical of BMW's commitment to refinement. BMW X3xDrive20d is fitted with an eight-speed sports automatic transmission.



by Rob Fraser

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | X3 xDrive20d |
| Model Price | \$76,917 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.0L 4 Cyl |
| Drivetrain | 8 Sp AT AWD |
| Power | 140kW @ 4,000rpm |
| Torque | 400Nm @ 1,750rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 149g/km |
| Economy ADR | 5.7L/100 km |
| Servicing | BSI Programme |
| Tow Rating | 2,000kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 200kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / Unlimited km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



The three driving modes (eco comfort and sport I think?). Economical changes the dash to display when you're using less/more than the average fuel consumption and when you're in charge mode. Very easy to receive the feedback and adjust your drive accordingly. No noticeable impact felt in engine power loss when swapping to this mode, however I only used it around town and not on the freeway in this mode. Also tells you every km of fuel you've saved. Sports mode gives audible change in engine revs and quicker pick up from standing stop. Didn't get to work through dynamics on tough roads in it.

All new BMW X3 models' maintenance requirements are controlled by BMW's Condition Based Service (CBS) program which identifies the condition of a vehicle based on actual use, realising the full potential of a vehicle and minimising costs.

In addition, BMW service and selected maintenance costs can now be covered by a single, one-off advance payment with BMW Service Inclusive (BSI). BSI offers two packages; BMW Service Inclusive Basic provides scheduled servicing cover, while BMW Service Inclusive Plus combines scheduled servicing and selected maintenance items. Based on individual lifestyle needs, a year range and kilometre option is selected, starting from 3 years/60,000kms. The BSI plan provides a long-term solution enabling cover to be extended and transferred to future vehicles owners before expiry.

Remember that while the X4 xDrive 35d is technically an AWD SUV, it definitely isn't designed for virtually any sort of off road driving. It will allow reasonable all road capacity. It is ideally suited to trips to the snow with icy roads, trips to the holiday house or farm and it does allow the driver to tow up to 2000kg braked though and that is in keeping with its sporting activity nature. The engine won't even feel 2000kg on the back by the way.

I have always been a fan of the BMW X3 series and apart from the design, which I find just plain ugly, I am a fan of this series as well. They always have exemplary quality interiors, display sporty driving dynamics and provide the owner with a sense of pride. What more could you as an owner ask for?



What's Good:

- Power & economy
- Ride & Handling
- Style

What's Not:

- Long and expensive options list
- Visibility 'C' pillar
- Not owning one

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 85/100

| | | | |
|------------------|----|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 10 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 10 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 7 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 6 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |

LAND ROVER DISCOVERY SPORT SD4SE

\$62,947 RDAP



In summary the Land Rover Discover Sport achieves a balance of on and off road capabilities that is not matched by other competitors. It comes at a price and some features are not standard but it has character, practicality and ease of driving.

by David Brown



When it comes to medium sized luxury SUVs (vehicles that cost \$60,000 or more) Land Rover is doing very well. In 2017 in Australia there are 12 models in this segment. The Land Rover Discovery Sport tops the sales chart with approximately 15% of the market. With the Range Rover Evoque and the Range Rover Velar also in this segment, let alone their cousin the Jaguar F-Pace, they currently have around a third of this market segment.

The Discovery Sport evolved out of their Freelander. It is smaller than the Land Rover Discovery and not quite as rugged in its cross-country capability, but nonetheless it has class-leading off-road capability as well as being remarkably good on the bitumen. In the last quarter of 2017, Land Rover did a bit of an upgrade mainly concentrating on improving the engines in both performance and environmental impact.

There are three trim levels in Australia: SE, HSE and HSE luxury. It comes with two "Ingenium" engines each of which has a number of power outputs. The new two litre petrol engine can be specified with 177 kW or 213 kW (the most powerful engine Land Rover

have put in this vehicle) and the two litre diesel engine has three power options 110 kW, 132kW and 177 kW.

All models come with a nine-speed automatic gearbox and four-wheel drive. We did an extensive test on the base model SE with the 110kW diesel engine.

Land Rover manages to create a very distinctive look, that has elements of its heritage and an overall appearance which says, it is a solid four-wheel drive vehicle.

A bit of the British Bulldog look at the front but without the angles or stodgy looks of an older style four-wheel-drive.



by David Brown

The front and rear taillights have rounded lamps within their respective clusters avoiding the squinting appearance that has become fashionable. All models come with an electric tailgate. You can get one of 12 exterior colours but only basic black or white come without an additional cost. Any one of the seven metallic colours, which include grey, silver, white, blue, black and red will cost an extra \$1,370. To get a premium metallic which could be orange, silver or Carpathian Grey will cost an extra \$2,740.

Inside it looks quite special with a good layout and functionality, although selecting gears is via the common Land Rover system of a dial not a lever, which means that putting your hand on the selector gives you no indication as to whether you are in Park, Drive or Reverse and so you have to look down every time. It is distinctive but not helpful.

The vehicle has an 8-inch information screen which is clear and easy to read. The top of the range HSE luxury gets a 10-inch screen. Unfortunately there is no Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto but there's Land Rover's InControl system, which provides digital connections to services such as Spotify and can link you to your vehicle when you are elsewhere. Voice control for navigation is not available for Australian models.

Even in our base model SE, both front seats had 10-way electronic adjustment including four-way lumbar support. The internal configuration can be 5 or 7 seats and there is a large amount of storage space. In five-seater mode, there was a highly credible 981 litres of space in the cargo area with the second row of seats in an upright position and a very significant 1698 litres with the seats folded down. The surprising third row of seats adds another dimension to the practicality of the Discovery Sport.

The Discovery Sport's environmental credentials are good enough for the both the petrol and diesel engine to meet Euro 6 standards. The modest 110 kW but credible 380 Nm of torque in our SE did not make for powerful motoring. The vehicle was not quick off the mark and appeared to be feeling its weight when asked to do something a bit strenuous but it toured comfortably. Its fuel consumption is rated at 5.3 l/100km and it is very comfortable and easy to drive even in the city. There's a touch of turbo lag and, at times, the 9-speed gearbox seemed to be thinking rather long and hard about what it should do. Not often and only momentarily, but on occasions the delay to deliver power to the wheels seemed unnatural.

The Discovery Sport has a reasonable amount of road safety technology and, thankfully, the features are available on all models. Along with the usual mandatory equipment, it has ride stability control, autonomous emergency braking and lane departure warning. But vehicle assistance to help keep in the lane and driver condition monitor is a \$940 optional extra. Blind spot monitoring and reverse traffic detection are also only available as options



by David Brown

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | Discovery Sport SE |
| Model Price | \$62,947 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.0L SD4 Cyl Diesel |
| Drivetrain | 9 Sp AT AWD |
| Power | 110kW @ 4,000rpm |
| Torque | 380Nm @ 17,50rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 139g/km |
| Economy ADR | 5.3L/100 km |
| Servicing | \$1,500 5 Yr Plan |
| Tow Rating | 2,200kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 100kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



The Discovery Sport may not be leading the field with driver assistance technology but it does come with a range of helpful features for off-road driving. This includes their All Terrain Progress Control which enables drivers to set and maintain a steady speed in challenging conditions and can help you pull away smoothly on low friction surfaces like ice, snow or wet grass. Also standard across the range are hill descent control, hill start assist and gradient release control, which is designed to prevent the vehicle accelerating too quickly on a steep incline when the driver releases the brake. The vehicle has a wading depth of up to 600 mm and a Wade Sensing System is an optional extra which uses sensors in the door mirrors to show the driver the waters depth in relation to the vehicle.

The vehicle is rated to tow 2200 kg but only has a tow ball weight of 100 kg. The vehicle does come standard with trailer stability control, trailer stability assist and front and rear recovery hooks. The rear-view camera includes reversing guidance, hitch guidance and parking blocks and all vehicles come with a full-size spare.

As seen already, optional extras can add significantly to the price of your Land Rover. For example, cruise control is standard on this vehicle but adaptive cruise control is an option on all trim levels at \$1,410. There are a wide range of feature packs, including a dynamic exterior design pack, which has xenon headlights with LED signature, front fog lights, front parking aid and larger wheels, which on our SE Discovery Sport will cost an additional \$7,210 which is nearly 13% extra. When you add on-road costs you are now over the Luxury Tax Threshold of \$65,094 so every extra dollar gets an additional 33% tax. Not all options are available on all models, nor with all power train choices so it might be worth taking a spreadsheet to the dealer if you are looking to buy.

In summary the Land Rover Discover Sport achieves a balance of on- and off-road capabilities that is not matched by other competitors. It comes at a price and some features are not standard but it has character, practicality and ease of driving.



What's Good:

- Rough road ride and handling
- Comfortable interior
- Subtle yet distinctive style

What's Not:

- Leisurely performance
- Occasional hesitation in driving
- Pricy option and safety packs

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 80/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 7 | Towing Ability | 7 |
| Performance | 7 | Off Road Ability | 8 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 8 |

LEXUS NX300 F SPORT

\$72,352 RDAP

The NX 300 has been improved significantly. It has a stand out design and a comfortable, competent driving experience. With more standard features including safety technology, it is a credible car in the prestige category.



by David Brown



With many of the latest technology features appearing in lower priced cars is it worth buying a luxury SUV? This question was in my mind when we tested the Lexus NX 300 F Sport. As soon as we started to drive the Lexus NX 300 there was an extra feeling, an ambience that you had to respect. In the scheme of things, pricing that starts at the entry level of \$54,800 is certainly not outrageous. Lexus prides itself in giving prestige driving without going over the top in price and the NX 300 fits the bill.

The NX is the bestselling model for Lexus even though it was launched onto our market only three years ago. Then the turbo charged 2 litre model was called the NX 200t. Now the vehicles with this same engine are called the NX 300 and you can also get the NX 300h which is a hybrid. Lexus has not been able to get the same market share as the German luxury brands so you can see how they are striving to stand out amongst the crowd with their design.

From the front, the NX 300 has that now familiar Lexus look, with a very strong grille, especially below the bumper line. There are the side lights in the shape of the Lexus 'L'. Lexus calls the overall effect "Striking, aggressive and exceptional". The different mesh patterns on the grille is the way to differentiate between equipment levels.



With black guard panels over the wheels, 18-inch rims and a waist line crease down the side that has a slight, flowing wave pattern they have clearly given an effort to detail. The distinctive sloping rear window, more Nike style rear lights and a faint crease line below the roof, adds to the fastback look.

From the side it is far more sports wagon rather than a plain but functional SUV station wagon. An electronic automatic opening tailgate is standard across the range with 500 litre cargo storage with the rear seats up and 1,545 litres with the seats down.

by David Brown

Lexus says the boot can hold "four 9.5-inch golf bags, or two suitcases (77cm x 2)". Apart from mixing the measurement units, I presume the 9.5-inch golf bag refers to the diameter otherwise its only good for the four-year old's plastic golf set.

The boldness extends, to some extent, with the nine exterior colour options. Ours was Vermillion and you can get a deep sky blue called Cobalt Mica, although the other colours' are just variations on white, grey and black. Australians seem very conservative when it comes to car colour. The paints have a Self-Restoring Coat Technology that helps improve scratch resistance. Two of the four interior colour options have bright highlighted inserts, either Tuscan Sun or Flare Red (which was the one we had). The other colour inserts are white or black. Naguri- Style aluminium was present in all options.

The interior is of a graphic style but with an overall mature look. The centre dash has controls in several layers that are designed like an up-market apartment block, where each subsequent level is set back from the one below it. A large 10.3 inch screen protrudes from the top of the centre dash and with a hint of refinement, there is an analogue clock. The large screen is much wider than it is tall but can still present detailed information, such the sat/nav, map and the directions clearly shown at the same time. The system has SUNA Live Traffic Alerts as well. There's plenty of accented leather trim and all models have heated seats. Dash/dials are fairly easy to read although the centre 4.2" Colour Multi Information Display is a bit cluttered.

The Head Up Display can show various information including vehicle speed, lane keep assist tachometer, navigation instructions, audio and cruise control and tachometer. I liked it. Driving with manual control, via the paddles or gear lever, I like to have the tachometer in as easy to read position as possible. The seats hold your behind firmly and a 10-speaker audio system is standard across the NX range. A Mark Levinson surround sound system is an optional upgrade.

The F-Sport has extra features such as ventilated front seats, wireless phone charger and driver's seat memory. A Panoramic View Monitor displays birds-eye images from cameras mounted on the front, sides and rear of the vehicle. While the second row of seats do fold down with a 60/40 split, they do not fold quite flat.

There NX F Sport comes with a two litre turbocharged four-cylinder engine which pushes out 175kW. It is matched to the 6-speed automatic gear box. The fuel consumption for our F-Sport AWD is rated at 7.9L/100km and for the 2WD you only gain 0.2 l/100km. You can have either two-wheel drive (Luxury and F Sport grades) or Part-time All Wheel Drive (all grades) drivetrains. The AWD models have a Dynamic Torque Control system automatically adjusting the front/rear differential torque split to suit the prevailing conditions.



by David Brown

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Model | RX350 F Sport |
| Model Price | \$99,932 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.5L V6 Petrol |
| Drivetrain | 8 Sp AT AWD |
| Power | 221kW @ 6,300rpm |
| Torque | 407Nm @ 4,000rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 223g/km |
| Economy ADR | 9.6L/100 km |
| Servicing | Service plan |
| Tow Rating | 1,500kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 150kg |
| Warranty | 4 Yrs / 100,000 km 4 Yrs Roadside Assist |



I find Lexus vehicles are particularly suited for touring. The smaller vehicles don't necessary give you a huge punch in the back but they get along nicely. The NX F-Sport fits this description. It held the road, coped with bumps and enjoyed the sweeping bends with enough power for overtaking on rural roads. You can select eco, standard and performance-oriented drive modes which can now be programmed to remember drive mode, chassis and air-conditioning settings.

The engine note sounds pretty good. One reviewer didn't think it was quite exciting enough but I don't have the need to be a boy racer and neither do, I suspect, potential buyers. The suspension has been improved with the F Sport and Sports Luxury having Adaptive Variable Suspension to provide greater continuous damping adjustment over varying surfaces. Don't think of this as an SUV or an off-roader. It is a sports wagon made for the bitumen. I would take the car on graded dirt roads but not much rougher.

It is pleasing to see that all the safety features offered in the Lexus Safety System+ are standard across the range. The package includes: a pre-collision warning system detecting pedestrians in addition to vehicles; autonomous emergency braking; all-speed radar cruise control; active lane keeping assist, blind-spot monitoring; rear cross traffic alert; trailer sway control and a selectable wider field of view for the reversing camera.

The Lexus is rated with a towing capacity as 1,000 kg with a braked trailer although it seems an academic figure. It's hard to see owners with a trailer full of rubbish going to the tip or a camper trailer on the back.

The NX 300 has been improved significantly. It has a stand out design and a comfortable, competent driving experience. With more standard features including safety technology, it is a credible car in the prestige category.



What's Good:

- Stylish design
- Build quality
- Sumptuous luxury

What's Not:

- No Apple CarPlay®/Android® Auto
- Sloping rear reduces practicality
- Lexus mouse

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 82/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 8 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 6 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 5 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |

OZROAMER 2017 4WD \$60,000 - \$80,000 AWARD



In today's market the number of genuine 4WD wagons has diminished dramatically. Yes there are the wagon versions of the Ute based 4WD's but they are 7 seat versions and represented elsewhere. There is limited choice in the \$60,000 - \$80,000 market segment for the true 4WD enthusiast.

We have chosen some iconic vehicles such as the Toyota LC 76 Wagon GXL and the old is all new again Land Rover Discovery SD4 S 4WD. Both of these have a 4WD pedigree as long as anybody's, but have taken divergent paths over the years.

Added to these are the base model Toyota Landcruiser Prado GX Wagon that has all the excellent features for 4WD driving of the Prado without the extra seats and all the bells and whistles of say the Kakadu.

Hopefully after fixing their reliability and build quality problems we have nominated the Jeep Grand Cherokee Limited as well. The Grand Cherokees have been amazing 4WD's let down by poor build quality and little niggles. FCA tell us that is dealt with so we will see how it goes.

As much as any category, maybe more, we have diverse design philosophy's represented, however they are all 5 seat 4WD's at the end of the day.

This segment more than any gave us some headaches and we relied more upon the subjective nature of decision making than other categories. We are more than happy with our decision however we laud all the the iconic 4WD nominees.

JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE LIMITED V6

\$75,660 RDAP



All up the Jeep Grand Cherokee Limited V6 Diesel is an urban 4WD that is stylish, reasonable value for money and capable off road as well as comfortable on city streets. It is the SUV with 4WD capability.

by Anthony Hood



Jeep Grand Cherokee has had a bit of a chequered history in Australia. It has been awarded many COTY awards, including some from OzRoamer, all well justified, but there has also been a number of reliability issues that have plagued the model. FCA tells us that these are behind them now and as such we have the Jeep Grand Cherokee Limited as a nominee for another COTY. The Jeep Grand Cherokee Overland has been a multiple previous winner in another category.

The Jeep Grand Cherokee Limited remains feature packed, with the smooth V6 diesel, 8 speed auto transmission and retains the legendary off road capability, all packaged in a stylish car like body. While externally it doesn't fit the mould of a rugged 4WD, it retains legendary Jeep styling with a squat seven slot front grill. It really is more SUV like than 4WD but is more than capable

The first thing you notice when you sit inside is the stitched-leather instrument panel and seats. The Capri leather seats are heated and exceptionally comfortable with multi electrically adjustable front seats that also have 4 way adjustable lumbar support. The



three spoke, thick rimmed, heated leather wrapped steering wheel is height and reach adjustable. Your driving position is also locked into memory, as is mirror and radio favourites.

Being 6'5" or 195cm tall I found that while comfortable in the drivers seat I would have appreciated a bit more slide adjustment. All seats are heated, just the thing for cold winter mornings. The front seats are ventilated for those hot summer days. The dash has two large dials and a new 7-inch user-configurable multi-view display with colour TFT liquid crystal technology. The easy-to-use instrument cluster displays the basic information a driver needs.

by Anthony Hood

The cluster can be configured 100 different ways. Navigation, speed, audio and fuel economy info, as well as useful information provided by on-board Jeep systems, such as Selec-Terrain modes, can all be displayed in the 7-inch screen.

The centre stack houses a new Uconnect Infotainment System and SatNav system with a 8.4" touchscreen. The Uconnect 8.4 system is designed to facilitate a fully integrated infotainment system including GPS, voice recognition functionality and additional entertainment features all built into a single hardware platform. The rear camera also displays on this screen. Sound comes from a 9 speaker Alpine sound system.

Rear passengers are well catered for with adequate head, shoulder and knee room unless there is a tall driver. There is plenty of boot space and with the 60/40 rear seats folded flat, there is an enormous area available. As a bonus these seats are also heated.

The heart of the Jeep Grand Cherokee Overland is the combination diesel engine and Quadra-Trac II 4wd system. The 3.0-litre V6 turbo diesel engine produces 184kW at 4,000rpm with 570Nm of torque at 2,000rpm. This power is delivered through a 8 speed ZF automatic. This combination is one of the best in its class. The Quadra-Trac II four-wheel drive system features a rear electronic limited-slip differential (ELSD) and the Quadra-Trac II delivers prodigious tractive capability and off-road performance.

The core of the system is the central transfer case and an electronically controlled clutch pack for active torque distribution. On dry pavement and in normal traction conditions, the central transfer case splits 48 per cent of the available torque to the front axle and 52 per cent to the rear axle. In case of slippery surfaces, the system automatically redirects engine torque between the front and rear axles based upon real-time driving conditions.

The system also uses electronic controls that multiply traction on the four wheels and help avoid losses of grip in case of sudden acceleration. The system includes 4WD High and 4WD Low ranges, with 4WD Low offering a 2.72 gear reduction ratio for extreme off-road conditions. Via the rear electronic limited-slip differential (ELSD), Quadra-Trac II instantly detects rear tyre slip and smoothly distributes torque across the axle.

In some cases, the vehicle will anticipate low traction and adjust in order to proactively limit or eliminate slip. The all-new Selec-Terrain traction control system lets customers choose the setting for the optimum experience on all types of terrain. This feature electronically coordinates up to 12 different powertrain, braking and suspension systems, including throttle control, transmission shift, transfer case, ASTC and ESC. Easily up there with the best systems available anywhere.



JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE LIMITED V6

\$75,660 RDAP

by Anthony Hood

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Model | Jeep GC Limited |
| Model Price | \$75,660 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.0L CRD V6 |
| Drivetrain | 4WD 8 speed Auto |
| Power | 184kW @ 4,000rpm |
| Torque | 570Nm @ 2,000rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 198g/km |
| Economy ADR | 7.5L/100km |
| Tow Capacity | Max 3,500kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 350kg |
| Servicing | 5 Yrs Capped Price |
| Warranty | 5 Yr Unlimited km Full Roadside assist |



The available Quadra-Trac II® 4x4 system features the Selec-Terrain® traction control system. Selec-Terrain® lets the driver select from five settings for optimum traction. The Jeep GC Limited features a 26-degree approach angle, a 24 -degree departure angle and a 19-degree rampover angle. This is less than the Overlander with Quadra Lift air suspension. If you were seriously venturing far off road I would suggest you look at the Overland or Trailhawk. Wading depth across the range is 508mm

Standard safety features include ESC, electronic roll mitigation (ERM), ABS with off road calibration, ASTC, brake traction control system (BTCS), trailer-sway control (TSC) and front-seat passenger seat-belt pretensioners.

The Grand Cherokee Overland offers upgraded lane departure warning, blind spot monitoring, rear cross path detection, forward collision warning with crash mitigation, adaptive cruise control, ParkView rear back up camera with dynamic grid, parallel and perpendicular ParkSense park assist system, advanced brake assist, and new Selec-Speed control with hill ascent control and hill descent control, assisting the driver when climbing and descending steep grades.

Other standard safety features include seven airbags, advanced multi-stage driver and front passenger, front seat side airbags, side curtain airbags for front and rear occupants, driver knee airbag and active head restraints that deploy in the event of a rear collision.

Towing with the powerful, torquey V6 Diesel is a breeze with 3,500Kg capacity and 350Kg tow ball rating. The standard suspension copes with towing heavy but the air suspension is much better. In short it's great for towing just about anything and copes easily. All up the Jeep Grand Cherokee Limited V6 Diesel is an urban 4WD that is stylish, reasonable value for money and capable off road as well as comfortable on city streets. It is the SUV with 4WD capability.



What's Good:

- Drivers comfort
- Sophisticated Selec-Terrain
- Standard features

What's Not:


- Feels more car like than 4WD
- Starting to show its age
- Drivers seat travel

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 84/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 8 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 8 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 10 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 9 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 9 |

LANDROVER DISCOVERY SD4 S

\$79,177 RDAP



Australian buyers have been slowly moving towards premium brands, and Land Rover is placed to take advantage. George VI gave Land Rover a royal warrant in 1951, and you can't get more pucker than that.

by Alan Zurvas



Land Rover's 5th generation posh country-hopper is the most luxurious, yet capable model yet. The familiar squared-off boxy body is gone, and is replaced by a pleasing, streamlined design. It is handsome, with a slightly aloof feel about it. Discovery shares a platform with her bigger, and even posher sister, Range Rover.

The interior is pure Range Rover too. Features, electronics, and trim, are common across the JLR brands. Our test car had a thrifty 2.0 "Ingenium" turbo diesel. Although the 177kW output seems a trifle modest, it has 500Nm of torque. Max speed is 207kmh, with a 0-100 of 8.3 seconds, and uses just 6.4L/100k. There is nothing to apologise for there. That's impressive for a relatively small engine pulling 2,115kg of SUV. A full tank means a highway trip of near 1,700km with a frugal foot and light load. You might view Land Rover as the entry level Range Rover, but you'd be dead wrong if you thought that meant compromise. The handsome



sloping roof and angled waistline, adds a touch of Range Rover Evoque stylr. An optional (\$3,480) glass sunshine roof makes the C pillar look like a retro roll-bar. Design has had the laying-on of a very light and skilled hand.

Full length roof rails are an \$920 option, with the Yulong white metallic paint being a further \$2010. Land Rover says it allows a buyer to fully personalize their trusty steed. Lighting inside and out, is LED.

Not only is it modern, but saves power. Attractive DTRLs have a distinctive line to distinguish it from the rest of the JLR family. A double line across the rear, makes the extra-large tail lights look like a light show you've paid to go and see.

by Alan Zurvas

The single tailgate lifts electrically to reveal an inner tailgate. There are buttons on the left inner wall of the cargo hold which lower it. Optional buttons lower the 2nd and 3rd row seats of the 7-seater, which costs an extra \$3,400. Surprisingly, that power adjustment adds a further \$630. The carpeted rear floor is flat with fully useable space. There are buttons inside the 2nd row doors, with further controls in the infotainment system.

The 2nd row seats recline electrically which adds \$1,940 to the price. JLR says the smart phone app can control other car functions too, including seats. Quality leather and woodgrain has been lavished throughout. There is Range Rover style aluminium trim on the centre console which, although classy, would easily scratch. The flat, highly-polished surface can reflect the sun straight into your eyes at certain times of day, which can be annoying.

There are plenty of grab handles too, and believe me, you need them. Stowage bins abound. The centre console is deep enough to swallow your arm. It is cooled by the A/C flow, so will keep drinks at just the right temperature. The centre stack has a nifty hidey hole behind the A/C control dials. The dial panel swing open to reveal a place for sunglasses and mobiles. The air conditioning controls switch thoughtfully to the main LCD screen while the flap is open.

Steering wheel buttons, infotainment, centre console buttons, and other controls are common too. Sadly, smart cruise control is an option, but then most of the really good stuff is. One thing that isn't, is the 10" Connect Pro touch screen, which is standard on the SE, as is the 6 speaker Meridian sound system. I'm impressed by the sound quality, and the ease of use of the system. A 10 speaker upgrade is additional cost option.

Voice control is useless, but then most voice control is. Satnav is fairly easy to use, but Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto would be even better. DAB radio should be standard on all audio systems. The Meridian speakers seem to punch sounds waves directly in to your brain. You can opt for a nifty wireless phone charger which uses the space in a cup holder if you wish.

Land Rover Discovery now drives like a Range Rover. Initially, you feel the bulk of what is quite a large vehicle. The responsive engine, and smooth 8 speed ZF auto, make low down traffic speeds easy. Once you get used to the size, you can really throw Discovery around like a toy.



by Alan Zurvas

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | LR Discovery SD4 S |
| Model Price | \$79,177 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.0 L SD4 |
| Drivetrain | 8 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 177 kW @ 4000 rpm |
| Torque | 500 Nm @ 1500 rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 168 g/km |
| Economy ADR | 6.4 L/100 km |
| Servicing | Optional Fixed Plan |
| Tow Rating | Max 3500 kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 350 kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



There is no automated parking as standard. Crystal clear cameras provide switchable views, including a 360° overhead aspect. Blind spot and lane monitoring make life a bit easier. The steering wheel gets a shake if you wander across lines without indicating, and lights flash if the system sees a car hiding in your blind spot. The highway felt like home for the Discovery.

Although capable of much more, this is how Discos will most likely be used. Our tour took us through some beautiful country. A narrow dirt road that clung precariously to the side of a gorge terminated at a camp ground. Deep ruts and potholes were ironed out well. Only the odd bunker-buster gave any rise for concern. Importantly, the handling was completely unaffected. There were no rattles either. There are off-road programmes, and automatic 4WD to sort out driving programs suitable for conditions. If you want a bit of entertainment, watch the system switch between 2WD and 4WD, as it locks and unlocks diffs and hubs. We still use those terms even though most of the clever stuff happens via the ABS.

Although Discovery is incredibly capable, and can tow 3,500kg it probably won't be called upon to do sooften. But the horse brigade seem to favour them. There is also Sway control which uses the ABS to prevent those nasty tank-slappers. The manufacture standard is high, and reliability has improved greatly over recent years. JLR's parent company, Indian giant TATA, has allowed Jaguar Land Rover to explore and invest. Quality control points along the build path have been improved too.

New standard features are being added, though many expensive options remain. JLR wants an SUV in every niche, in an ever-expanding market. Australian buyers have been slowly moving towards premium brands, and Land Rover is placed to take advantage. George VI gave Land Rover a royal warrant in 1951, and you can't get more pucker than that. The optional Active Wristband allows you to lock the car with the key inside. This is handy at the beach. It deactivates the key, and only reactivates again upon your return. Simple features that make life easy are worth their weight in gold.



What's Good:

- Style and looks
- 4WD capability
- Luxury interior

What's Not:

- Premium pricing
- No Apple CarPlay®/Android® Auto
- Expensive options

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 85/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 8 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 7 | Towing Ability | 10 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 8 |

TOYOTA LC76 WAGON GXL V8**\$75,606 RDAP**

In the world of 4WD Wagons the Toyota LC 76 Wagon GXL reigns supreme. From the outside the LC 76 Wagon GXL looks exactly like it should for what it is designed for. A utilitarian workhorse that would last forever.

by Anthony Hood



In the world of 4WD Wagons the Toyota LC 76 Wagon GXL reigns supreme. From the outside the LC 76 Wagon GXL looks exactly like it should for what it is designed for. A utilitarian workhorse that would last forever. It has a bold grill, snorkel, high roofline and sides. The front has single lights, lower fog lights and bold wheel arches.

Let's recap what the upgrades gave to the LC76 Wagon GXL. Safety electronics with extensive local tuning including - vehicle stability control, active traction control, hill-start assist control, brake assist, electronic brake-force distribution and cruise control. In addition to these safety features Toyota upgraded the engine to Euro 5 compliance. This was achieved through many enhancements but featured - Piezo injectors, diesel particulate filter (auto regen plus manual switch), improved Fuel economy by up to 1.2 litres/100km at 10.7 litres/100km, improved CO₂ emissions of 281 grams/km, improved by up to 32 grams/km. Other improvements include the much needed taller manual gearbox ratios in second and fifth gears, Auto-locking front hubs (with manual "lock" option), Fuse box and fused battery terminal, Front seatbelt pre-tensioners and front-passenger seatbelt warning. Unfortunately the



LC76 didn't get all the improvements of the single cab chassis Ute which has achieved 5 Star ANCAP safety rating, but those improvements that filtered through to the Wagon are needed and appreciated. The current model LC 76 is a little behind competitors with its ANCAP rating.

Inside the LC 76 Wagon GXL is more spacious than expected. There is enough leg room for my 190cm tall frame, plenty of headroom, even with a hat on and changing gears with the height adjustable steering wheel allows more flexibility.

Rear seats are adequate again with plenty of head and shoulder room and adequate knee and leg room. The boot is cavernous and the barn rear doors allow ease of use.

by Anthony Hood

The dash looks like my old HJ 60 series Sahara Landcruiser. It is improved obviously but I swear the AC controls are straight out of the parts bin from those days. The seat is supportive but could do with some lumbar support. The steering wheel actually feels pretty good in the hands and allows good feedback. It is however totally devoid of any controls.

The dash has two larger dials, four smaller and provides a large amount of information. There is a clock on the centre stack, a Bluetooth stereo and below are the slide controls for the AC. Like my old HJ 60 Sahara there is a hand throttle/idle up button. Apart from some missing features the LC 76 reminds you that you really don't need some of the fancy things that are in vehicles as the older versions still work. The addition of electric windows is a bonus and the much needed cruise control means that I won't have to drive with a stick on the accelerator in future on long trips

However there are some things that are needed. Additional air bags that have been included in the SCC Ute and PLEASE, PLEASE electrically adjustable external rear mirrors. Let me repeat this, the external rear view mirrors are still manually adjustable. Yes you read that right. This essentially meant that almost every day I had to hop in and out multiple times to readjust the left hand side mirror because someone had bumped it in a car park or it had rattled loose. It was plain annoying and simply ridiculous. They are great mirrors when adjusted properly. One benefit of the upright vehicle style is excellent visibility all around.

During its 30-year life, the 70 Series (collectively) has been progressively upgraded with features such as direct-injection turbo-diesel technology, coil front springs and even Bluetooth® connectivity. Sat Nav still is on the wish list though. Even so, it continues with the attributes that have made it such a versatile off-road vehicle - a tough box-section chassis, simple part-time 4WD system with two-speed transfer, lockable hubs (now auto), excellent low-range gearing, long-range fuel tanks and excellent ground clearance. These features, combined with ample approach, ramp-over and departure angles, enable the 76 Series vehicles to traverse rugged roads and obstacles that are beyond the capabilities of other vehicles.

Today's LandCruiser 76 Wagon GXL models are powered by a 32-valve 4.5-litre V8 turbo-diesel engine with common-rail direct injection and an intercooler. It delivers 151kW of power at 3400rpm and peak torque of 430Nm from just 1200rpm all the way to 3200rpm – a particularly flat torque curve. This is actually one of the main features of the LC 76. The torque curve or flat line allows you to drive in fifth gear all the way from 40kmh up to 120kmh. You can idle and pull away at 40kmh without chugging or problem. The taller fifth gear doesn't seem to affect the lower responsiveness but significantly improves higher speed economy. Previously at speeds of 100kmh the LC76 was revving at around 3000rpm, with the taller gear this drops to around 2000rpm. This changes everything. It makes cruising more relaxed, especially with the new cruise control, quitter, more economical etc.



TOYOTA LC76 WAGON GXL V8

\$75,606 RDAP

by Anthony Hood

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | LC 70 Wagon GXL |
| Model Price | \$75,606 RDAP |
| Engine | 4.5 L V8 Turbo |
| Drivetrain | 5 Sp MT 4WD |
| Power | 151kW @ 3,400rpm |
| Torque | 430Nm @ 1,200rpm |
| Safety | TBA ANCAP |
| CO2 | 313g/km |
| Economy ADR | 11.9L/100 km |
| Servicing | TBA Price |
| Tow Rating | 3,500kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 350 kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



The Toyota Landcruiser LC 76 Wagon GXL is a mixed bag. In many ways it is an icon from a bygone time like a 70's rock star that simply won't die. Yet it still sells in reasonable numbers today. Like its single cab Trayback cousin it has dual personalities. On road and around town it feels like a sumo wrestler trying to buy clothes at Supre' It is big, cumbersome, has an atrocious turning circle (that I discovered at a tight inner city roundabout much to my dismay and the mirth of onlookers) and simply is out of place.

However the dual personality comes to the fore when you turn off the tar roads and head bush, either on dirt roads or on the farm. Here the LC 76 is like a male lion, king of the beasts. It is here that the LC 76 excels. The low down torque delivery combined with low gearing means that it will gently putter along where needed. It is simply superb. It is unmatched by any other 4WD currently. We have previously towed trailers both on and off road with the LC 76 and with the 3500kg tow rating and a 350kg tow ball rating it is a great tow vehicle.

The LC 70 series vehicles are extremely popular with buyers in mining, agriculture, construction, communications support and recreation industries. They value the almost indestructible nature of the ubiquitous LC 70 series. I have friends on farms that have Landcruiser Utes that are 20 years plus old, have been belted beyond recognition in everyday use and still keep going strong.

The LC 76 Wagon GXL has a rightly deserved unrivalled reputation for class-leading mechanical reliability and serious towing, load carrying and off-road performance. It is easily upgraded with a plethora of factory or aftermarket accessories to make it even more unstoppable in the bush. As I said the LC76 Wagon GXL is a mixed bag, hopeless around tight inner city streets, not really designed for fast highway cruising but simply unmatched off road. It has many faults and I love it. There really is nothing like it left on the market today and it is only fitting that such an icon should be represented and indeed a previous winner for the COTY Award for 4WD \$60,000 - \$80,000



What's Good:

- 4WD Capability
- Towing Capability
- Power and Torque

What's Not:

- No power external mirrors
- Turning circle
- Doesn't get all the Ute upgrades

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 84/100

| | | | |
|------------------|----|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 7 | Practicality | 10 |
| Comfort | 7 | Fit for Purpose | 10 |
| Equipment | 7 | Towing Ability | 10 |
| Performance | 10 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 7 | Value for Money | 7 |

TOYOTA LANDCRUISER PRADO GX**\$61,682 RDAP**

The Toyota Prado GX 5 seat wagon we are testing here, in some ways is an entry level 4WD aimed more at the real purpose, rather than a family run-around.

by Rob Fraser



The Toyota Prado in some ways has always been an underrated 4WD. Often dubbed a soccer mums taxi, the Prado has always had excellent off road ability. It's just that many owners never explored those qualities. Updated in both 2016 and again in 2017, the Prado has managed to keep at the forefront of the segment. The Toyota Prado GX 5 seat wagon we are testing here, in some ways is an entry level 4WD aimed more at the real purpose, rather than a family run-around. Priced from around \$61,682 RDAP, the Prado GX auto is an affordable way to buy a genuine 4WD without many of the extras that are nice but not necessary to have.

Externally the Prado GX looks the same as the Kakadu, without the fog lights, DRL's, roof rails etc. It runs on 265/65R17 tyres on 6spoke alloy rims. Recent upgrades has seen the bonnet acquire similar sculpturing to the LC200 series. This actually assists visibility. There are some muscular wheel arch bulges and the whole lines actually look pretty good. It also has halogen headlights and colour coded bumpers.

Inside the Prado GX there is adequate room for all passengers. The driver's seat is relatively comfortable, even after a few hours at



the wheel. It has manual adjustment and no lumbar adjustment. I personally dislike the fabric seats. For some strange reason I find myself always pushing back against the seat. I would prefer vinyl, I know I am probably Robinson Crusoe here, but the seats in the GXL 76 are more practical.

The steering wheel is comfortable and being height and reach adjustable, easy to manoeuvre to a good driving position. It doesn't have a lot of controls on it, basically having the Bluetooth and audio controls. One feature I really like is the simple to use cruise control stalk, and on the manual it's NOT adaptive, thanks Toyota. The auto ACC thankfully is easy to override.

by Rob Fraser

The dash is clearly visible through the steering wheel with two large and two small dials with a simple MFD in-between. It tells you everything you need to know and quite frankly as a driver I shouldn't be reminded of what my economy driving style is. The central console and stack are well laid out, easy to use and simple. It houses the 8 inch screen and audio system. There is a 9 speaker sound system. The GX doesn't get satellite navigation, but if Toyota got over their refusal to utilise Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto, this wouldn't be a problem. If you are heading off road there are any number of good 4WD systems, especially the HEMA system for navigation. Also the screen is a little insensitive to touch on occasions.

Both front and rear passengers have plenty of head and shoulder room. There is enough front seat slide for front occupants. Rear passengers have a little restricted knee room but overall it is great for four and even five occupants. The almost flat footwell also provides more comfort for the middle passenger. The rear seats will fold flat on a split arrangement to give a flexible boot area. While not cavernous it is more than adequate. The best thing Toyota has done is get rid of those ridiculous fold up rear seats, I know not an issue on the five seat GX but just had to rant.

One thing to note is that overall visibility from the Prado is surprisingly good. Over bonnet view is improved, there are great internal and external mirrors and the rear camera is an essential safety feature on all cars. The other great thing about the Prado is the rear mounted full size spare. No underbody slung spare that gets damaged and useless when you need it most.

Even though this is an entry level model it still has little features that are welcomed, such as illuminated vanity mirrors for both front occupants, rear A/C vents, smart entry (which moves the steering wheel up out of the way while you get in) and smart start, 220-volt rear accessory socket, USB auxiliary input and iPod control, side mirror-mounted indicators, conversation mirror, power windows front and rear and UV-cut glass

The Prado GX is now offered with the same diesel engine that sits in the Hilux and Fortuner vehicles. It is a 2.8L, Four cylinder in-line, 16-valve, DOHC diesel that produces 130kW @ 3,400rpm of power and 450Nm @ 1,600rpm of torque (auto version). The manual has torque of 420Nm @ 1,400rpm. This runs through either a six speed manual or six speed automatic transmission. The Prado has constant four-wheel drive; two-speed transfer case with lockable centre Torsen LSD.

This combination of low torque and well suited transmission means that for a relatively large 4WD the Prado is frugal with diesel using just 8.0L/100k ADR. In real world use, the Prado is certainly economical, especially on the freeway. This will see you getting upwards of 900km out of a tank of fuel.



TOYOTA LANDCRUISER PRADO GX

\$61,682 RDAP

by Rob Fraser

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Model | LC Prado GX |
| Model Price | \$61,682 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.8L 4 Cyl D4D |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 130kW @ 3,400rpm |
| Torque | 450Nm @ 1,600rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 211g/km |
| Economy actual | 8.0L/100 km ADR |
| Servicing | Capped Price |
| Tow Rating | Max 3,000kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 300kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



The manual GX will tow 2,500kg and the auto version will tow 3,000kg. The recent engine power upgrades have enhanced the Prado's towing ability. It still isn't a powerhouse, but the available torque low down allows relaxed cruising both on and off road and the trailer sway control greatly assists the driver. The size of the Prado helps in real 4WD conditions, with an overall length of 4,995mm, width of 1,885mm, height of 1,845mm and wheelbase of 2,790mm. Approach angle is 30.4 degrees, rampover angle is 21.1 degrees and departure angle is 23.5 degrees. Wading depth is 700mm and ground clearance is 219mm standard.

Off road the Prado is a more than capable performer. We have driven them, including the GX, on sand, firetrails, in the desert, on the farm, along tight 4WD tracks, just about everywhere. They simply don't let you down and the reliability is awesome. The recent engine upgrades also help with towing, both on and off road. On road the Prado has good ride and handling for a 4WD, better than most.

Safety is still a strong feature on the GX Prado with seven airbags, rear view camera, trailer sway control, emergency brake signal, whiplash injury lessening front seats, vehicle stability control, active traction control (A-TRC), ABS with electronic brake-force distribution (EBD) and brake assist (BA). The automatic version adds Toyota Safety Sense+ (automatic only) including pre-collision safety system with pedestrian detection, lane departure alert, automatic high beam and active cruise control (but easy to disable), hill-start assist control (HAC) and downhill assist control (DAC). There is no blind spot monitoring, but the external rear view mirrors are a decent size and easy to electronically adjust to get the best view, that should negate the need for BSM.

So there it is. The Toyota Prado GX 5 seat 4WD wagon. It could be the 4WD enthusiasts are looking for. It is affordable, has genuine 4WD capability, can tow 3,000kg, is economical, has an abundance of aftermarket accessories for it and has Toyota's legendary reliability.



What's Good:

- Value for money
- Standard features
- Towing & 4WD ability

What's Not:

- No Apple CarPlay®/Android® Auto
- No Sat Nav
- Fabric seats

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 86/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 9 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 9 |

OZROAMER 2017 - 7 SEAT 4WD \$60,000 - \$80,000 AWARD



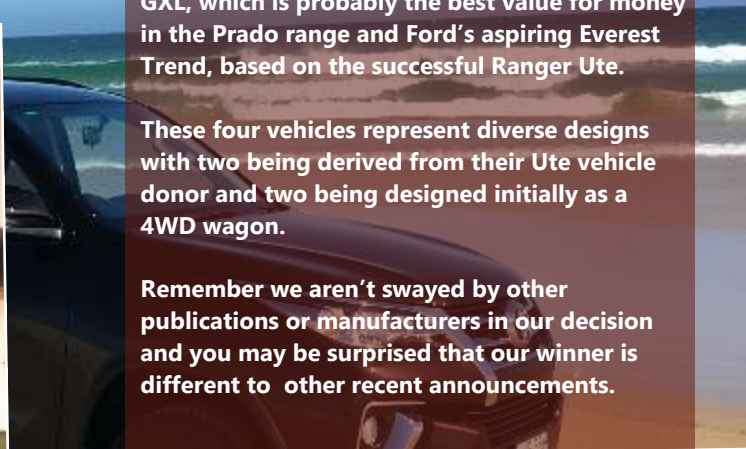
There has been an explosion in the 7 seat genuine 4WD segment over the last few years. Previously the domain of the Prado and Pajero with Landcruiser and Challenger thrown in. Now it seems that if a manufacturer has a Ute they are basing a 7 seat wagon on that Ute.

The \$60,000 - \$80,000 segment is starting to get expensive and buyers want the best of both worlds. Family capability, luxury SUV like characteristics and genuine 4WD ability. This year we have a previous winner in the Toyota Fortuner Crusade along with another multiple winner in the Pajero Exceed. The Pajero is really starting to show its age but remains strongly competitive.

Alongside these we have the Landcruiser Prado GXL, which is probably the best value for money in the Prado range and Ford's aspiring Everest Trend, based on the successful Ranger Ute.

These four vehicles represent diverse designs with two being derived from their Ute vehicle donor and two being designed initially as a 4WD wagon.

Remember we aren't swayed by other publications or manufacturers in our decision and you may be surprised that our winner is different to other recent announcements.



FORD EVEREST TREND 4WD**\$64,407 RDAP**

The Everest Trend has good looks, good 4WD ability, great use of internal space, good build quality, a torquey engine that suits its purpose and can tow a decent caravan or trailer. Well worth a test drive if that is what you are after.



by Anthony Hood

Like a lot of other manufacturers, Ford in 2015 developed a Ute based wagon, the Everest, that has 7 seats and great 4WD capability. This makes sense. It came with a premium price though for a competent offering. Ford has since reviewed their pricing and it is now more in line with it's competitors, yet still a little pricey for what you get. To offer that same vehicle in 2WD doesn't make sense to me. It would just frustrate the hell out of me and there are better 2WD wagon choices.

Externally, the Everest is the same as the Ranger from the front doors forward, behind that the design changes. Overall it is reasonably stylish with a deep hollow through the belly and strong roofline. It runs 18 inch alloys with 265/60 R18 tyres. The Everest also has halogen daytime running lights, auto high beam, halogen projector headlamps with manual height adjustment, colour coded bumpers and door handles, puddle lamps, running boards and a power tailgate. The design looks to accommodate good 4WDing but more on that later. So a tick for the overall looks, which is obviously subjective.



Inside the Everest Trend the differences to the Ranger become apparent. There has been a definite style choice to make the interior more SUV or car like. The dash, centre console bin top and arm rests all have soft touch panels. The Trend still gets fabric seats and manual seat adjustments, having said that the seats are comfortable. However compare this to the Fortuner Crusade which is cheaper but gets leather and electric drivers seat adjustment.

The steering wheel is nice and thick and has the usual controls on it. In front of the driver is the unusual dash with one large dial and two side MFD's. It's clear and concise. Overall it feels spacious and relaxed.

by Anthony Hood

The 8 inch centre stack screen is home for Sync III. This is Ford's system but now comes with voice control that can be a little temperamental. The system makes all functions available from the home screen which is split into 4 functions: climate, audio, phone and navigation, and has Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto . Everest Trend also now has the Sat Nav with traffic management channel. The system has the unusual feature of allowing access to alternative screens from each screen making it easily navigable. The Everest also has "active noise cancelling" which makes the cabin relatively quiet. The 10 speaker sound system belts out a good rock tune to keep me focused while driving long distances.

The middle row seats are again pretty comfortable and what you would expect., Noting that there is plenty of headroom, there is average room for three people. The rear seats again are for pre teens or short people. The good thing is that the seats fold flat to provide a long and almost cavernous rear storage area. It is however slightly narrow through the wheel arches. Speaking of storage there are cup and bottle holders everywhere, including for the third row seats, a huge centre console bin, really huge, reasonable glove box and more. The overall feel inside is one of good visibility, especially rearwards with the reversing camera and clear rear three quarter windows, as well as space. The Everest Trend feels spacious!

Like the Ranger, the Everest is home to the 5 cylinder 3.2L turbo diesel engine. This is a good performer producing power of 143kW @ 3,000rpm and torque of 470Nm @ 1,750-2,500rpm running through a 6 speed automatic transmission and driving the wheels through a dual range box. This makes for relaxed freeway cruising and excellent towing ability. Its no powerhouse but scoots along when pushed, yet is still reasonably economical. Wind rather than weight kills the economy.

The Everest isn't all that big with an overall length of 4892mm, width of 1860mm and height of 1837mm. Giving it that internal spacious feeling is the wheelbase of 2850mm. Showing its 4WD credentials are the ground clearance of 225mm, wading depth of 800mm, approach angle of 29.5 degrees, rampover angle of 21.5 degrees and departure angle of 25 degrees.

Around town you feel its size, but it has a relatively tight turning circle of 11.7m, but on the freeways and secondary roads it seems to come into it's own. Here the size is an advantage and the engine can purr along untroubled. The linear delivery of torque feels like it just propels you forward. Off road the low down torque allows most situations to be controlled from your right foot. That is what you want.

I have driven the Everest and its cousin the Ranger, pretty much on all surfaces, road, forest trails, on the farm, gravel rocky tracks, sand etc. It always feels in control. Its a great 4WD. The dial 4WD controls are simple and intuitive to use as well.



FORD EVEREST TREND 4WD

\$64,407 RDAP

by Anthony Hood

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | Everest Trend |
| Model Price | \$64,407 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.2L 5 Cyl TD |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 143kW @ 3,000rpm |
| Torque | 470Nm @ 1,750rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 224g/km |
| Economy ADR | 8.5L/100 km |
| Servicing | Capped Price |
| Tow Rating | 3,000kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 30 kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 1 Yrs Roadside Assist |



The other benefit of the Everest off road is the rear diff lock. This should be used more to get you through somewhere you need to go or to get out of trouble, not take you further into the bush than your skills dictate you should go.

With a 5 Star ANCAP safety rating the Everest Trend's features include: adaptive cruise control with forward collision warning, multiple airbags everywhere, dynamic stability control incorporating anti-lock brakes system (ABS), rollover mitigation, trailer sway control, and traction control system, emergency brake assist, front and rear parking sensors, hill descent control and hill launch control, lane keeping system, rear view camera, etc.

One thing that the Everest does very well is tow things. With a tow rating of 3000kg and a tow ball rating of 300kg, it is perfect for an active lifestyle. The trailer sway control, linear delivery of torque at low revs and good feedback through the steering wheel means that the Everest is amongst the best of the Ute based wagons for towing. It gives the driver a solid feeling of control.

There has been some reliability issues with the engine management systems and a few other niggles with the engine, but overall the Ford Everest is a good option for a family 4WD wagon. Make no mistake it drives like a 4WD, a smooth one, but not even like a SUV. That is why I simply don't understand people buying them in 2WD versions. However I'm sure someone will tell me why!

Ford originally pegged the Everest as a direct competitor to the Prado, which to be realistic is being a bit presumptuous. They priced it as such and as mentioned have now readjusted their pricing and are a little sensitive about it. It competes nicely with the other Ute based wagons. The Everest Trend has good looks, good 4WD ability, great use of internal space, good build quality, a torquey engine that suits its purpose and can tow a decent caravan or trailer. Well worth a test drive if that is what you are after.



What's Good:

- Sync 111 Technology
- Real 4WD ability
- Safety features

What's Not:

- Reasonably pricey
- Reliability issues
- Rough riding

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 85/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 9 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 8 |

MITSUBISHI PAJERO EXCEED DID

\$72,370 RDAP



Pajero remains a value plus, roomy and very competent 4WD vehicle that will transport the family and all their gear to wherever you may wish to go. As a family 4WD that provides something for all drivers the Pajero is easy to live with

by Anthony Hood



Going back some fifteen or so years ago, Mitsubishi revolutionised the 4WD market with a large 4WD that actually had road manners. Time has moved on and the latest MY17 model of the Pajero is now getting long in the tooth but still remains a very competent 4WD with good handling, dynamics and surprisingly good value. This certainly has been a long model life cycle however there has been major improvements along the way. The Pajero is now a previous three time winner of this award over the last seven years. Combine this with a price reduction and the value equation is even better.

The MY 17 model features exterior sophisticated styling that includes a new front bumper, chrome radiator grille and new spare tyre cover design. Inside, a new centre panel design and chrome air conditioning dials brighten the appearance. One of the niggles with the Pajero was the noise. It simply wasn't as quiet as other 4WD's however that has changed. Significant NVH upgrades on all automatic models have improved cabin quietness with new dash panel acoustic insulation material.



For extra isolation performance, noise absorbing material has been added to the engine hood, top cowl, floor area, headlining, rear quarter trim and front transmission tunnel area. A noise insulation layer has also been added to the laminated firewall material.

Pajero Exceed specific features include electric sunroof with slide and tilt functionality, sport pedals, chrome windscreen and side protection moulding.

Automatic high beam is a feature on the Pajero Exceed. A forward facing camera located in the rear view mirror bracket senses oncoming vehicle headlights and adjusts accordingly to allow the driver to stay focused on the road at all times.

by Anthony Hood

The external shape remains stylish and the Exceed has some features that enhance that style such as ten spoke 18-inch alloys, front fog lamps, roof rails, rear spoiler, high intensity dusk sensing headlights etc.

Step inside the Exceed and the first thing you notice is that the interior is quite spacious. The electrically adjustable heated drivers seat is comfortable and the leather and wood grain steering wheel is both reach and height adjustable to allow you to find that perfect driving position. There is enough seat travel even for my lanky frame and the overall visibility is excellent. The steering wheel is surprisingly comfortable in the hands and houses the usual controls. In front of the driver is the illuminated sports dash with dual dials and multi information display in-between. The dash is very easy to read. The centre console houses Mitsubishi's Multi Communication System (MMCS) with Navigation Voice Command Steering Wheel Controls, an 850-watt Rockford Acoustic Design 12 Speaker Premium Audio System and reversing camera with reversing sensors. The sound from this entertainment system is simply awesome. Above the MMCS is a carryover from the previous models with the push button information system. It also houses the Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto .

Rear seat passengers are spoilt with plenty of leg, head and shoulder room. The Pajero probably has the most rear room in this segment and even the taller passengers are comfortable. The Exceed also comes with a rear entertainment system as an option and it's worth it to keep the rear passengers occupied. The third row of seats folds neatly into its own floor to give a large luggage area but are definitely in the small child, short trip category though. There is no leg room or knee room for anything but the smallest passengers. One particular design advantage is the fact that the rear seats can be totally removed and in their place is a handy large storage well. This is great for extended touring holidays etc when the rear seats aren't needed.

The Pajero Exceed Edition offers first-class occupant and driver safety with 5 star ANCAP safety rating. Features include front, side and curtain airbags, ASC, ATC, EBAC, Super Select 4WD II, Multi-mode, ABS, EBD, ISOFIX child restraints, reversing camera, rear parking sensors, Mitsubishi Body Optimised Suspension (MBOS) and MATT (Mitsubishi's All Terrain Technology). MATT incorporates a number of systems including active stability and traction control, ABS braking system with EBD and Super Select II 4WD. Super Select let's you alternate between 2WD and 4WD modes by changing between modes at speeds of up to 100 kilometres per hour on any surface.

The Pajero also now comes with a very handy rear diff lock for superior off road performance. Powered by a 3.2 litre Common Rail turbo-charged diesel the Pajero pumps out 141kW of power at 3,800rpm and 441Nm of torque at 2,000rpm. At 110kmh on the freeway the Pajero will be turning over a relatively lazy 2,100rpm. The engine is mated to the INVECS II 'Smart Logic' 5-speed automatic transmission with Sports mode. This combination works well enough.



MITSUBISHI PAJERO EXCEED DID

\$72,370 RDAP

by Anthony Hood

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | Pajero Exceed |
| Model Price | \$72,370 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.2 L DiD 4 Cyl |
| Drivetrain | 4WD 5 speed Auto |
| Power | 141kW @ 3,800rpm |
| Torque | 441Nm @ 2,000rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 228g/km |
| Economy ADR | 9.1L/100km |
| Tow Capacity | Max 3,000kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 250kg |
| Servicing | TBC |
| Warranty | 3 Yr 100,000 km Full Roadside assist |



The Pajero still remains one of the better handling 4WD's in its class. On highways and back roads the Pajero drives almost like any sedan. When the road turns to dirt and corrugations the Pajero remains composed providing an engaging drive. Off road the Pajero is an excellent performer. The MATT system combined with the rear diff lock, means that you can go almost anywhere you want within reason. As a standard 4WD it will provide endless kilometres of comfortable outback touring.

The Pajero will tow 3000kg with a tow ball weight of up to 250kg and makes a pretty dam good tow vehicle. Over the years I know people that have towed caravans, off road caravans, bike trailers, off road camper trailers, boats etc with the Pajero. It handled everything they towed with ease. Personally I would keep it to 2500kg with the balance on the tow ball of 250kg, especially if you are venturing into the rough stuff. Fuel usage will increase while towing as the motor does work a little harder.

The Pajero remains an excellent, real 4WD with a wading depth of 700mm, approach angle of 36.6 degrees, rampover angle of 22.5 degrees and departure angle of 25 degrees with a ground clearance of 235mm. These stats are up there with other 4WD's. The Pajero Exceed is often overlooked because of all the new models, but still has a lot going for it. For a start the monocoque body ensures a better ride than the current crop of Ute based 4WD wagons. It has also to some extent been superseded by the Pajero Sport. However don't underestimate the Exceed, with luxury and comfort at a reasonable price.

As I mentioned before the current Pajero is long in its design cycle and there are areas where the market has caught up and passed it. It's strength isn't in doing anything exceptionally well (except on road handling) but rather everything competently. However it remains a value plus, roomy, very competent 4WD vehicle that will transport the family and all their gear to wherever you may wish to go. As a family 4WD that provides something for all drivers the Pajero is easy to live with.



What's Good:

- Internal space
- 4WD Stability system
- Rear diff lock

What's Not:

- Third row seats leg room
- Diesel a bit noisy
- Engine power

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 87/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 8 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 8 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 9 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |



TOYOTA FORTUNER CRUSADE

\$62,297 RDAP



The Fortuner delivers a compliant and quiet ride, a spacious interior, convenient features and premium quality expected in a modern SUV.



by Rob Fraser



For the Fortuner Crusade make that three. Three years in a row the winner of the 7 Seat 4WD \$60,000 - \$80,000. This says two things, first that Toyota designed a pretty good vehicle first up and second there hasn't been much movement in the competition over those years. This is a decision that is sure to be debated by fellow journalists as they like to change things to be seen to be doing things, but we believe it is the best overall choice for buyers.

Toyota Fortuner Crusade is based on the Hilux chassis, with heavy modifications to make it more car like for family buyers with genuine 4WD credentials. The modifications see the Fortuner ride and handle much better than the Hilux. The development process had a strong Australian DNA with its unique body, wiring and key underpinnings having been designed or extensively developed and evaluated by local engineers. The rugged frame, high-torque engine, all-coil suspension and strong upper body have been proven in Australia under the world's toughest conditions - on tarmac and off the beaten track.

Externally, the Fortuner is actually quite a pleasant design with bold front end but a protruding grill, sweeping uplift side profile and integrated rear end. The Crusade features projector-type LED headlamps, LED daytime running lamps, LED tail lamps and side steps,



alloy wheels, fog lamps, roof rails and privacy glass. The power tailgate in the Crusade can be controlled from switches on the dash panel, in the tailgate itself or from the smart key-fob. It has a memory function that allows owners to set the opening height, which is handy when parking under a low-hanging branch or in a garage with a low roof. The maximum height is 191cm - which means that I just fit.

Internally the Fortuner raises the bar and exudes a premium SUV ambiance with elegant and flowing lines, soft touch materials on high touch areas, especially the centre console, which is flanked by vertical columns covered in such that also provide leg support for the front occupants..

by Rob Fraser

Front leather faced seats are very comfortable and along with the height and reach adjustment for the leather feel steering wheel, it is easy to find a comfortable driving position even for taller drivers. The Crusade features a high-precision, full-colour 4.2-inch MID with information including trip meters, vehicle checks and data to support economical driving.

There is seating for seven people over three rows with sports front seats that are flared at the shoulders and fitted with firm bolsters for maximum support. Middle seats are reasonably comfortable and the fold up third row seats are a pain and simply poor design. Other features include seven-inch touch-screen display audio systems with six speakers, auxiliary/USB port, AM/FM radio and a CD player. The screen also displays the reversing camera image and provides access to Toyota Link connected mobility.

Toyota Link can provide access to Pandora Internet radio and help find fuel, a destination, weather and other assistance. Top-of-the-range Crusade has DAB+ digital radio and satellite navigation, which expands the capability of the Toyota Link system. Convenience features include Bluetooth connectivity, voice recognition, steering-wheel audio and telephone controls and power door locks, windows and mirrors. Again Toyota doesn't utilise Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto which is inconvenient for some.

The Crusade has climate controlled air-conditioning with separate air-flow controls for second-row passengers and vents for the rear seats. Storage space is generous with a number of cup and bottle holders, compartments, trays, pockets and consoles. An air-conditioned compartment above the glovebox can be used to cool or warm items with the capacity for two 600ml bottles. Convenient shopping-bag hooks are fitted to the front seat-backs.

All models feature three 12-volt accessory sockets, under the centre cluster, in the rear of the centre console for second-row seat passengers and in the rear luggage area. Crusade also has a 100w/AC220-volt accessory socket in the centre console. Fortuner's seven seats are arranged in a 2-3-2 configuration. The 60/40 split-fold second-row seat has a one-touch slide and tumble feature, while the 50/50 third-row seats are fold-to-the-side style that severely limits available storage space. Cargo capacity ranges from 200 litres to 1,080 litres when packed to the top of the seat backs. The folded seat configuration could be better.

The Fortuner Crusade is powered by a high-torque 2.8-litre four-cylinder common-rail direct-injection turbo-diesel engine with a choice of six-speed manual or automatic transmissions. Either transmission is good and works well with the engine. We have driven the Crusade over forest trails, sand dunes, heavy 4WD tracks, fire trails, highways and freeways and throughout, it has impressed with its ease of driving, ride and handling, tractability and quietness. Toyota have done an excellent job of designing a vehicle for Australian conditions. This comes as no surprise though.



TOYOTA FORTUNER CRUSADE

\$62,297 RDAP

by Rob Fraser

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Model | Fortuner Crusade |
| Model Price | \$62,297 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.8L DiD 4 Cyl |
| Drivetrain | 4WD 6 speed Auto |
| Power | 130kW @ 3,400rpm |
| Torque | 450Nm @ 1,600rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 228g/km |
| Economy ADR | 8.6 L/100km |
| Tow Capacity | Max 2,800kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 280kg |
| Servicing | Capped Price Service |
| Warranty | 3 Yr 100,000 km Full Roadside assist |



Maximum power is 130kW @ 3,400rpm and peak torque is 450Nm @ 1,600rpm for the automatic and 420Nm for the manual. Braked towing capacity is 3,000kg for the manual and 2,800kg for the auto. Tow ball rating is 10% of either weight. The key here is that while the power figure is probably a little low, the available torque at 1,600rpm is plenty. It provides an easy driving environment and towing is a breeze, especially with the trailer sway assist. It also means that Fortuner is economical at around 8.6L/100k for the auto version.

The Fortuner has strong off-road ability - as you would expect using the base Hilux 4WD transmission. This includes rear differential lock, approach angle of 30 degrees, departure angle of 25 degrees, ramp-over angle of 23.5 degrees, ground clearance of 225mm, wading depth of 700mm. Additionally there is A-TRC (active traction control) and locally developed underbody protection. All Fortuner models have an electronically controlled transfer case for 'on-the-fly' changes from 4x2 to 4x4 high, using Toyota's unique disconnecting differential.

Safety is a key feature with a five-star ANCAP safety rating. All models are equipped with stability and active traction control, seven airbags, reversing camera, trailer sway control, hill-start assist control and rake-and-reach adjustments for the steering column. It includes three top-tether anchors and two ISOFIX child-seat mounts. A comprehensive range of Toyota Genuine accessories is available including airbag-compatible bull bars and newly developed towbar and load distribution hitch.

A real limiting factor for the Fortuner is the waste of space the fold up rear seats create, just really poor design. However this is a great alternative to either a Prado or a Kluger for families. In addition to its prodigious off-road ability, the Fortuner delivers a compliant and quiet ride, a spacious interior, convenient features and premium quality expected in a modern SUV.



What's Good:

- Ride, handling, balance
- 4WD ability
- Rear diff lock

What's Not:

- Fold up 3rd row seats seriously?
- Tow rating
- Missing newer safety features

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 88/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 8 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |

TOYOTA LANDCRUISER PRADO GXL**\$73,220 RDAP**

The Toyota Prado in some ways has always been an underrated 4WD. Often dubbed a soccer mums taxi, the Prado has always had excellent off road ability. It's just that many owners never explored those qualities.

by Rob Fraser



The Toyota Prado in some ways has always been an underrated 4WD. Often dubbed a soccer mums taxi, the Prado has always had excellent off road ability. It's just that many owners never explored those qualities. Updated in both 2016 and again in 2017, the Prado has managed to keep at the forefront of the segment. The Toyota Prado GXL 7 seat automatic wagon we are testing here, in some ways is the most popular family run-around.

Externally the Prado GXL looks the part with Bi LED headlamps, LED fog lights, DRL's, roof rails, side steps and colour coded bumpers. It runs on 265/65 R17 tyres on 6 spoke alloy rims. Recent upgrades has seen the bonnet acquire some sculpturing for improved forward visibility. There are some muscular wheel arch bulges and the whole lines actually look pretty good.

Inside the Prado GXL there is adequate room for all passengers. Our GXL also came with the \$3,500 optional leather-accented pack which includes power driver and passenger seats, heated seats for the front and second row and a feature we particularly like for the great outdoors, ventilated seats in the front row. There is also three zone climate controlled air conditioning.



The premium steering wheel is comfortable and being height and reach adjustable, easy to manoeuvre to a good driving position. It has the full range of controls on it. One feature I really like is the simple to use cruise control stalk, and on the manual it's NOT adaptive, thanks Toyota. The auto version ACC thankfully, is easy to override.

The Prado GXL offers separate climate controls in the second row of seats and vents in the third row of seats. The interior of the Prado has had a redesigned dashboard, instrument binnacle and switchgear. The console incorporates a flash surface air conditioning control panel which helps it sit lower and makes for a sleeker appearance and improved visibility.

by Rob Fraser

The dash is clearly visible through the steering wheel, with two large and two small dials and has a simple MFD in-between. It tells you everything you need to know. The central console and stack are well laid out, easy to use and simple. It houses the 8 inch screen Sat Nav, Toyota Link and audio system. Also the screen is a little insensitive to touch on occasions. There is no Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto, which to be honest is frustrating. Hopefully Toyota will add this in the future.

Both front and rear passengers have plenty of head and shoulder room. There is enough front seat slide for front occupants. Rear passengers have a little restricted knee room but overall it is great for four and even five occupants. The almost flat footwell also provides more comfort for the middle passenger. The rear seats will fold flat on a split arrangement to give a flexible boot area. While not cavernous it is more than adequate. The third row of seats are suitable for pre teens or short people. The best thing Toyota has done is get rid of those ridiculous fold up rear seats.

One thing to note is that overall visibility from the Prado is surprisingly good. Over the bonnet view is improved, there are great internal and external mirrors and the rear camera is an essential safety feature on all cars. The other great thing about the Prado is the rear mounted full size spare. No underbody slung spare that gets damaged and useless when you need it most.

Even though this is a mid level model, it still has little features that are welcomed, such as illuminated vanity mirrors for both front occupants, rear AC vents, smart entry (which moves the steering wheel up out of the way while you get in) and smart start, 220-volt rear accessory socket, USB auxiliary input and iPod control, side mirror-mounted indicators, conversation mirror, power windows front and rear and UV-cut glass

The Prado GX is now offered with the same diesel engine that sits in the Hilux and Fortuner vehicles. It is a 2.8L, Four cylinder in-line, 16-valve, DOHC diesel that produces 130kW @ 3,400rpm of power and 450Nm @ 1,600rpm of torque (auto version). The manual has torque of 420Nm @ 1,400rpm. This runs through either a six speed manual or six speed automatic transmission. The Prado has constant four-wheel drive; two-speed transfer case with lockable centre Torsen LSD.

This combination of low torque and well suited transmission means that for a relatively large 4WD the Prado is frugal with diesel using just 8.0L/100k ADR. In real world use, the Prado is certainly economical, especially on the freeway. This will see you getting upwards of 900km out of a tank of fuel.



by Rob Fraser

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Model | LC Prado GXL |
| Model Price | \$73,220 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.8L 4 Cyl D4D |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 130kW @ 3,400rpm |
| Torque | 450Nm @ 1,600 rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 21 g/km |
| Economy actual | 8.0L/100 km ADR |
| Servicing | Capped Price |
| Tow Rating | Max 3,000 kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 300 kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



The manual GXL will tow 2,500kg and the auto version will tow 3,000kg. The recent engine power upgrades have enhanced the Prado's towing ability. It still isn't a powerhouse, but the available torque low down allows relaxed cruising both on and off road and the trailer sway control greatly assists the driver. The size of the Prado helps in real 4WD conditions, with an overall length of 4,995mm, width of 1,885mm, height of 1,845mm and wheelbase of 2,790mm. Approach angle is 30.4 degrees, rampover angle is 21.1 degrees and departure angle is 23.5 degrees. Wading depth is 700mm and ground clearance is 219mm standard.

Off road the Prado is a more than capable performer. We have driven them, including the GXL, on sand, fire trails, in the desert, on the farm, along tight 4WD tracks, just about everywhere. They simply don't let you down and the reliability is awesome. The GXL also has a rear diff lock to improve its credentials. The recent engine upgrades also help with towing, both on and off road. On road the Prado has good ride and handling for a 4WD, better than most.

Safety is still a strong feature with the GXL Prado with seven airbags, rear view camera, trailer sway control, emergency brake signal, whiplash injury lessening front seats, vehicle stability control, active traction control (A-TRC), ABS with electronic brake-force distribution (EBD) and brake assist (BA). The automatic version adds Toyota Safety Sense+ (automatic only) including pre-collision safety system with pedestrian detection, lane departure alert, automatic high beam and active cruise control (but easy to disable), hill-start assist control (HAC) and downhill assist control (DAC). There is no blind spot monitoring, but the external rear view mirrors are a decent size and easy to electronically adjust to get the best view, that should negate the need for BSM.

So there it is. The Toyota Prado GXL 7 seat 4WD wagon. It could be the 4WD families and enthusiasts are looking for. It is affordable, has genuine 4WD capability, can tow 3,000kg, is economical, has an abundance of aftermarket accessories for it and has Toyota's legendary reliability.



What's Good:

- Value for money
- Standard features
- Towing & 4WD ability

What's Not:

- No Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto
- No BSM or RCTA
- A little expensive

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 87/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 9 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 9 |

OZROAMER 2017 7 SEAT AWD SUV \$60,000 - \$80,000 AWARD

Sitting just above the popular price segment the 7 seat AWD SUV \$60,000 - \$80,000 segment is for those that want the luxuries and extra features, often safety, that comes with the range topping models.

This is where the explosion in the SUV sales started. Here the buyers have chosen the bells and whistles, the bling that costs, but makes life more luxurious and safer. They want the air conditioned seats, the electro chromatic rear view mirror, the four way lumbar adjustment. These little niceties that are just so comfortable.

Picking four nominees we ended up ironically or perhaps not with higher versions of the lower priced category. This made our life difficult determining the actual differences between the models. These are the four standout vehicles in the category for quality and features. Here are our four best for the final choice.

Again Ironically enough all four have been previous winners of the category over the last 7 years.

First up is the Hyundai Santa Fe Highlander 2.2 CRDi . This vehicle is long on its life cycle now with an upgraded version due 2018, but still manages to compete at the top level.

Next is the brilliant Kia Sorento GT Line 2.2 CRDi AWD that was completely upgraded in 2017 and leads the way for the segment. Kia made a great car even better. It was the category winner last year.

Mazda is again represented with the CX-9 Azami with its stylish looks, clever engine and technology features and sumptuous interior.

As always there is the Toyota Kluger Grande with the kitchen sink thrown in. It also had a revamp late in 2017 but again is long in its life cycle now.

Remember these vehicles are not 4WD's rather they have an AWD capability for added safety and some all road adventures. Their primary purpose is to transport families in comfort, safety and luxury!

As usual the segment was close but there is only one winner!





When I first drove it, I found that I checked the tachometer a few times to confirm it was actually a diesel. Hyundai also provided latex gloves to keep your hands clean when filling the tank. This is an awesome idea as many people dread the filling procedure.

by David Brown



In Australia there are 22 models in the medium to large SUV category under \$70,000 that are still trying to stay on the market although some at the bottom end of the sales chart are barely troubling the scorer. But you could divide the category into serious four-wheel drives and soft-roaders. Seven seat capacity is one of the critical features of the large soft-roaders more than any rugged off-road capability.

The Hyundai Santa Fe Highlander is a soft-roader but I don't like the expression. It speaks of compromise, when it is really well targeted at the comfortable, practical and easy-to-drive family vehicle. The term AWD SUV better suits the category. The current generation Santa Fe has been around for six years with a few make-overs along the way. There is a new generation model due early next year but the current one has kept up quite well.

The exterior is more car-like than say a Toyota Prado. Less of the square shoulders, tough look. It has a sloping bonnet; the side and the slightly sloping back window gives a bit of sporty station wagon to its appearance. The rear of the vehicle has a bit of Star Wars stormtrooper look to it.



When the tail gate goes up it gives good headroom for those walking around the back. We were driving the top of the line Highlander with an electric tailgate and an automatic opening feature which we struggled to get to work consistently. The theory is that if you stand at the back with the key in your pocket it will open.

The Highlander runs LED headlights and tail lights, indicators along with front and rear fog lamps, a high mount LED stop light and courtesy light in the door handles. There is also a panoramic sunroof.

by David Brown

Tyres on the Highlander are 5 spoke alloy design with 235/55 R19 tyres and there is a full-size spare on all models. The Santa Fe Elite measures 4,700mm long, 1,880mm wide, 1,690mm high and a wheel base of 2,700mm. The approach angle is 16.9 degrees, rampover of 17.1 degrees and departure angle of 21.5 degrees. These dimensions clearly put the vehicle in the medium category.

Getting into the leather driver's seat you are met with a stylish design, that gives clarity to the controls which, in most cases, are easy to use. Syncing your phone was simple. The fascia around the dials in front of the driver were angled to add a bit of style, while the dials were clear and the information between the two main dials was small. You had to look hard to make out the numbers but it was manageable.

The seats did not hug you like a racing car but were better than many others in support. The Highlander has electric seats with heating and ventilation which is a great feature for Australia. There were seat adjustment memory buttons and the driver's seat retracts when you open the door to make getting in and out easier. It had an easy to use electric parking brake. The interior, with prominent stitching on the seats and a few bits of faux carbon fibre, looked like it was designed rather than a few trendy elements randomly stuck together. This plush interior spoke of warning children about not having mud on their shoes.

The Santa Fe's second-row seating with map lights for the outer seats, locked into place when folded down and had a triple-split fold arrangement. The third-row of seats were typically for smaller people although they did get vents on either side. One weakness is that with the third row of seats raised, there is very little luggage room and the head rests were only millimetres away from the rear window glass. I never know what to do with the privacy screen when you don't want it but the Santa Fe provided storage for it under the boot floor behind the folding seats. A great idea that means you don't leave the screen in the garage at home.

Unlike some of the other big selling soft-roaders in this class, the Santa Fe has a diesel option, which is the dominant engine. The engine is a gem producing 147kW @ 3,800rpm of power and 440Nm @ 1,750-2,750rpm of torque. This drives through a 6 speed automatic transmission that is smooth and well suited to the engine. The diesel engine was very good. It was quiet, practically no turbo lag and performed more than adequately. It has various driving modes from eco to sport but above all it gave the feeling of confidence and being well matched to its six-speed automatic gearbox.

When I first drove it, I found that I checked the tachometer a few times to confirm it was actually a diesel. Hyundai also provided latex gloves to keep your hands clean when filling the tank. This is an awesome idea as many people dread the filling procedure with oily and smelly diesel pumps.



by David Brown

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | Santa Fe Highlander |
| Model Price | \$62,241 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.2L CRDI 4 Cyl |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp AT AWD |
| Power | 147kW @ 3,800rpm |
| Torque | 44 Nm @ 1,750rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 205g/km |
| Economy ADR | 7.9L/100 km |
| Servicing | Free service offer |
| Tow Rating | 2,000kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 100kg |
| Warranty | 5 Yrs / unlimited km 1 Yrs Roadside Assist |



The Santa Fe did not have the jarring feel on bumps that can come with vehicles more tuned to off-road capers. It was easy and comfortable to drive with good steering and no torque steer. Interestingly it did have some off-road technology including hill descent and centre diff lock control.

The four-wheel drive system, however, is "active on-demand" with 50/50 split up to 30kmh, which is not for the purists. Perhaps the best balance between car-like feel and a four-wheel drive system in this category is the Subaru Outback although that does come with a fuel consumption penalty.

Safety gets a good nod with rear view camera, lane departure warning system, autonomous emergency braking system, forward collision warning, blind spot detection, lane change assist and rear cross traffic alert are standard across the range. The adaptive cruise control worked reasonably well. The Santa Fe has a five-star ANCAP safety rating. Highlander specific features are front parking assist system with guidance, rear parking assist system with guidance, smart parking assist system (SPAS) with parallel parking, reverse parking (90°) & parallel exit mode.

Hyundai may have started out with offerings that were cheap and cheerful, but it has now positioned itself as having high-quality products. Yet with the Santa Fe, it is significantly cheaper than the Mazda CX-9 and the Toyota Kluger.

So in summary the Santa Fe is a well-equipped, good driving, large SUV suited for the family. Early next year you can expect the new model to be better most likely including the 8-speed automatic that you can now get on the Kia Sorento. The Hyundai Santa Fe Highlander still competes with the segment leaders, but next year with the revamp will see it maybe be class leading again.



What's Good:

- Diesel engine and transmission
- Standard features
- Pricing and value

What's Not:


- Reversing camera screen dull
- Touch screen little insensitive
- Rear and C panel visibility

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 85/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 8 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 5 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 6 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 10 |

KIA SORENTO GT LINE 2.2 CRDI AWD

\$64,092 RDAP



When Michelangelo painted the Sistine Chapel he stopped halfway through and realised his scale was wrong and improved the rest of the ceiling, There was nothing wrong with what he had already done, he just wasn't happy with it. Kia have done that with the Sorento!

by Rob Fraser



When Michelangelo painted the Sistine Chapel he stopped halfway through and realised his scale was wrong and improved the rest of the ceiling, There was nothing wrong with what he had already done, he just wasn't happy with it.

Now you might ask what the *!#\$xxx... has the Sistine Chapel got to do with a car review. Well nothing really it just seemed like an unusual intro, but one designed to make a point. I am not comparing the Kia Sorento to the beauty and mastery of the Sistine Chapel, however there are parallels. What parallels you may ask, I'm glad you asked!

Kia had gone to great lengths a few years ago, to design what was, by the measure of all the awards it won, a well-designed successful vehicle. There was nothing wrong with the model at all really. Yet they deemed it worthwhile to make more improvements. While all models benefited from the upgrade the GT Line we are testing here certainly has taken the segment to another level. Remember that the Kia won this category last year and they have made the vehicle even better.



They focused on four key areas: safety, driveability, comfort and convenience and lastly design and styling. To show how in tune with their market, a lot of what has been enhanced has come directly from feedback from customers and some is what they felt needed to be improved themselves.

Let's have a look at these Kia Sorento product enhancements. Key changes include: addition of Kia's in-house eight-speed automatic across the range, a higher and longer body for increased internal space, which is noticeable, especially in the rear half of the vehicle, revised and improved ride and handling characteristics to even better suit Australian conditions, some exterior

by Rob Fraser

changes to LED lights, revised and tuned suspension to improve handling and noise reduction, a new 8 inch multi-media cluster incorporating Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto, improved Harmon Kardon sound system on GT Line and improved safety features including: AEB across the range, lane keeping assist, driver attention alert, a 360-degree camera on GT-Line and advanced cruise control for all grades.

Let's have a look at a couple of what I think the key improvements are. Firstly the 8 speed automatic transmission. Kia has again built this in house and it's VERY smooth. The six speed it replaces was good, this is better! So straight from the Kia marketing material. They actually have explained it pretty well. "The new transmission offers four different drive modes: Eco, Comfort, Sport and Smart. Drivers can select their preferred mode with the Sorento's electronic Drive Mode Select system." Each mode enables the driver to customise the powertrain's responses to driver inputs, enhancing fuel economy or acceleration characteristics depending on driver preference. The Drive Mode Select also adapts the weight of the rack-mounted power steering system, for more relaxed or more immediate, engaging steering responses.

The second key improvement, for my money, is the extra length that is focused mainly in the rear section. It is noticeable in rear seat leg room and boot space. Again making what was already class leading even better. The front seats are extremely comfortable for long periods and being multi electronically adjustable will suit any driver. The driver's seat features a four way electronically adjustable lumbar support. AWESOME!

With the front seat back, I sat in the middle row seats for a couple of hours while we went looking at Christmas lights and I have to say these are the most comfortable middle row seats in the segment. Class leading. The extra knee, leg and foot room along with plenty of head and shoulder room means that even the biggest of bears will be comfortable. While we are discussing seats the third row seats are great for two teens, even taller ones, and they feel at home with great visibility and cup holders, air vents etc. They also fold flat, as do the middle row seats to expose a cavernous storage area that I can probably sleep in.

The third key area is the widespread adoption of additional safety features across the range. The entry Si model is now comprehensively equipped with features like Kia's latest DRiVE WISE advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS). DRiVE WISE embodies Kia's philosophy to create intelligently safe vehicles with active safety technologies designed to avoid or mitigate the effects of collisions. The new driver attention alert (DAA) system combats distracted or drowsy driving.



by Rob Fraser

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Model | Sorento GT Line |
| Model Price | \$64,092 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.2 L 'R' 4 Cyl |
| Drivetrain | AWD 8 speed Auto |
| Power | 147kW @ 3,800rpm |
| Torque | 441Nm @ 1,750rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 192g/km |
| Economy ADR | 7.3L/100km |
| Tow Capacity | 2,000kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 100kg |
| Servicing | 7 Years Capped |
| Warranty | 7 yr/Unlimited km full roadside assist |



Other safety features include: autonomous emergency braking (AEB), forward collision warning system (FCWS), lane keeping assist (LKA), driver attention alert (DAA), advanced smart cruise control, electronic parking brake (EPB) with auto-hold, electronic stability control (ESC), traction control system (TCS), vehicle stability management (VSM), hill-start assist control (HAC), front and reverse parking sensors, rear view camera with dynamic guidelines and LED daytime running lights (DRL), dynamic bending light (DBL)

The fourth area is design. Sorento's GT Line exterior design changes include revised front and rear bumpers, new LED head-lamps and tail-lamps, and a new dark metallic finish to the 'tiger-nose' grille. The result is a more sophisticated and purposeful front-end appearance. Additional exterior features are four-lamp LED fog lights, red brake callipers, a more prominent sill step, and subtle GT Line badging designed to distinguish it from other Sorento models. GT-Line models are fitted with a distinctive new chrome twin exhaust tip. The new Sorento GT Line is available with Kia's latest 8.0-inch touchscreen infotainment system, with navigation. The new system offers Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto enabling full smartphone integration. The GT Line now features a high-end Harman/Kardon® sound system. The powerful 640-watt, 10-speaker surround-sound audio system features QuantumLogic™ Surround Sound technology. The result is clear, refined and detailed playback of a driver's favourite tunes.

So let's quickly sum up. Kia has upgraded what was already an excellent product to make it better. They have added more safety features across the range, added an 8 speed automatic transmission to improve smoothness and fuel economy, have streamlined the exterior for a more subtle style and added LEDs etc, have lengthened the body for more internal room and a bunch of other features. All this for marginal price increases. The Kia Sorento is bloody good! It's no wonder it won the award again in 2017. All Kia's come with their outstanding full factory 7-year warranty, 7-year capped price servicing and 7-year roadside assist.



What's Good:

- Engine Transmission combination
- Apple Car Play/Android Auto
- Value for money

What's Not:

- AWD not 4WD
- No Head up display
- Low tow ball rating

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 87/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 10 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 10 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 5 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 7 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 10 |

MAZDA CX-9 AZAMI I-ACTIV

\$70,625 RDAP



Mazda's new CX9 is a revelation in design implementation. The CX-9 Azami is a lovely place to be and if you have to transport a tribe of kids around you may as well be happy doing it. The CX-9 does just that.

by Anthony Hood



Mazda has had a lot of success with its CX-9 and the model we are testing here is the Azami which is the top of the range. It is the premier seller in the range. The first thing to note is that there is no diesel option, a fact that would ordinarily lower our expectations but the Mazda I-ACTIV engine range is impressive enough to warrant being a contender for the COTY.

Externally the CX-9 could be described as a good looking car. The designers have really excelled. The front grill design gives the vehicle a bold imposing stature with flowing lines to the rear. It displays a curved style but retains plenty of interior space. The high roofline allows large window sizing and the rear allows great visibility. External features include 20 inch alloy wheels, LED headlamps, bold grill and front fog lights, sunroof and remote operated power tailgate.

Step inside and the story keeps getting better. This is the top of the range and it shows. Cream leather seats and soft touches everywhere let you know you are in luxury with a sense of space, comfort and stylish ambience. The leather driver's seat is comfortable with 6 way electric adjustment for the driver, including great lumbar support. They are also heated (as are the middle outer seats) for those cold winter mornings. In front of the driver is a small thick rimmed leather steering wheel that frames a three dial dash.



The centre dial is the speedo and the outside contain ancillary information. The instruments are clear and easy to read. One good feature is that the indicator stalks are visible over the steering wheel spokes, always helpful.

My rather lanky 195cm frame can get comfortable with enough seat slide and height and reach adjustable steering wheel.

by Anthony Hood

The heated middle row passenger seats again are fairly comfortable with adequate head, shoulder knee and leg room, better suited for two but comfortable for three. The third row seats are amongst the best in the market segment with enough leg room for tall passengers but the head room is tight. There are air-conditioning controls for the middle row of seats and USB ports but strangely there isn't any vents for the third row of seats.

The centre stack houses the 8 inch touch screen display for the satellite navigation in a backdrop of soft touch dashboard. Again the ease of use and clarity are two immediate impressions. The whole centre console is well laid out and easy to use but the centre storage bin is small. Other than that, storage is generally adequate, with cup holders everywhere and door bottle holders.

With the rear seats folded the boot area is cavernous and you can appreciate how spacious the CX-9 actually is. Like most of the vehicles in this class there is little room behind the third row seats when they are in use. The rear seats fold in split configuration and fold nearly flat. You could sleep in there. Little features that make everyday use more comfortable include rear view mirror with auto dimming function, auto on/off headlights, rain sensing wipers, slide forward rear seats, simple lever controls for folding seats and wide opening doors etc.

The central story of the all new CX-9 is the an all-new 2.5 litre direct-injection turbo charged petrol engine, with both i-stop and i-ELOOP technology, that produces 170kW of power at 5,000rpm and 420Nm of torque at a low 2,000rpm,. This power and torque drives all four wheels using the i-ACTIV AWD all-wheel drive system through a 6 speed automatic transmission. Economy is heavy compared to a diesel. The ADR economy is stated at 8.8 l/100k however we experienced somewhere nearer 13.5 l/100km around town, albeit with some enthusiastic driving and that dropped to closer to 11.5 l/100 on the freeway. The good thing is that the engine will happily run on standard unleaded (91 RON) or with E10.

This engine transmission combination is well suited and the torque coming in at the relatively low 2,000rpm means that the driving style is smooth, relaxed and almost diesel like, but with acceleration when needed. The SKYACTIV-G 2.5T technology removes almost any sign of turbo lag providing linear acceleration. One thing I don't like is the tiptronic controls are around the wrong way. Up should be down and vice versa. There is plenty of mid rage grunt and extra passengers have little effect on the performance. As good as it is though I still am wanting a diesel option. The stop-start can be a little slow to kick off and can provide some "interesting" moments at roundabouts. The automatic transmission is mated brilliantly to the engine and if you switch to 'sport' mode the driving becomes an engaging experience. It's better than most SUV's in the class. Mazda continues its tradition of providing direct steering feel and rewarding driving experience.



by Anthony Hood

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| Model | Mazda CX-9 Azami |
| Model Price | \$70,625 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.5L 4 Cyl I-ACTIV |
| Drivetrain | AWD 6 speed Auto |
| Power | 170 Kw @ 6,000 rpm |
| Torque | 420 Nm @ 2000 rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 206 g/km |
| Economy ADR | 8.8 L/100km |
| Tow Capacity | 2000 kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 100 kg |
| Servicing | Fixed price |
| Warranty | 3 yr/Unlimited km full roadside assist |



The suspension can be a little harsh though and can be upset by mid corner bumps etc. The front end seems to understeer when pushed more than some of its competitors and running on the blacktop the ride can feel a little flat. As this is an all road vehicle the ride and handling on dirt roads and corrugations is smooth. Mazda's i-ACTIV AWD system is integral to the CX-9's impressive handling, while enhancing safety and provides all road capabilities, including forest trails and snow conditions, for the adventurous family. It is also quiet on all surfaces. Overall it aims towards a sporty ride rather than a soft ride. It will please almost all the drivers that sit behind the wheel. One thing that was disappointing though, for an AWD SUV that aims at the adventurous family lifestyle is the poor towing capability. Yes it will tow 2,000kg but is let down by the low 100kg tow ball rating.

Safety is a key feature with the CX-9 achieving a 5 Star ANCAP safety rating. The key here is that all the safety features are standard and went a long way to the eventual winning of the award. Features of the standard i-ACTIVSENSE safety technologies include: lane departure warning, lane keep assist, smart braking sensors, forward obstruction warning (FOW), reverse camera with rear parking sensors, pedestrian detection and smart city brake support (Forward/Reverse), LED headlamps, front fog-lamps, advanced blind spot monitoring (ABSM), rear cross traffic alert (RCTA) , six airbags (dual front, front side and full-length curtain). Mazda's i-ACTIVSENSE advanced safety technologies are designed to help drivers recognise potential hazards, avoid collisions and minimise the severity of accidents when they are unavoidable.

Overall the all new Mazda CX-9 provides prospective buyers a choice in the segment that is arguably the best looking vehicle, full of standard features, has a five star ANCAP safety rating and provides an engaging driving experience and full of advanced technology. Mazda's new CX9 is a revelation in design implementation. The CX-9 Azami is a lovely place to be and if you have to transport a tribe of kids around you may as well be happy doing it. The CX-9 does just that.



What's Good:

- Engine Transmission combination
- Stylish Looks
- Internal space

What's Not:

- Harsh front end
- Bit heavy on fuel
- No third row vents

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 85/100

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|------------------|----|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 10 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 10 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 6 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 6 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |

TOYOTA KLUGER GRANDE V6 AWD**\$76,058 RDAP**

So to sum up the Toyota Kluger Grande. It could be described as the perfect family wagon. It does everything with a minimum of fuss, isn't fazed by anything in its daily life and transports the family in comfort and safety. It is loaded with features for the family and isn't too expensive.

by Rob Fraser



Often in life you can relate everyday events to movies. The Toyota Kluger reminds me of the movie with Mel Gibson "What Women Want' Now before the feminists get all uppity, it is meant to be a compliment. Every time I drive the Toyota Kluger I can't help but think that somehow they got inside a women's mind and worked out what they want in a family SUV.

Toyota Kluger was first released to Australia in 2003 and the latest version of the Kluger was first introduced in 2014 with a significant upgrade in early 2017. We had on test the Grande model which is the range topping version. We have previously reviewed the Kluger a number of times so let's just go with a quick overview to start. It is a 7 seat 2WD and AWD SUV featuring a 3.5L V6 engine (upgraded 2017) with practical versatility and amazing internal space. The Kluger looks good for a family wagon, drives with almost car like handling and ride, has an abundance of standard comfort and safety features and sells in droves for Toyota.

The 2017 updates for the Kluger included: revised engine with direct injection technology, now producing 218kW of power and 350Nm of torque, a new 8 speed automatic transmission, a claimed 10 % improvement in fuel economy meaning up to 85 more kilometres from a tank of fuel, refreshed styling especially the front and rear lights, improved safety features across the range.

Jumping inside the Kluger Grande is like sitting in your lounge room. It is comfortable, roomy and familiar. The driver's seat is really comfortable, with plenty of adjustments and with the height and reach adjustable steering wheel every driver should be able to find their perfect driving position.



by Rob Fraser

The dash is easy to read and simple to navigate. The centre stack houses the infotainment system that again is easy to read and use. Unlike a lot of the Toyota systems this looks integrated in to the dash. It also does look a little plastic though. Bluetooth connection is a breeze. For a fairly large SUV there is good visibility for the driver. More so now with the new panoramic view monitor for Grande. This system uses four cameras (front, rear and in the side mirrors) to display a 360-degree bird's-eye view of the vehicle surroundings when driving at low speeds, especially useful for negotiating tight parking spots.

Even for taller drivers such as myself there is ample head and shoulder room. Front seats are now air conditioned. The second row of seats are again comfortable, even for three. Again ample head shoulder room. With the flat floor there is room for the middle passenger feet as well. With the driver's seat fully back there is enough room for me to sit behind myself in comfort. The third row of seats is amongst the best in class and both rear rows now benefit from a DVD player to keep the troops entertained. In line with the perfect SUV theory there are cup holders and storage bins everywhere. The centre console is probably the biggest and best designed in any vehicle. It serves as a great arm rest and is cavernous as well as practical.

The list of standard features on the Grande is impressive and includes electric power steering, six-speaker display audio with Toyota Link connected mobility, front foglamps, privacy glass and power-adjustable exterior mirrors, three-zone climate-control air-conditioning, keyless entry and ignition, roof rails, premium steering wheel and shift knob, and leather-accented seats with a 12-way power-adjustable driver's seat. No Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto though.

Exclusive Grande features include active cruise control, blind spot monitor, auto high beam, tilt-and-slide moon roof, A/C front seats with two-position memory for the driver's seat, nine-inch rear-seat entertainment system with Blu-ray player, heated exterior mirrors with memory function and puddle lamps, electro-chromatic interior mirror, second-row retractable sunshades and a backing-guide monitor for the reversing camera.

In what is becoming a new sales trend the Kluger is becoming more popular as a 2WD as well as its traditional AWD roots. Buyers are looking for the benefits of the SUV body style but don't necessarily want or need the benefits of AWD.

The recent upgrade has seen the safety of the Grande improved. Standard features include seven airbags, reversing camera, reverse-parking sensors, anti-skid brakes with brake assist and electronic brake-force distribution, stability and traction control, and hill-start assist control and a pre-collision safety system with autonomous emergency braking. Grande's lane departure alert is now supplemented with steering control and sway warning.



by Rob Fraser

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| Model | Kluger Grande |
| Model Price | \$76,058 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.5 L DOHC V6 |
| Drivetrain | AWD 8 speed Auto |
| Power | 218kW @ 6,600rpm |
| Torque | 350Nm @ 4,700rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 221g/km |
| Economy ADR | 9.5L/100 km |
| Tow Capacity | Max 2,000kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 200kg |
| Servicing | Optional package |
| Warranty | 3 yr/ 100,000 km with 1 Yr roadside assist |



The Kluger Grande now has rear cross-traffic alert, a system to aid reversing out of a parking space. Given the proximity of where most of the Kluger's are to be used this is a major addition. School car parks, shopping centres, local playgrounds. Places where there is a lot of kids running around and cars constantly moving around. This is a huge bonus.

The 3.5L V6 petrol engine produces 218kW @ 6,600rpm of power and 350Nm @ 4,700rpm of torque. The Kluger, in an effort to improve driveability and economy, now has an 8 speed Automatic transmission. It isn't a powerhouse or exciting but neither does it lag the traffic or feel sluggish. It is adequate for the job. As mentioned the Kluger now is available in both 2WD and AWD.

Even though the Kluger 2WD sales are increasing it at heart is an AWD SUV and that is its roots I guess you could say. It has a ground clearance of 200 mm but doesn't have good approach, ramp over or departure angles. I is really an AWD SUV for forest trails, down to the snow for a weekend, some sand driving and towing the Jet Ski. The AWD system in the Kluger is the dynamic torque control AWD. It really is a safety feature as much as anything.

The AWD system helps maximise traction, cornering stability and driver control while also saving fuel. The compact, lightweight system uses information on vehicle speed, yaw rate and steering and throttle angles to control torque distribution automatically between the front and rear axles. It saves fuel by driving only the front wheels when the vehicle is cruising, switching to AWD when needed ensuring an ideal torque split - up to a maximum of 50 per cent

So to sum up the Toyota Kluger Grande. It could be described as the perfect family wagon. It does everything with a minimum of fuss, isn't fazed by anything in its daily life and transports the family in comfort and safety. It is loaded with features for the family and isn't too expensive. It is however a little boring and still is a bit heavier on fuel than alternative diesel engine SUV's.



What's Good:

- Internal space
- Practicality
- Fit for purpose

What's Not:

- No diesel option
- No Apple CarPlay®/Android® Auto
- Manual steering wheel adjustment

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 80/100

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|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 7 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 10 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 7 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 5 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |

OZROAMER 2017 AWD SUV \$80,000 - \$100,000 AWARD



The world of AWD SUV vehicles in the price range of \$80,000 - \$100,000 starts to become very brand specific and rarefied. Brand loyalty often overrides selective choice.

This is starting to become pricey for most buyers but aspirational for many. This is when people start to show that they are becoming successful and can afford to indulge what has often been long held dreams.

Amongst the ever increasing plethora of participating brands, we have selected four outstanding nominees.

The first of these is the recently launched Audi Q5 2.0 TFSI Sport Quattro. The Q5 has been extremely successful for Audi over the years, being the biggest selling vehicle in their Q range.

The BMW X4 xDrive 35d was updated last year and in fact was the winner of this category then. It sits on the edge of what is an AWD SUV and a sports activity vehicle. It's selection last year cused controversy because of its sports activity coupe style rather than SUV.

Lexus gives us the third nomination, with their elegant RX 350 F Sport, which just squeezes in the category. With subtle style and design, the RX range is popular amongst the buyers that are looking for no fuss motoring as they head to the snow regularly.

Lastly is the Jaguar F Pace 25D R Sport, which is Jaguars first foray into the world of AWD SUV's, but hardly JLR's first. The combination of Jaguar sublime ride and handling and a powerful engine is hard to beat.

I have to admit that driving these vehicles wasn't really a chore. It would be difficult to convince anyone that this was work, but the testing procededure was exhaustive.

Four alternative designs and philosophies, four excellent nominees, one winner!



AUDI Q5 2.0L TFSI SPORT QUATTRO**\$82,210 RDAP**

The Audi Q5 2.0L TFSI Sport Quattro is brilliant. It provides the latest in Quattro technology combined with a powerful and economical petrol engine that drives through a smooth 7 speed dual clutch transmission. In terms of a practical, luxury AWD SUV that can transport the family around town and still head to the snow for the holiday it is definitely worth a test drive.

by Rob Fraser



Audi has now launched the second generation of its very successful Q5 and SQ5 models in mid-2017. The Audi Q range in general is extremely important to Audi with one in three sales a Q model. The Q5 range is the most successful of all the Q range. Externally the second-generation Audi Q5 boasts a muscular new design that is more taut and sculpted than ever, with a broader stance and sharply defined creases that accentuate the new car's proportions. The new model is also as much as 90kg lighter in direct comparison with its predecessor, affording significant improvements in handling, ride comfort and of course, fuel efficiency. I would have to say I am a fan of the proportions of the Q5. It just seems to flow and everything looks in place.

Sitting inside the all new Audi Q5 range, the front occupants are treated to an exceptionally comfortable cabin. There is more than enough room, even for someone my size, and the ergonomics are first class, as is the ambience. The front sport leather seats are generously comfortable, with electronic adjustments allowing adaptive driving positions. The leather sports steering wheel is also height and reach adjustable. The Audi 12.3 inch virtual cockpit is awesome as is the centre stack display. The cockpit can be customised to suit individual tastes, however once you find what you like you tend to just leave it. The clarity is first class.



I am not a fan of the transmission lever and the coffee cup holders are a little small and buried deep, but otherwise the cockpit is spot on. I also never use the scratch pad in front of the transmission lever. These gadgets seem clever, but like the mouse in Lexus, they rarely translate to daily practicality. Sitting at the top of the centre stack is the MMI Navigation plus with larger 8.3-inch high-resolution screen, MMI touch, DVD player and 5 included map updates, Audi premium sound system with 10 speakers, subwoofer and 180w output.

by Rob Fraser

In addition, every Q5 comes equipped with Audi Connect, which enables a high-speed 4G LTE connection via a regular data SIM card, as well as Google Earth and Google Search functionality. Audi smartphone interface allows connectivity via Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto and is standard on all Q5 models.

The rear seat passengers, two are more comfortable than three, are also treated to a relaxed ride and with the front seat positioned for a normal height driver, there is ample head, shoulder, knee and foot room. There are A/C vents and USB ports there for passenger convenience. The all-new Audi Q5 offers an additional 10 litres of luggage space in comparison with its predecessor, meaning between 550-610 litres of space is available, depending on how the optional sliding rear seat bench is positioned. With the 40/20/40 rear seats folded, a spacious 1550 litres of luggage space is available. The all-new Audi Q5 comes standard with an electric tailgate, activated by a sensor-controlled 'kick motion'. A myriad of Audi genuine accessories are also available to allow owners to integrate their active lifestyle with their Q5, like a luggage-securing kit with load rails in the boot floor, bike racks, a kayak holder, aerodynamic roof box and many others.

Of special importance to OzRoamer readers, is the fact that the Q5 range also boasts a game changing new Quattro technology that swaps from 2WD to AWD as needed and is predictive in nature. In other words it anticipates when you will need AWD and is ready for you. The changes from 2WD to AWD are totally imperceptible and as it turns out the ratio of 2WD to AWD is about 70/30 for most drivers under most conditions. This use of AWD for only about 30% of the driving time saves money for the driver. To complement this new Quattro system, a new drive select program has been developed. In 'auto' mode, the drive select provides the best possible traction and balanced handling. In dynamic mode, power is actively sent to the rear axle sooner and to a larger degree, which improves handling in slippery conditions. In the new 'offroad' setting, the all-wheel drive system is always engaged. To be honest I simply marvel at the lengths that Audi have gone to, to improve what was already an awesome Quattro system. The Audi Q5 is perfect for dirt roads, ski trips on snowy or icy roads and towing the family toy. I don't know what it is like on the sand yet but will also test this later.

The Q5 AWD SUV is ideally suited to those families or couples that harbour some adventurous spirit. In normal fit out the Q5 boasts 200mm of ground clearance but poor approach and departure angles. With the adaptive air suspension the vehicle sits at a normal ground clearance of 175mm but can be lowered 50mm for ease of loading and raised another 50mm to have a ground clearance of 225mm. For those adventurous Q5 owners that like to tow jet skis, camper trailers or smaller boats the tow rating for the Q5 is 2000kg, with a tow ball rating of 200kg. The adaptive suspension has a self-levelling feature when loaded and towing.



AUDI Q5 2.0L TFSI SPORT QUATTRO

\$82,210 RDAP

by Rob Fraser

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| Model | Q5 2.0L TFSi Sport |
| Model Price | \$82,210 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.0L 4 Cyl TFSi |
| Drivetrain | 7 Sp DCT Quattro AWD |
| Power | 185kW @ 5,000rpm |
| Torque | 370Nm @ 1,600rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 143g/km |
| Economy ADR | 7.3L/100km |
| Tow Capacity | Max 2,000kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 200kg |
| Servicing | 3 Yr Service Plan |
| Warranty | 3 yr/ Unlimited km 3 Yr roadside assist |



The petrol engine for the Q5 Sport Quattro is the 2.0L TFSI petrol engine. This engine produces 185kW of power @ 5,000 – 6,000rpm and 370Nm of torque @ 1,600 – 4,500rpm. This engine will sip fuel at 7.3L/100Km. It will accelerate from 0-100kmh in 6.3 seconds and has a top speed of 237kmh. The feeling of low down torque provides a linear acceleration feeling. The petrol engine is a gem, very easy to drive around the city and plenty of power on the open road and freeway. The engine benefits from an advanced start-stop system and meets EU 6 standards. I could almost choose this over a diesel engine, almost.

The Q5 comes with a 7-speed dual-clutch transmission that provides maximum use of available power and smooth driving. I am never a big fan of the dual clutch transmissions around town in stop start traffic as they often seem to be clunky and not smooth. However the transmission in the Q5 seems to overcome that jerkiness.

The all-new Audi Q5 has been awarded a 5-star ANCAP safety rating, thanks to an impressive array of standard safety features on all models. These include: Audi pre-sense city with autonomous emergency braking (AEB) and pedestrian detection (up to 85 km/h), exit warning system, cross traffic assist, Audi side assist blind spot warning system, Audi pre-sense basic (belt tensioning, window closing and other preventative measures if an emergency is detected), Audi pre-sense rear (warns following traffic if they are at risk of running into the rear of the car) and parking system plus with rear-view camera. In addition, the following safety features are standard equipment in the high-end sport models: adaptive cruise control with stop & go, turn assist, Audi pre-sense front (collision warning up to 250km/h), predictive efficiency assistant and high-beam assist.

The Audi Q5 2.0L TFSI Sport is brilliant. It provides the latest in Quattro technology combined with a powerful and economical petrol engine that drives through a smooth 7 speed dual clutch transmission. In terms of a family, practical luxury AWD SUV that can transport the family around town and still head to the snow for the holiday it is definitely worth a test drive.



What's Good:

- Quattro system
- Engine / transmission
- Dynamic ride and handling

What's Not:

- Not a fan of the scratch pad
- Some option packs expensive
- Small coffee cup holders

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 88/100

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|------------------|----|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 10 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 10 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 7 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 7 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |

BMW X4 XDRIVE 35d AWD SUV

\$99,890 RDAP



Launched in January 2016 the BMW X4 xDrive35d crosses over prestige and sport AWD SUV. BMW likes to be different and labels the X4 the first ever Sports Activity Coupé (SAC). Got to love the marketing people.

by Rob Fraser



The booming mid-size premium AWD SUV segment is full of a diverse array of offerings from almost all manufacturers and honing that selection down to just a few that suit your needs is a difficult task. Launched in January 2016 the BMW X4 xDrive35d crosses over prestige and sport AWD SUV. BMW likes to be different and labels the X4 the first ever Sports Activity Coupé (SAC). Got to love the marketing people.

With signature BMW X features, unmistakable coupé character, a distinctive design and excellent dynamic ability, the BMW X4 xDrive35d introduces the powerful and economical diesel engine that generates 230kW of power and 630Nm of torque and is set to build on the success of the X6 by offering a unique vehicle in this segment.

The new BMW X4 xDrive35d is based on the technical blueprint of the BMW X3, (itself a previous winner of OzRoamer AWD SUV award) but displays a coupé style, sporting character and a generous level of standard specifications - very much its own.



Externally the new X4 styling is quite beautiful. The distinctive front face guarantees it is immediately recognisable as a member of the BMW X family. In profile, the low coupé-style roofline extending into the rear is a distinctive feature which also clearly sets the BMW X4 apart.

Internally the X4 is definitely aimed at the front occupants. A typical BMW cockpit faces the driver, where every control element is angled towards the driver for optimal ergonomics. Both front seats are exceptionally comfortable for long trips. Despite its coupé-style roofline the front seats are only marginally lower than the X3 so the occupants still get that elevated driving position and feel.

by Rob Fraser

The rear seat bench has two elegant coupé-style individual seats and although it will fit 3 at a squeeze it is better suited to two occupants. There is adequate headroom, shoulder, knee and leg room. Bear in mind that the X4 really is better suited to a couple rather than a family.

The BMW X4xDrive35d comes equipped with 40:20:40 split fold rear seats which allows for a flexible luggage compartment capacity of between 500 and 1,400 litres. A storage compartment package with a range of handy storage and luggage carrying features is also standard.

The heart of the X4xDrive35d is a 3.0 litre, six cylinder engine, with BMW TwinPower Turbo technology, adding significant output over the xDrive30d it replaces within the brand's model line-up, while retaining its miserly levels of fuel economy.

Generating 230 kW and 630 Nm of torque, increases of 40 kW and 70 Nm respectively over the outgoing xDrive30d, the BMW X4 xDrive35d charges from 0-100k m/h in 5.2 seconds, while fuel consumption measures at 6.0 L/100K. That is outstanding performance and economy. BMW X4xDrive35d is fitted with an eight-speed sports automatic transmission - and also include gear shift paddles on the steering wheel. With these figures it was a contender for the Sports SUV award as well.

Let's pause for a moment and deliberate on the engine figures. That is 230Kw of power and an enormous 630Nm of torque. The combination of those figures, transmitted through the sports 8 speed automatic transmission and driving through the awesome xDrive means that the X4 has levels of ride handling, performance and economy that is rivalled by few other vehicles. In short it is awesome to drive. The peak torque coming in at a lazy 1500 rpm means amazing tractability with an abundance of acceleration on tap at any stage.

The sports characteristics of the X4xDrive35d are far in excess of what 99.99% of drivers will ever utilise. It gives the driver a level of feel and control that probably most buyers wouldn't have experienced before.

Standard features that highlight the dynamic credentials of the BMW X4 include Performance Control and variable sports steering, both of which combine to enable a higher level of dynamic cornering and handling with maximum grip, excellent directional stability and a very high degree of steering precision as well as comfort when parking.

Sharing the same extensive list of standard equipment as the xDrive35i, the xDrive35d is equipped with an eight-speed sport automatic transmission with Steptronic, Dynamic Damper Control, 20-inch M light alloy wheels and a full suite of driver assistance features.

These include cruise control with braking function, front and rear Park Distance Control, Rear View Camera and Surround View, with 360 degree visibility, providing optimum assistance for parking and manoeuvring in confined spaces.



BMW X4 XDRIVE 35d AWD SUV

\$99,890 RDAP

by Rob Fraser

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|-----------------|---|
| Model | X4 xDrive35d |
| Model Price | \$99,890 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.0L Straight 6 |
| Drivetrain | 8 Sp AT AWD |
| Power | 230kW @ 4,400rpm |
| Torque | 630Nm @ 1,500rpm |
| Safety | TBA |
| CO2 | 157g/km |
| Economy ADR | 6.5 L/100 km |
| Servicing | BSI Programme |
| Tow Rating | 2,000kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 200kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / Unlimited km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



Receiving the M Sport package as standard, the xDrive35d is equipped with M Aerodynamics package, M leather steering wheel with gearshift paddles and upholstery in Nevada leather.

Comfort access system, including keyless vehicle access and contactless tailgate operation is also included with base specification, in addition to ConnectedDrive Freedom, which consists of ConnectedDrive Services, Remote Services, Real Time Traffic Information and Concierge Services. The entire cache of ConnectedDrive features is completed by Intelligent Emergency Call, Teleservices and Real Time Traffic Information, while DAB+ Digital Radio and Harman/ Kardon Surround Sound system, with 16 loud speakers, headline the entertainment offerings.

All new BMW X4 models' maintenance requirements are controlled by BMW's Condition Based Service (CBS) program which identifies the condition of a vehicle based on actual use, realising the full potential of a vehicle and minimising costs.

In addition, BMW service and selected maintenance costs can now be covered by a single, one-off advance payment with BMW Service Inclusive (BSI). BSI offers two packages; BMW Service Inclusive Basic provides scheduled servicing cover, while BMW Service Inclusive Plus combines scheduled servicing and selected maintenance items. Based on individual lifestyle needs, a year range and kilometre option is selected, starting from 3 years/60,000kms. The BSI plan provides a long-term solution enabling cover to be extended and transferred to future vehicles owners before expiry.

Remember that while the X4 xDrive 35d is technically an AWD SUV, it definitely isn't designed for virtually any sort of off road driving. That is probably why the nomination will promote a lot of argument amongst readers I am guessing. It is ideally suited to trips to the snow with icy roads, trips to the holiday house or farm and it does allow the driver to tow up to 2000kg braked though and that is in keeping with its sporting activity nature. The engine won't even feel 2000kg on the back by the way.



What's Good:

- Power & economy
- Ride & Handling
- Style

What's Not:

- Long and expensive options list
- Visibility 'C' pillar
- Not owning one

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 85/100

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|------------------|----|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 10 | Practicality | 8 |
| Comfort | 10 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 7 |
| Performance | 10 | Off Road Ability | 5 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 8 |

JAGUAR F PACE 25D R-SPORT AUTO

\$97,473 RDAP



In the tight bends, Jaguar F-Pace feels completely at home. It is as joyous as any Jaguar. Considering the considerable weight, it shifts in corners like a much smaller car. The engine is a beast of a thing despite its diminutive size. The torque beckons you on in a drive that can only be described as voluptuous.

by Alan Zurvas



Jaguar F-Pace is not just a pretty face grafted to an SUV. Don't be fooled by the shape, this is a real Jaguar, and a real AWD SUV. There is a well-developed design language across the JLR (Jaguar Land Rover, just in case you're wondering) portfolio: sexy and luxurious quality, with a unifying face. The F-Pace has been ages in coming and was launched internationally in a spectacular full sized loop-the-loop demonstration.

Our R Sport 2.0 turbo diesel has a decent 177kW (at 4,000 rpm), but it is the 500Nm at a low 1,500rpm that makes it feel more lusty. It drive all wheels through a deliciously silky 8 speed auto. It does the 0-100 dash in 7.2 seconds while allegedly drinking only 5.8L/100k. Not too shabby for an aluminium car weighing 1,810kg.

The familiar Jaguar front end continues an evolution from the gorgeous but old fashioned, to the luxurious and cutting edge. The adaptive LED headlights with inbuilt "J-blade" daytime running lights, brings a sharp look that began with the XF all those years ago.



Huge 22" wheels should make the ride rubbish, but this is a jag, and it doesn't. The rear end sports a smart set of XF-like LED tail lights which wrap well around the sides. Also accessible from the outside is F-Pace's party trick.

Along with your keys, you get a rubber wrist band. You can wear it in the water, so no longer do you have to hide your car keys when you go for a surf.

Here's how the Activity Key works: take your key from your pocket and stow it somewhere inconspicuous like the glove box. Attach the wrist band, get out of the car and make sure all the doors are shut. Go around to the rear and place the front of the wrist band on the letter "J" in Jaguar.

by Alan Zurvas

The car will lock while disarming the key you left inside. Even if it is stolen, the key is useless. When you come back to your car, hold your wrist over the "J" and press the unlock tab as if you were going to open the tailgate. *Voilà*, the car is unlocked and the key re-engaged. It is a stroke of genius. Think of the many times you'd be afraid of losing your keys and now don't have to. There is a gesture powered tailgate too, but only works when not locked by the Activity Key.

Internally it looks and feel likes an XF or XE. Some of the hard plastics look a bit out of place though. The console, dash board, seats and materials all feel familiar to their sedan cousins. Jaguar F-Pace has the new audio system. It is mostly easy to use, but it will frequently come over all moody and sulk between commands. Some actions may need to be done several times before the system decides to co-operate, and at speed, this can be annoying.

Options come in packs to "save money". There are touches of wood grain or metal depending on how you choose your trim. The seats have more buttons than mission-control, (seat back and bottom, lumbar up/down/in/out, Squab and bolsters), with the mirrors, windows and door lock button on the doors close by. It means one hand can access all controls without having to reach.

There also are controls and settings in the centre driver's LCD as well as in the "in-touch-pro" infotainment system. I'd like to see all controls in the centre console. It seems silly to have them split so the driver sometimes has to play a guessing game to find lesser-used options. If all settings were found in the centre stack, the steering wheel buttons and driver's LCD could just be auxiliary controls. Many functions have been subsumed into the infotainment system. Settings such as Interior coloured mood lighting, and seat heating can be found in the menu system.

You can swipe side to side like a mobile phone, and use a "pinch" action on the map screen. Jaguar has done a lot to make this as user friendly as possible, but there are a few hiccups to be ironed out in future software updates. The infotainment system is responsible for making the centre console look so clutter-free. There are some rear seat controls for the multi zone air conditioning, and the zones can be synced in the menu system. The sound from the Meridian system is brilliantly clear and smooth.

It wouldn't be cricket to move on without mentioning the gear selector which is a rotary dial. When the starter button is pressed, the dial rises majestically out of the console. When the engine is switched off, the system selects "park", lowers the dial, and activates the parking brake. I particularly like the "selectable" soothing blue lighting which bathes the cabin in the evenings. It even makes a special guest appearance in the scuff plate on the floor inside the rear hatch too. It's the sort of touch whose absence you wouldn't notice, but looks elegant and tasteful being present.



JAGUAR F PACE 25D R-SPORT AUTO

\$97,473 RDAP

by Alan Zurvas

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | F Pace 25d R-Sport |
| Model Price | \$97.473 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.0L 4 Cyl Diesel |
| Drivetrain | 8 Sp AT AWD |
| Power | 177kW @ 4,000rpm |
| Torque | 500Nm @ 1,500rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 153g/km |
| Economy ADR | 5.8L/100 km |
| Servicing | \$ Service Plan |
| Tow Rating | 2,400kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 240kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



Jaguar F-Pace performs well at low speed. It is easy to park despite the bulk. You can take full advantage of parking spots with the cameras that allow tight low-speed moves. The drive is lively enough in standard mode, but changing the drive mode to Dynamic brings the throttle to life. As impressive as it is around town, F-Pace is brilliant on the highway. Its ghostly quiet until you hit a god-awful section of chip-tarmac. Although quieter than most cars on the road, the rough surface still causes a bit of a ruckus.

But, this F-Pace is AWD, not 4WD, so eventually you'll run out of puff off-road. Think of the AWD system more as a safety feature that allows stress free trips to your snow cabin during the season or to the weekend farm retreat for a tree change weekend. In the tight bends, F-Pace feels completely at home. It is as joyous as any Jaguar.

Occasionally you notice there is a bit more bulk than you'd normally have in a sports saloon, but for an SUV it is brilliant. Considering the hefty weight, it shifts in corners like a much smaller car. The engine is a beast of a thing despite its diminutive size. The torque beckons you on in a drive that can only be described as voluptuous.

You can tow up to 2,400kg of braked load if you wish, but that would ruin the lines of such a beautiful looking vehicle. This master stroke by JLR has done wonders for sales, and rightly so.

What I like about F-Pace is that unlike other car makers, Jaguar makes every model a hot(ish) model. There is no 100kw cheap entry turbo 3 cylinder to appease the tightwads. You get what you pay for, and F-Pace is a cracker. The options are pricey, and some colours just doesn't do it for me, but you can't have everything.



What's Good:

- Powerful Engine
- Jaguar ride and handling
- Subtle style

What's Not:

- No Apple CarPlay®/Android® Auto
- Limited AWD ability
- Pricey option packs

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 89/100

| | | | |
|------------------|----|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 10 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 10 | Fit for Purpose | 10 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 8 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 6 |
| Ride & Handling | 10 | Value for Money | 9 |

LEXUS RX350 F SPORT

\$99,932 RDAP



The Lexus RX 350 F Sport is pretty useless for towing or anything further off road than the local dirt road, however is ideal for trips to the snow. As a family AWD SUV wagon it fits perfectly. It definitely has the most internal room of the nominees and as a daily family driver it is probably the best option. It is a no fuss, luxurious family wagon with a level of sophistication that surprises.

by Rob Fraser



Lexus RX has achieved a strong customer base in Australia, accounting for between 30 and 40 per cent of total sales. The model that we selected which just scrapes in the category, (depending on assumptions) is the RX 350 F Sport. Lexus launched the all-new fourth generation of the RX midsize luxury SUV in 2015, bringing with it a host of new features including a bold new exterior styling package with Lexus-first styling cues and a redesigned luxury cabin. It is longer, lower and wider than its predecessor with improved handling, ride and steering.

The main focus was to combine the dynamic new appearance, longer wheelbase, with focused on-road performance and new safety technologies, including the new Lexus Safety System+ package on all variants. The longer wheelbase also means there is more space for rear occupants, increasing its overall comfort levels. The exterior styling package on all-new RX is in line with the other Lexus SUVs, bold, angular and striking. I think the RX line is the best looking of them all. It appears to have the best overall balance. Up

front is the new aggressive grille that sweeps back and seems to envelope the front of the vehicle. There is a new headlamp and daytime running light design. From the side it has a high waistline, low roof, sleek coupe style windows and somehow looks like it swoops down at the back but doesn't. This has everything to do with the trim lines behind the 'C' pillar. The RX is also one of the few cars that looks as striking from the back as the front.

The new larger car is 50mm longer in the wheelbase, 120mm longer overall, 10mm wider but 20mm lower. This increases the sleek look that is appealing. There are a host of paint and interior colour options to enhance the new look. Further complimenting the look is the F Sport 20 inch alloys.



by Rob Fraser

F Sport interior and exterior styling package includes: front and rear bumper, seats, grille, pedals, steering wheel and gear shift knob.

Step inside the RX 350 F Sport and the ambience is immediately luxury and functionality. The interior is absolute first class quality with soft touch material everywhere you would put a hand or elbow. The feeling is of contemporary luxury. The F Sport is treated to sumptuous red leather seats. They are 10 way electronically adjustable for the driver and electronic for the passenger. For taller drivers, there is adequate slide for leg room and the height and reach electronically adjustable F Sport steering wheel dovetails into position.

In front of the driver is the 12.3 inch dash with a central main dial with digital speed and revs, a smaller dial to the right with fuel and temperature etc. and to the left is a MFD that has multiple customisation ability. The steering wheel has a heap of controls on it and Lexus utilises the simple yet effective cruise control stalk below the indicator. The pedals are brushed aluminium and the accelerator rises from the ground as it should. The overall impression from the driver's seat is greater visibility all round as well.

On the centre console is the mouse. Yes Lexus still continues to persevere with the god awful mouse controls. The RX is amongst the better ones, being behind the transmission lever and out of the way of the cup holders and drive mode selector. Despite what the Lexus marketing blurb promotes, it is neither natural nor intuitive. In front of the transmission lever are the seat A/C controls etc. Also there is a wireless charger within the dashboard centre box.

Apart from that the overall layout is intuitive and user friendly. To the right of the steering wheel lies a number of easy to reach and use buttons for the automatic headlights etc. The centre stack houses the A/C controls and the optical drive with the analogue clock taking pride of place at the pinnacle, between A/C vents.

All RX models have Lexus Drive Mode Select, with the controller on the centre console. The switch controls the various drive modes and allows the driver to customise the Adaptive Variable Suspension on F Sport models. There are supplementary switches for VSC OFF, AWD Lock.

Storage locations include a centre box, console box, glove box, overhead console for small items, driver's side small-item storage, passenger-side console pocket, cup holders with vertical-sliding height adjustment, door pockets and rear cup holders.



by Rob Fraser



Given that the wheelbase has increased (ready for the seven seat version coming in 2018) the rear seat occupants are treated to a spacious area with 30mm more room. Very comfortable seats and probably best in class knee, leg, head and shoulder room. The seats are deeply padded and sculptured for two occupants, but will take three at a pinch. There are A/C vents back there as well. The boot area has increased by 20mm in length. F Sport models have a 40/20/40 split manual reclining and folding rear seat, with a recliner damper for more gentle movement when reclining the seat back. This gives a huge storage area accessed from the power tailgate.

The features list for the RX 350 F Sport is extensive. In addition to what has already been mentioned there is: electrochromatic interior mirror, rain-sensing windscreen wipers, automatic heated exterior mirrors, tyre pressure monitoring, dynamic headlight levelling, smart key card, headlight cleaner, and sunshade on rear passenger doors, 12.3-inch high definition multimedia display and a stunning audiophile quality 15-speaker Mark Levinson premium audio system

RX 350 features an upgraded 3.5-litre direct injection V6 that develops 221kW of power at 6300rpm and 370Nm of torque at 4700rpm, with combined cycle fuel economy of 9.6 litres/100km. This drives all four wheels via an eight-speed transmission which is linked to the Lexus Drive Mode Select function, with its ECO, NORMAL, SPORT, SPORT S and SPORT S+ on F Sport.

Lexus RX 350 uses a bespoke all-wheel drive system, the new-generation Dynamic Torque Control system, designed to maximise traction, cornering stability and driver control while saving fuel. Drivers can view the torque distribution in real time on the multi-information display.

RX 350 F Sport also features Adaptive Variable Suspension (AVS). AVS controls damping force of the shock absorbers on all four wheels in response to driving conditions and the road surface. AVS also interacts with RX Line's Vehicle Stability Control (VSC) and Pre-Collision Safety System (PCS)/Lexus Safety System+ (LSS+), optimising damper rates to prepare the vehicle during potentially hazardous driving situations.



LEXUS RX350 F SPORT

\$99,932 RDAP

by Rob Fraser

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | RX 350 F Sport |
| Model Price | \$99,932 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.5L V6 Petrol |
| Drivetrain | 8 Sp AT AWD |
| Power | 221kW @ 6,300rpm |
| Torque | 407Nm @ 4,000rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 223g/km |
| Economy ADR | 9.6L/100 km |
| Servicing | Service plan |
| Tow Rating | 1,500kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 150kg |
| Warranty | 4 Yrs / 100,000 km 4 Yrs Roadside Assist |



It helps realise both enhanced ride comfort and a flat, sporting ride depending on the driver's selection for drive mode. The RX 350 VSC can use the new AWD system to control the front-rear torque split if operating conditions require. For example, sudden acceleration of any vehicle during cornering can cause a driven wheel to start spinning, which in turn could cause the front or rear wheels to skid, resulting in a loss of control. The new-generation Lexus RX Line has improved handling, ride and steering response with the sport tuned electronic steering.

The new Lexus RX Line has the Lexus Safety System+ (LSS+) package and a suite of driver-assist technologies. A number of the LSS+ and driver-assist systems share sensors, including millimetre-wave radar for the Pre-Collision Safety System (PCS) and All-Speed Active Cruise Control (ACC). LSS+ also includes Lane Keeping Assist (LKA), which combines Lane Departure Warning (LDW), Lane Departure Warning+ (with steering control) and Sway Warning Control. The full LSS+ package is PCS, ACC, LKA and Auto High Beam.

Driver-assist technology in new-generation RX Line includes Blind Spot Monitor with Rear Cross-Traffic Alert, Panoramic View Back Monitor on F Sport and Sports Luxury grades, rear-guide monitor, and clearance and parking sonar. The 10 SRS airbags include dual-stage twin-chamber driver and front-passenger airbags, driver and front-passenger knee airbags, and rear-seat side airbags.

The Lexus RX 350 F Sport is pretty useless for towing or anything further off road than the local dirt road, however is ideal for trips to the snow. As a family AWD SUV wagon it fits perfectly. It definitely has the most internal room of the nominees and as a daily family driver it is probably the best option. It is a no fuss, luxurious family wagon with a level of sophistication that surprises. I really enjoyed driving it and the RX 200T as well.



What's Good:

- Stylish design
- Build quality
- Sumptuous luxury

What's Not:

- No diesel option
- Poor towing and AWD ability
- Lexus mouse

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 82/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 5 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 5 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |

OZROAMER 2017 4WD \$80,000 - \$100,000 AWARD

Although the sales numbers in this larger and expensive 4WD segment have been decreasing, replaced by smaller SUVs, there is still a significant number of enthusiastic buyers still out there.

The market segment though is somewhat limited in depth. For this years contenders we have chosen the ubiquitous Landcruiser GXL, the popular and technologically advanced Prado Kakadu, the new entrant the Ford Everest Titanium and the previous winner the Jeep Grand Cherokee Overland. Add to this the recently released Landrover Discovery SD4 HSE and you have a wide selection.

These represent varying philosophies, in design, functionality and operation. We have the traditional 4WD style like the Landcruiser GXL and the more car like but still robust 4WD in the Jeep Overland.



FORD EVEREST TITANIUM 4WD

\$81,532 RDAP



Ford had cunningly set up a display by stacking shipping containers. With several together at angles and 45° ramps at each end, drivers took us up the ramp, along the top of the containers and down the other side. They stopped half way down, then reversed up again just to showcase the 4WD capability of the Everest.

by Alan Zurvas



In recent years, LCVs (light commercial vehicles) like Ford's Ranger, have been turned into SUVs. Everest is one such result. I saw Ford demonstrate their Everest at the Sydney Motor Show. Ford had cunningly set up a display by stacking shipping containers.

With several together at angles and 45° ramps at each end, drivers took us up the ramp, along the top of the containers and down the other side. They stopped half way down, then reversed up again before completing the downward leg. While few of us will want to drive along shipping containers 007-style, some of us might fancy a steep slope or two.

The Titanium has a decent leather interior, and while I wouldn't call it luxurious, it certainly feels comfortable and sturdy. The design is familiar to anyone who has been in a ranger. The exterior has a handsome chrome grille and broad bulging wheel arches with wheels that are off-road ready.



I don't know why car makers go to all the trouble to make wondrous mountain-conquering master pieces, only to saddle them with tyres that would be taxed by little more than an Eastern Suburbs gravel driveway.

The interior is the same as a Ranger with one or two little tweaks. The Sync III makes life a bit easier with voice control that actually works, even in Satnav mode. The Sync III infotainment system makes all functions available from the home screen, which is split into 4 functions: climate, audio, phone and navigation, and has Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto.

by Alan Zurvas

Even more brilliantly, each is directly selectable from any of the other mode screens leaving an icon in each corner. From the home screen you can press any of 6 radio station buttons, and you can see some of your phone functions without having to faff about going between functions. That's one of the few systems with such flexibility. The climate and audio functions are repeated in buttons below the LCD screen.

There is a shedload of tech and here is a short sample: automated parking, blind spot and cross traffic detection, radar cruise control, active noise cancelling for the cabin, automatic high beam, electric 3rd row seats for freeloaders, electric tailgate, and Ford's excellent lane keeping assistant.

If you drift out of your lane you feel a shimmy in the steering wheel. If you're too thickheaded to do anything about it, the computer applies subtle torque to the steering to guide you back in if you let it. This only happens at speed, and if there is no indication used. It's terribly clever stuff and makes your life much easier.

Blind spot detection helps in a beast this big too. It will flash a thoughtful reminder light which will save more than a few motor cyclists.

The Active noise cancelling samples cabin noise and plays the opposite wave back through the audio system. I've seen this before and it can be a bit hit and miss. This one works well. It's a shame you can't turn it off just to see the difference because that would really make a good story. The active noise cancelling makes the cabin spookily quiet, though not as quiet as the superb Sahara.

The real surprise is the 5 cylinder 143kW/470Nm 3.2 turbo diesel which feels effortless at all speeds. It doesn't hit in the back of the head with the punch of a lusty V8, rather it pushes you urgently forward with its mountains of torque. Like most big diesels, it is excellent at cruise while getting impressive fuel economy.

We took the Everest up the M1 to Newcastle, just for a lark. I thought it might feel awkward being so big, but instead it felt free and eager. It was so comfortable that we both said we could have easily kept going. A few hundred kilometres each way felt like a doddle.

The Watts-Link suspension made it supremely smooth. To help the driver further, the electric steering detects uneven or crowned roads or cross winds, and will then apply a little corrective torque to compensate. The stability control will detect rollover and intervenes so you don't make a feckless tit of yourself.



by Alan Zurvas

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| Model | Everest Titanium |
| Model Price | \$81,532 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.2L 5 Cyl TD |
| Drivetrain | 4WD 6 speed Auto |
| Power | 143kW @ 3,000rpm |
| Torque | 470Nm @ 1,750rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 224g/km |
| Economy ADR | 8.5L/100km |
| Tow Capacity | 3,000kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | TBA kg |
| Servicing | 15,000 Loan Car |
| Warranty | 3 yr/100,000 km full roadside assist |



It all works off-road too. There, hill start assist and descent control, plus a selection of pre-programmed off-road settings make driving feel like “you’ve got an expert onboard”. The torque will switch between driving wheels in “auto”, and will even put all torque just to the one wheel with grip if needed. You can choose to lock the diff with another button forcing full torque to both rear wheels even if one is off the ground. I hasten to add we did no off-roading in the Everest but have done it before in a Ranger.

It’s delicious. Everest drives more like an SUV rather than a car, but all serious off-roaders do. Most of the SUVs on the road now, even the luxury ones, are nothing more than pumped up station wagons. They may have all-wheel-drive (AWD), but this is very far from pucker the mudding capability people think they’re getting. They don’t have high and low range or locking diffs and are often built on car platforms.

They are simply not rugged enough to survive long in the wilds of the outback. Decades ago manufacturers realised most people don’t want to go bush bashing, and only a smaller percentage of owners do. Even fewer actually will take their pride and joy onto sand or into the rocks. Even proper four-wheel-drive (4WD) buyers probably won’t want to take a 300 grand Range where the Duco will be history before it gets into second gear. A second hand Lexus, Sahara or Range Rover make attractive propositions, but for anyone wanting a new option, the Everest Titanium comes fully loaded.

If there is one fault, it might be the 6 speed auto where I’d hope for an 8 speed. Although the auto is smooth, the engine would be even more economical especially at cruising speed with those few extra cogs. I liked it a lot as did my co-driver who is an ex-army truck driver. Would I buy one? To my surprise, yes.



What’s Good:

- Sync 111 technology
- Good to drive
- 4WD capability

What’s Not:

- Expensive
- Slightly cramped interior
- No reach adjustable steering

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 81/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 8 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 8 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 8 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 8 |

JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE OVERLAND V6

\$86,735 RDAP

All up the Jeep Grand Cherokee Overland V6 Diesel is a superb 4WD that is stylish, reasonable value for money and awesome off road as well as comfortable on city streets.



by Anthony Hood



It's funny how things work out. The Jeep Grand Cherokee Overland has been a previous multiple winner of different categories for OzRoamer COTY awards, yet even though it is a great 4WD the brand has been plagued with build quality and reliability issues. FCA tell us that is all in the past, so this year the Overland gets another nomination. This year we believed that another vehicle surely will topple the Grand Cherokee Overland for the category winner. Now with a 5 star ANCAP safety rating, the Jeep Grand Cherokee Overland remains feature packed with the smooth V6 diesel, 8 speed auto transmission and retains the legendary off road capability, all packaged in a stylish car like body. While externally it doesn't fit the mould of a rugged 4WD, it retains legendary Jeep styling with a squat seven slot front grill along with some Overland specific body-colour design cues including the lower fascia trim on the front and rear of the vehicle.

The first thing you notice when you sit inside is the contrasting stitched-leather instrument panel and seats. The leather seats are exceptionally comfortable with 8 way electrically adjustable front seats that also have 4 way adjustable lumbar support. The three spoke, thick rimmed, heated leather wrapped steering wheel has a top wooden rim and is electronically height and reach adjustable. Your driving position is also locked into memory.



Being 6'5" or 195cm tall I found that while comfortable in the drivers seat I would have appreciated a bit more slide adjustment, as the foot brake gets in the way. All seats are heated, just the thing for cold winter mornings. The front seats are ventilated for those hot summer days. The dash has two large dials and a new 7-inch user-configurable multi-view display with colour TFT liquid crystal technology. The easy-to-use instrument cluster displays the basic information a driver needs.

by Anthony Hood

The cluster can be configured 100 different ways. Navigation, speed, audio and fuel economy info, as well as useful information provided by on-board Jeep systems, such as Selec-Terrain modes, can all be displayed in the 7-inch screen. The centre stack houses a new Uconnect Infotainment System and SatNav system with a 8.4" touchscreen. The Uconnect 8.4 system is designed to facilitate a fully integrated infotainment system including GPS, voice recognition functionality and additional entertainment features all built into a single hardware platform.

Rear passengers are well catered for with adequate head, shoulder and knee room unless there is a tall driver, such as myself. There is plenty of boot space and with the 60/40 rear seats folded flat there is an enormous area available.

Above your head is the CommandView dual-pane panoramic sunroof, which is comprised of two glass panels. The full-power front panel opens rearward, while the rear panel, which is fixed, allows light and open viewing for second-row passengers. The system comes complete with a full length power sun shade.

The heart of the Jeep Grand Cherokee Overland is the combination diesel engine and Quadra-Drive II 4wd system. The new 3.0-litre V6 turbo diesel engine produces 184kW at 4,000rpm with 570Nm of torque at 2,000rpm. This power is delivered through a 8 speed ZF automatic. This combination is amongst the best in its class. The Quadra-Drive II four-wheel drive system features a rear electronic limited-slip differential (ELSD). Also the Quadra-Drive II delivers prodigious tractive capability and off-road performance. The core of the system is the central transfer case and an electronically controlled clutch pack for active torque distribution. On dry pavement and in normal tractive conditions, the central transfer case splits 48 per cent of the available torque to the front axle and 52 per cent to the rear axle. In case of slippery surfaces, the system automatically redirects engine torque between the front and rear axles based upon real-time driving conditions.

The system also uses electronic controls, that multiply traction on the four wheels and help avoid losses of grip in case of sudden acceleration. The system includes 4WD High and 4WD Low ranges, with 4WD Low offering a 2.72 gear reduction ratio for extreme off-road conditions. Via the rear electronic limited-slip differential (ELSD), Quadra-Drive II instantly detects rear tyre slip and smoothly distributes torque across the axle. In some cases, the vehicle will anticipate low traction and adjust in order to proactively limit or eliminate slip. The all-new Selec-Terrain traction control system lets customers choose the setting for the optimum experience on all types of terrain. This feature electronically coordinates up to 12 different powertrain, braking and suspension systems, including throttle control, transmission shift, transfer case, ASTC and ESC. Easily up there with the best systems available anywhere.



JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE OVERLAND V6

\$86,735 RDAP

by Anthony Hood

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | GC Overland |
| Model Price | \$86,735 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.0L CRD V6 |
| Drivetrain | 4WD 8 speed Auto |
| Power | 184kW @ 4,000rpm |
| Torque | 57 Nm @ 2,00 rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 198g/km |
| Economy ADR | 7.5L/100km |
| Tow Capacity | Max 3,500kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 350kg |
| Servicing | TBC |
| Warranty | 3 Yr 100,000 km Full Roadside assist |



The Grand Cherokee Overland comes standard with the Quadra-Lift Air Suspension system. This is awesome both on and off road and is an essential aid for towing. The Quadra-Lift Air Suspension operates automatically to institute certain ride height conditions, but can also be adjusted manually by the driver using the console controls. The Quadra-Lift system provides five height settings for optimum ride performance. Quadra-Lift air suspension adds up to 106 mm of lift supported by four-corner air springs. With the front air dam removed and Quadra-Lift air suspension fitted, the Overlander features a 35.8-degree approach angle, a 29.6-degree departure angle and a 23.5-degree rampover angle. No wonder it's great off road. The new Grand Cherokee uses an array of sophisticated systems, including Quadra-Lift air suspension, Selec-Terrain traction control and new Selec-Speed Control to achieve on and off road dynamics that have to be driven to be appreciated. Standard safety features include ESC, Electronic Roll Mitigation (ERM), ABS with off road calibration, ASTC, Brake Traction Control System (BTCS), Trailer-sway Control (TSC) and front-seat passenger seat-belt pretensioners.

The Grand Cherokee Overland offers upgraded Forward Collision Warning with Crash Mitigation, Adaptive Cruise Control, ParkView rear back up camera with dynamic grid, ParkSense park assist system and new Selec-Speed Control with Hill Ascent Control and Hill Descent Control, assisting the driver when climbing and descending steep grades. Other standard safety features include seven airbags, advanced multi-stage driver and front passenger, front seat side airbags, side curtain airbags for front and rear occupants, driver knee airbag and active head restraints that deploy in the event of a rear collision.

Towing with the powerful, torquey V6 Diesel is a breeze with 3500Kg capacity and 350Kg tow ball rating. The standard Quadra-Lift suspension only makes towing heavy items easier. In short it's great for towing just about anything and copes easily. All up the Jeep Grand Cherokee Overland V6 Diesel is a superb 4WD that is stylish, reasonable value for money and awesome off road as well as comfortable on city streets.



What's Good:

- Drivers comfort
- Sophisticated Selec-Terrain
- Standard features

What's Not:

- Feels more car like than 4WD
- Starting to show its age
- Drivers seat travel

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 86/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 8 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 8 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 10 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 7 |

LANDROVER DISCOVERY SD4 HSE

\$99,138 RDAP



In 2017 Land Rover launched its 5th generation Discovery, a major change that embraced a monocoque body and large amounts of aluminium. The result is perhaps a little less utilitarian . But Land Rover has not forsaken its off-roading heritage even though the new vehicle comes with many modern comfort features

by David Brown



When Land Rover launched their first Discovery model in 1989 (although it did not make it to Australia till 1991), they wanted to have a vehicle that appealed to the leisure market and filled the gap in their fleet between the rough and ready Defender and the upmarket Range Rover. With Japanese car manufacturers greatly expanding their product lines of "leisure vehicles", the Discovery came none-too-soon for Land Rover.

In 2017 Land Rover launched its 5th generation Discovery, a major change that embraced a monocoque body and large amounts of aluminium. The result is perhaps a little less utilitarian but it has reduced its weight by 480 kg. But Land Rover has not forsaken its off-roading heritage even though the new vehicle comes with many modern comfort features. It has maintained its enviable record of providing an outstanding balance between motoring on the bitumen and seeking adventure in the great outdoors on poorer quality roads. We are testing here the SD4 HSE Version with the 2.0L diesel engine and an 8-speed automatic gearbox and permanent four-wheel drive.



The obvious exterior design feature of the first four generations of Discovery, was the stepped roof line that provided more headroom for the back half of the passenger compartment. With a raised roof, large side windows and additional windows in the roof line, the vehicle had a suggestion of the Pope Mobile style. But it was clearly aimed at its target market of adult size passengers and providing ample space for luggage etc.

The 5th generation Discovery's raised roof line is not as pronounced but they continue to buck the trend towards roofs that angle in the other direction, to give a sloping fastback style or even a sports wagon look that is now a feature of many SUV vehicles.

by David Brown

The functional benefit of this is clear. Land Rover claims that if you get the \$3,400 seven-seat option, there is enough room in the third row of seats to cater for the height requirements of 95% of the population. The third row of seats in most other vehicles are reserved for those with more childlike dimensions.

The result is a vehicle that can look a bit dorky, but the vehicle has other design features to embrace the more fashionable desires. There are wheel arch graphics that echo the Discovery Sport model and there are optional features that Land Rover says will give the Discovery a stealth-like appearance, including a contrast roof colour, athletic front and rear bumper designs and alloy wheels up to 22 inches in diameter. There are 18 different exterior colours, however only basic white comes as a standard feature.

When you first get into the vehicle, the dash layout has a very horizontal feel which gives the impression of the executive desk and with a 10-inch touchscreen you feel that you have a strong link to technology. Unfortunately, there is no Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto. Land Rover, however, has their own system which allows interaction between the car system and your smartphone. For example, if you enter an address on the screen it can transfer the information to your smart phone and you can still get door-to-door navigation once you have left the vehicle.

There are a range of a cubby storage facilities in the centre armrest and even behind the fold down climate control panel. A flush fitting, push oriented, 'curry hook' on which you can secure carrier bags, is a nice touch in the front passenger footwell. Not surprisingly there is good legroom inside the vehicle and the second row of seats can slide forwards and backwards by 160 mm. The cargo area has 1,137 litres of space with the second row of seats raised and 2,406 litres with the seats lowered.

Anyone who's had to struggle with trying to fold down 2nd or 3rd rows of seats, especially if you are in a skirmish with children and/or carrying luggage, will greatly appreciate the optional intelligent seat fold system. It allows you to use your smartphone to fold or raise the second and third row of seats when you're away from the vehicle. If, for example, you are waiting in a queue to collect your groceries, you can arrange the seats to suit your needs for when you arrive at the vehicle. These adjustments can also be made through the main touchscreen or from buttons in the back of the vehicle. All three rows are available with optional heated seats and you can get heated and cooled seats in the first two rows of the vehicle. There is even a massage option for the driver and front passenger.

You can specify an active key wristband option so you can leave you keys locked in the car while you go for a swim or other sporting activities. When you return to the vehicle you merely wave the wristband at the appropriate spot and the car will unlock for you. Not unique to Land Rover but a good feature nonetheless.



LANDROVER DISCOVERY SD4 HSE

\$99,138 RDAP

by David Brown

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Model | Discovery SD4 HSE |
| Model Price | \$99,138 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.0 L 4 Cyl TDi |
| Drivetrain | 8 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 177 kW @ 4000 rpm |
| Torque | 500 Nm @ 1500 rpm |
| Safety | 5 STAR ANCAP |
| CO2 | 168 g/km |
| Economy ADR | 6.4 L/100 km |
| Servicing | Service Plan |
| Tow Rating | 3500 kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 350 kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



The HSE model comes standard with an electronic air suspension. You can select a range of ride heights but leave it to the car if you want. The vehicle will lower itself when parked to aid entry and exit. The multimode terrain response system has a range of settings affecting throttle sensitivity and gear change characteristics to suit the driving conditions and even optimise settings automatically if driver is unsure of the best choice.

There is a scarcity of safety and driver assistance systems as standard items. Standard features include: a rear-view camera, rear parking aid, electronic automatic emergency braking, front parking aids and automatic high beam assist. But when it comes to the more modern electronic devices that provide better information and intervene if necessary in dangerous situations, most of these features are options on the Discovery. These include blind spot monitor, closing vehicle sensing where the system scans for fast approach in vehicles and alerts the driver they risk a collision if they were to move into the paths in the adjacent lane. Blind spot assist where the vehicle will intervene if you are making a dangerous lane change movement by gently applying a corrective steering action, active cruise control, driver condition monitor which takes inputs of steering, brake and accelerator to detect if you're becoming tired and 360 degree surround view cameras.

For the adventurer, the vehicle has very good off-road geometry with a ground clearance up to 283mm and a maximum wading depth of 900mm and it is very competent in towing. The maximum tow rating is 3,500kg and with a tow ball rating of 350kg. Like the seat control system there is an optional electronic deployable tow bar which, at the flick of the switch can retract or protrude from the back of the vehicle without you having to go near a spanner. It can also measure the downward load on the tow bar and display the number on the touchscreen. The fifth generation Land Rover Discovery breaks new ground for this vehicle, but helps take it into the new area without losing the inherent value of its practicalities and on and off-road capabilities.



What's Good:

- Ride and handling
- Internal space
- Practicality

What's Not:

- Expensive options
- Awkward style
- Non standard safety options

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 86/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 7 | Towing Ability | 10 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 8 |



LANDCRUISER 200 GXL V8 D4D

\$96,200 RDAP



The LandCruiser 200 series still is the yardstick by which all other large off road 4WD's are measured.



by Rob Fraser



Sometimes in this job you get surprised, not often mind you. Last week I had the LandCruiser 200 series GXL on test. Now I have driven plenty of LandCruisers before but this is the latest version and I have to say I was pleasantly surprised.

Let me state upfront that I am an ardent fan of the big off road beast having owned a few of them and one of our writers owns an old 80 series that is a weapon off road. So having declared this I was still surprised.

The surprise was in how well behaved the near on 3 tonne vehicle was on the road. I took the GXL out to the farm and on the hilly twisty Bells Line of Road it took to the road like a vehicle weighing much less. There was no need to tame the beast!

Don't mistake my surprise to take it that the GXL was a sport car, but it gripped the road, showed little body roll and the powerful V8 diesel sat in the torque band for a fun driving experience. It was surprisingly nimble for a beast.



Out on the highway west of Lithgow it was remarkably quiet with very little wind or road noise, cruised between 100 and 120kmh without effort and I arrived relaxed and was comfortable throughout. This is the GXL not the Sahara. I could actually see myself owning one of these again.

Most noticeably on the exterior changes are the new grille, projector halogen headlamps, bumper, bonnet and fenders at the front, LED low-beam headlamps with auto-levelling (static), LED clearance lamps, roof rails and a restyled rear that includes LED tail lamps.

by Rob Fraser

Thankfully the designers have got rid of the protruding glass that was a nightmare off road. The bonnet scoops are interesting and subtly reminds you of the hulking V8 beneath. The style seems to make the LandCruiser smaller than it actually is.

The interior on the GXL now has soft touch padding around the centre console in areas that come in direct contact with occupants' legs. I'm not really a fan of the fabric seats as they tend to stick to clothing but are comfortable over the long run. There is however an electronic lumbar support that increases comfort. I actually prefer the vinyl style if I can't have leather.

The driver has a commanding view both internally and externally. The lower front bonnet really helps with tyre placement, rear visibility is great with the reversing camera and the external rear view mirrors are amongst the best in the business. The indicator, washer and cruise control stalks are visible behind the steering wheel as well.

The dash is clear and easy to read with two large white on black dials and transmission selector in between. One thing I did miss is the distance to empty calculator. The height and reach adjustable steering is thick and feels good in the hands and allows you to feel the road transmitted through, with more direct response, not vague like previous models.

The centre stack again is easy to understand but on the model I tested the touch screen was a pain as it required a hard push sometimes 2 or 3 pushes and not soft touch. Centre console is tidy and the 4WD controls are a breeze to use. The GXL does have Sat Nav which is a bonus. There is no Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto



There is plenty of head room, leg room for the taller drivers and everything is neatly packaged. By far the best interior on a LandCruiser ever. The middle row of seats will sit 3 in comfort and with the low floor over the transmission tunnel, foot room is great.

The third row will seat 3 passengers that don't mind their knees around their chest. There are A/C outlets in the rear seats with dual zone controls for the front. Boot space is compromised by the ridiculous fold up third row seats, seriously guys this is antiquated. Serious tourers will remove them immediately.



LANDCRUISER 200 GXL V8 D4D

\$96,200 RDAP

by Rob Fraser

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Model | LC200 GXL |
| Model Price | \$96,200 RDAP |
| Engine | 4.5L V8 D4D |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 200kW @ 3,600rpm |
| Torque | 650Nm @ 1,600rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 297g/km |
| Economy actual | 9.5L/100 km ADR |
| Servicing | Capped Price |
| Tow Rating | Max 3,500kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 350kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



Safety is a feature with the 200 Series having a 5 star ANCAP safety rating. Features include: seven airbags, vehicle stability and active traction control, multi-terrain anti-skid brakes, hill-start assist control, trailer sway control, an emergency brake signal. It does miss out on a number of the newer extra safety features though.

The diesel engine has been slightly upgraded now producing power of 200kW @ 3,600rpm and torque of 650Nm coming in at an early 1,600rpm. That type of torque delivery makes for very relaxed highway driving, easy towing, controlled off road driving and surprising take off in the city. For its few shortcomings like oil usage, I love this engine and struggle to understand why anyone looking at this type of vehicle would buy a petrol V8. This power is delivered through a smooth and robust electronically controlled six-speed automatic transmission. Fuel consumption has improved as well with combined cycle fuel consumption now just 9.5 litres/100km. Along with the addition of a particulate filter, CO₂ emissions have improved to 250 grams/litre. There isn't any need to talk about the LandCruiser's off road ability or towing ability. Both are excellent.

The Landcruiser does have some shortcomings. Amongst these are a low load capacity with two or three passengers on board, slightly excessive oil usage for the turbo diesel engine, spare tyre underneath where it can be scraped over rocks and fold up rear seats. These pale into insignificance compared to the benefits of a powerful and economical diesel engine, awesome 4WD and towing ability, outstanding outback touring ability and comfort.

The LandCruiser 200 series still is the yardstick by which all other large off road 4WD's are measured. Having driven the GXL I am looking forward to the Sahara and actually considering buying one again.



What's Good:

- Powerful diesel engine
- Smooth ride & handling
- Towing & 4WD ability

What's Not:

- Underslung spare tyre
- No DTE reading
- Fold up rear seats

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 87/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 10 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 8 |

TOYOTA LANDCRUISER PRADO KAKADU**\$91,682 RDAP**

The Toyota Prado Kakadu 7 seat 4WD wagon. It combines all the bling for the family and the 4WD capability for the enthusiasts. Even though it is close to \$92,000 it actually is pretty good value. It is relatively affordable, has genuine 4WD capability, can tow 3,000kg, is economical, has an abundance of aftermarket accessories for it and has Toyota's legendary reliability.

by Rob Fraser



The Toyota Prado in some ways has always been an underrated 4WD. Often dubbed a soccer mums taxi, the Prado has always had excellent off road ability. It's just that many owners never explored those qualities. Updated in both 2016 and again in 2017, the Prado has managed to keep at the forefront of the segment. The Toyota Prado Kakadu 7 seat wagon we are testing here, is the top of the range with a complete range of standard features. It has all the bling.

Externally the LandCruiser Prado's robust exterior features a revised grille with broad vertical bars and slit-shaped cooling openings, flanked by restyled Bi-LED headlamps, with the main beams positioned inboard to avoid damage from obstacles when off-road driving. At the rear, there are new lamp clusters and a smaller garnish incorporated within the number-plate surround. There are front and rear fog lights, roof rails and it runs on 265/60R18 tyres on alloy rims. Recent upgrades has seen the bonnet acquire similar sculpturing to the LC200 series. This actually assists visibility. There are some muscular wheel arch bulges and the lines actually look good. The lower corners of the front and rear bumpers now kick upwards, to enhance off-road manoeuvrability.



Inside, LandCruiser Prado has a redesigned dashboard, instrument binnacle and switchgear. The revised centre console incorporates a flush-surface air-conditioning control panel and has a low profile at the top for a sleeker appearance and improved forward visibility.

The front seats are excellent, having both heating and cooling and being electronically multi adjustable along with the electronic adjustable steering wheel, means that all drivers can be comfortable. The steering wheel is thick with a wood section but not woodgrain. It has all the controls you would expect. One feature I really like, is the simple to use cruise control stalk, and the auto ACC thankfully is easy to override.

by Rob Fraser

The dash is clearly visible through the steering wheel with two large and two small dials with a feature packed MFD in-between. It tells you everything you need to know and more than you want. At this price range I would have liked a heads up display. There is subtle woodgrain look everywhere, a soft touch dash and subtle style features throughout. The ambience is luxurious without being tacky. Add to this grab handles everywhere and lots of little cup, bottle and nick knack storage areas. The central console is replaced with a chiller box. That is both good and bad, great for keeping drinks cold for the kids, not so much for mixed storage. The centre stack houses the controls for the adaptive variable suspension, kinetic dynamic suspension system (KDSS), multi-terrain select (MTS) and crawl control. It takes a little adjusting to.

The stack is otherwise well laid out, easy to use and simple. It houses the 8 inch screen and audio system. The display also features the panoramic surround camera view, satellite navigation and the reversing camera. There is a 14 speaker sound system to soothe the nerves or pump up the kids. Again Toyota refuses to integrate Apple Car Play and Android Auto. Also the screen is a little insensitive to touch on occasions. Behind the transmission lever is the drive mode select which actually does seem to work well. Both front and rear passengers have plenty of head and shoulder room. There is enough front seat slide for front occupants. Rear passengers have a little restricted knee room but overall it is great for four and even five occupants. The almost flat footwell also provides more comfort for the middle passenger. Rear seats are heated as well. Above is a moon roof for star gazing.

The rear seats will fold flat on a split arrangement to give a flexible boot area. While not cavernous it is more than adequate. The best thing Toyota has done is get rid of those ridiculous fold up rear seats. The third row seats will fold electrically. Rear passengers also have the benefit of separate controls for the 3 zone air conditioning as well as the Blu-ray rear seat entertainment system with three wireless headsets, perfect for keeping the tribe quiet.

One thing to note is that overall visibility from the Prado is surprisingly good. Over bonnet view is improved, there are great internal and external mirrors and the rear and panoramic camera is awesome. The other great thing about the Prado is the rear mounted full size spare. No underbody slung spare that gets damaged and useless when you need it most.

The Prado Kakadu is now offered with the same diesel engine that sits in the Hilux and Fortuner vehicles. It is a 2.8L, Four cylinder in-line, 16-valve, DOHC diesel that produces 130kW @ 3,400rpm of power and 450Nm @ 1,600rpm of torque (auto version). The manual has torque of 420Nm @ 1400rpm. This runs through either a six speed manual or six speed automatic transmission. The Prado has constant four-wheel drive; two-speed transfer case with lockable centre Torsen LSD. This combination of low torque and well suited transmission, means that for a relatively large 4WD the Prado is frugal with diesel using just 8.0L/100k ADR. In real world use, the Prado is certainly economical, especially on the freeway. This will see you getting upwards of 1200km out of a tank of fuel.



TOYOTA LANDCRUISER PRADO KAKADU

\$91,682 RDAP

by Rob Fraser

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|-----------------|---|
| Model | LC Prado KAKADU |
| Model Price | \$91,682 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.8L 4 Cyl D4D |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 130kW @ 3,400rpm |
| Torque | 450Nm @ 1,600rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 211g/km |
| Economy actual | 8.0L/100 km ADR |
| Servicing | Capped Price |
| Tow Rating | Max 3,000 kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 300 kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



The Kakadu will tow 3000kg. The recent engine power upgrades have enhanced the Prado's towing ability. It still isn't a powerhouse, but the available torque low down allows relaxed cruising and the trailer sway control greatly assists the driver. The size of the Prado also makes it well suited to real 4WD conditions, with an approach angle of 30.4 degrees, rampover angle of 21.1 degrees and departure angle of 23.5 degrees. Wading depth is 700mm and ground clearance is 219mm standard. Kakadu features the adaptive variable suspension, kinetic dynamic suspension system (KDSS), multi-terrain select (MTS) and crawl control. This system quite frankly is up there with the best four wheel drive systems but my fear is that inexperienced drivers will use it to overcome poor quality driving and get themselves in trouble rather than out of trouble.

Off road the Prado is a more than capable performer. We have driven them on sand, fire trails, in the desert, on the farm, along tight 4WD tracks, just about everywhere. They simply don't let you down and the reliability is awesome. The recent engine upgrades also help with towing, both on and off road. On road the Prado has good ride and handling for a 4WD, better than most.

Safety is still a strong feature with the Kakadu Prado with seven airbags, rear view camera, trailer sway control, emergency brake signal, whiplash injury lessening front seats, vehicle stability control, active traction control (A-TRC), ABS with electronic brake-force distribution (EBD) and brake assist (BA). Other features include Toyota Safety Sense+ (automatic only) including pre-collision safety system with pedestrian detection, lane departure alert, automatic high beam and active cruise control (but easy to disable), rear cross traffic alert, hill-start assist control (HAC) and downhill assist control (DAC), blind spot monitoring etc.

So there it is. The Toyota Prado Kakadu 7 seat 4WD wagon. It combines all the bling for the family and the 4WD capability for the enthusiasts. Even though it is some \$91,000 it actually is pretty good value. It is relatively affordable, has genuine 4WD capability, can tow 3,000kg, is economical, has an abundance of aftermarket accessories for it and has Toyota's legendary reliability.

What's Good:

- Value for money
- Standard features
- Towing & 4WD ability

What's Not:

- No Apple Car Play or Android Auto
- No Head Up Display
- Would like more power



Overall OzRoamer Rating: 90/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 10 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 9 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 9 |

OZROAMER 2017 PRESTIGE SUV OVER \$100,000 AWARD

As the SUV market segment grows, so does the number of prestige brands that want to participate. You could say it really started with Porsche Cayenne many years ago. Since then the number of prestige brands that have an offering in the Prestige SUV category has exploded.

The Prestige SUV over \$100,000 award is full of vehicles that just make you smile when you drive them

Starting the process is a previous winner, the awesome Audi Q7 3.0L Tdi Quattro. The design philosophy here is to provide a full size family SUV that is loaded with technology and safety, has an abundance of space yet manages to deliver all this in a prestige package.

This year brings two new nominees. The sleek Maserati Levante Gransport. Being a Maserati it brings with it an expectation of luxury performance. Does Maserati manage to translate the brand qualities through to a SUV?

The other new nominee is the stylish Jaguar F Pace with its svelte proportions, beautiful internal design and a mild off road capability. Does the Jaguar roar again?

The Lexus LX 570 has robust 4WD ability and is loaded with features. It definitely is the only nominee that you would consider taking anywhere deep off road.

Given the plethora of prestige brands having a model in this segment it was extremely difficult to narrow the nominees to four. We will produce a Prestige SUV Guide at a later stage where we will review a wider selection.

Brands such as Mercedes Benz, Porsche, Volvo, BMW, Bentley etc all didn't make the final four this year. We definitely wanted to highlight a spread of philosophies and design. Not everyone will agree with our choices though.

Four different vehicles in design, functionality, application, and pricing. In this price bracket, brand loyalty or perception often overrides form and function for buyer choice.

The ultimate decision is up to what the buyer is looking for, but for us there can only be one winner, even though we would be happy with any of them.





AUDI Q7 3.0L TDI QUATTRO

\$117,584 RDAP

The new generation Audi Q7 3.0L TDi QUATTRO AWD SUV is an excellent vehicle with few if any faults. It sets the benchmark for prestige 7 seat family SUV driving. For those in a hurry that is all you need to read.



by Rob Fraser



Since last year when the Audi Q7 3.0L Tdi Quattro won the Prestige SUV Award, a lot has changed in this segment of the market. There have been new entrants, model upgrades and other changes. But as the saying goes, the more that changes, the more that stays the same. That is why the Audi again is triumphant in this segment. The new generation Audi Q7 3.0L TDi QUATTRO AWD SUV is an excellent vehicle with few if any faults. It sets the benchmark for luxury 7 seat family SUV driving. For those in a hurry that is all you need to read.

The first thing you notice when you approach is that for a big car it looks compact. The overall length is 5.05m, which is longer than a Toyota 200 series Landcruiser. Yet for all this size it has a svelte appearance more fitting a luxury wagon than an AWD SUV. That is one of the features of the Q7. It is more than it seems. However the new Q7 is less also, 240kg less to be precise. Like all of us, less weight usually means being more nimble, use less fuel and handle better.



Style can be a matter of personal taste. To me the Q7 exterior simply looks good and is very appealing. The Mercedes Benz GLS is like the ugly sister in comparison.

At this level you expect a quality luxurious interior, but the essence of true luxury is integration. Integration means that the whole interior not only flows, it works seamlessly and has subtlety.

Some vehicles in this class seem to have a love affair with buttons or switches, others seem to like minimalism, to the detriment of functionality. The Audi Q7 strikes almost a perfect balance between form and function.

by Rob Fraser

The drivers' alignment to the steering wheel and dash can be adjusted for all drivers to find the perfect position. Our reviewers range from 195cm tall to 170cm tall, slim to larger than the average bear and all commented on just how comfortable they were. The large and clear virtual digital dash can be changed to suit personal preferences and is amongst the best in class. I believe that while being able to adjust the dash layout, most drivers will find what they like and leave it.

Again the more than it seems feature of Audi comes through. The dashboard and centre console layout seems simple, almost bland, but after a little while you realise how easy and integrated it all is to use.

Sitting on top of the centre dashboard is the MMI navigation plus with MMI touch. This is displayed on an 8.3-inch extending screen that is sharp, brilliant and rich in contrast. The optional head-up display (HUD) directly within the driver's field of vision means that you don't have to take your eyes off the road.

The controls are intuitive to use with the intelligent new MMI control concept: fewer buttons yet more functions, including vehicle settings, navigation, telephone, media and the optional Audi connect. A larger touchpad creates a better user-experience. I found it very sensitive though, but once you grasp it the simple functionality wins you over. Well, almost wins me over, I am not a big fan. There is a lack of centre console storage though.

Front seats for driver and passenger are excellent. Rear seats are great for two passengers but can accommodate three in comfort with adequate head, knee and leg room. The third row of seats while reasonable for teenagers, do feel slightly restricted in head room and leg room, unlike the Mercedes Benz GLS, which has the best in class. There is however just adequate luggage space with all seats in use. One clever feature is the flexibility in luggage configuration with individual folding seats that fold flat.

There are far too many standard and optional features and packages to list here when you are looking at the Q7 and to be honest its best to look at the Audi site for a list of them. Suffice to say the Q7 has an incredible long list of standard safety, luxury and comfort features with an even longer and expensive options list.

Safety is obviously 5 star ANCAP and the Q7 is class leading in passive and active safety features. However I found that sometimes the vehicle was overriding normal driving ability. For instance the lane assistance system was more sensitive than I believe is warranted, turning the steering wheel against my input. It's not dangerous, just a little annoying at times. I would have all the safety features and put up with the car thinking it's a better driver than me though. It probably is!



by Rob Fraser

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Model | Q7 3.0 L QUATTRO |
| Model Price | \$117,584 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.0 L V6 TDI |
| Drivetrain | 8 speed AT Quattro |
| Power | 200kW @ 4,250rpm |
| Torque | 600Nm @ 1,50 rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 15 g/km |
| Economy ADR | 5.9L/100 km |
| Tow Capacity | 3,500kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 350kg |
| Servicing | Service plan |
| Warranty | 3 yr/Unlimited km full roadside assist |



The Q7 is powered by a 3.0L TDI engine that produces 200kW @ 4,250rpm of power and 600Nm @ 1,500-3,000rpm of torque. This translates to the road through the QUATTRO AWD drivetrain and 8 speed auto transmission. The Q7 can reach a top speed of 234km/h and accelerates from 0 to 100km/h in 6.5 seconds. It does all this while drinking fuel at a miserly 6.5l/100km on our test. These figures were around town and some freeway driving.

These are the raw figures. The real world driving experience though is even better. The abundance of torque at low revs makes for smooth, powerful and extremely relaxed driving experience. Combine this with the adaptive air suspension and you have a big AWD SUV that handles and drives like a luxury sedan. You simply forget you are driving a 5.05m long AWD SUV.

In short I loved driving in the Q7. I had the opportunity to test it over normal road surfaces and some dirt roads. Its ride, handling dynamics and comfort are class leading. Let's face it not many (if any) Q7's will ever see any real off road driving, however I would be more than happy to take one to Birdsville for the annual races. That would be a drive along some of Australia's iconic roads to an iconic Australian experience in luxury and comfort. I got side-tracked apologies.

The overall appeal of a powerful yet economical diesel engine mated to an 8 speed transmission driving all four wheels through Audi's outstanding Quattro system, that has dynamic handling yet smooth ride, is equally at home at the Opera and at Birdsville, accommodating its occupants in luxury and comfort for around \$120,000 is exceptionally strong. This might sound strange but it actually represents reasonably good value. If I was looking for a luxury 7 seat AWD SUV the Audi Q7 3.0L TDi QUATTRO would be at the top of the list. The Audi Q7 is now a two time winner of the OzRoamer Prestige SUV Award.



What's Good:

- Power and economy
- Ride and Handling
- Space and practicality

What's Not:

- Centre Console lack of storage
- Long and expensive options list
- Not owning one

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 90/100

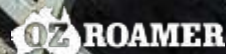
| | | | |
|------------------|----|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 10 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 10 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 10 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 6 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |



JAGUAR F PACE 30D PORTFOLIO

\$103,027 RDAP

In the tight bends, F-Pace feels completely at home. It is as joyous as any Jaguar. Occasionally you notice there is a bit more bulk than you'd normally have in a sports saloon, but for an SUV it is brilliant. You get what you pay for, and F-Pace is a cracker



by Alan Zurvas



Jaguar F-Pace is not Just a Pretty Face Grafted to an SUV. Don't be fooled by the shape, this is a real Jaguar, and, a real SUV. There is a well-developed design language across the JLR (Jaguar Land Rover, just in case you're wondering) portfolio: sexy and luxurious quality, with a unifying face. The F-Pace has been ages in coming, and was launched internationally in a spectacular full sized loop-the-loop.

Our Supercharged 3.0L V6 First Edition pumps out 280kw and 460Nm through a deliciously silky 8 speed auto. It does the 0-100 dash in 5.5 seconds while allegedly drinking only 8.9L/100k. The familiar Jaguar front end continues an evolution from the gorgeous but old fashioned, to the luxurious and cutting edge. The adaptive LED headlights with inbuilt "J-blade" daytime running lights brings a sharp look that began with the XF all those years ago. Huge 22" wheels should make the ride rubbish, but this is a jag, and it doesn't. The rump sports a smart set of XF-like LED tail lights which wrap well around the sides.



Also accessible from the outside is F-Pace's party trick. Along with your keys, you get a rubber wrist band. You can wear it in the water so no longer do you have to hide your car keys when you go for a surf.

Here's how it works: take your key from your pocket and stow it somewhere inconspicuous like the glove box. Attach the wrist band, get out of the car, and make sure all the doors are shut.

Go around to the rear and place the front of the wrist band on the letter "J" in Jaguar. The car will lock while disarming the key you left inside. Even if it is stolen, the key is useless.

by Alan Zurvas

When you come back to your car, hold your wrist over the “J” and press the unlock tab as if you were going to open the tailgate. *Voilà*, the car is unlocked and the key re-engaged. It is a stroke of genius. Think of the many times you’d be afraid of losing your keys and now don’t have to.

It looks and feel like an XF or XE. Some of the hard plastics look a bit out of place though. The console, dash board, seats, and materials all feel familiar to their sedan cousins. F-Pace has the new audio system. It is mostly easy to use, but it will frequently come over all moody and sulk between commands. Some actions may need to be done several times before the system decides to co-operate, and at speed, this can be annoying.

Options come in packs to “save money”. There are touches of wood grain or metal depending on how you choose your trim. The seats have more buttons than mission-control (seat back and bottom, lumbar up/down/in/out, Squab and bolsters), with the mirrors, windows and door lock button on the doors close by. It means one hand can access all controls without having to reach.

There also are controls and settings in the centre driver’s LCD as well as in the “in-touch-pro” infotainment system. I’d like to see all controls in the centre console. It seems silly to have them split so the driver sometimes has to play a guessing game to find lesser-used options. If all settings were found in the centre stack, the steering wheel buttons and driver’s LCD could just be auxiliary controls.

Many functions have been subsumed into the infotainment system. Settings such as Interior coloured mood lighting and seat heating can be found in the menu system. You can swipe side to side like a mobile phone, and use a “pinch” action on the map screen. Jaguar has done a lot to make this as user friendly as possible, but there are a few hiccups to be ironed out in future software updates. The infotainment system is responsible for making the centre console look so clutter-free. There are some rear seat controls for the multi zone air conditioning, and the zones can be synced in the menu system. The sound from the Meridian system is brilliantly clear and smooth.

It wouldn’t cricket to move on without mentioning the gear selector which is a rotary dial. When the starter button is pressed, the dial rises out of the console. When the engine is switched off, the system selects “park”, lowers the dial, and activates the parking brake.



by Alan Zurvas

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Model | Jaguar F Pace 30d |
| Model Price | \$103,027 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.0L V6 DT |
| Drivetrain | 4WD 8 speed Auto |
| Power | 221kW @ 4,000rpm |
| Torque | 700Nm @ 2,500rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 159g/km |
| Economy ADR | 6.0L/100km |
| Tow Capacity | Max 2,400kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 240kg |
| Servicing | TBC |
| Warranty | 3 yr/ 100,000 km with 3 Yr roadside assist |



I particularly like the soothing blue lighting which bathes the cabin in the evenings. It even makes a special guest appearance in the scuff plate on the floor inside the rear hatch too. It's the sort of touch whose absence you wouldn't notice, but looks elegant and tasteful being present.

F-Pace performs well at low speed. It is easy to park despite the bulk. You can take full advantage of parking spots with the cameras that allow tight low-speed moves. The drive is lively enough in standard mode, but changing the drive mode to Dynamic brings the throttle to life. As impressive as it is around town, F-Pace is brilliant on the highway.

It's ghostly quiet until you hit a god-awful section of chip-tarmac. Although quieter than most cars on the road, the rough surface still causes a bit of a ruckus. But, F-Pace is AWD, not 4WD so eventually you'll run out of puff off-road.

In the tight bends, F-Pace feels completely at home. It is as joyous as any Jaguar. Occasionally you notice there is a bit more bulk than you'd normally have in a sports saloon, but for an SUV it is brilliant. Considering the considerable weight, it shifts in corners like a much smaller car. The 3.0L turbo diesel with 221kW at 4,000rpm and 700Nm at 2,000rpm is a beast of a thing. You can tow up to 2,400kg of braked load if you wish, but that would ruin the lines of such a beautiful looking thing.

This master stroke by JLR has done wonders for sales, and rightly so. What I like about F-Pace is that unlike other car makers, Jaguar makes every model a hot(ish) model. There is no 100kw cheap entry turbo 3 cylinder to appease the tightwads. You get what you pay for, and F-Pace is a cracker. The options are pricey, and some colours just doesn't do it for me, but you can't have everything.



What's Good:

- Powerful engine
- Understated looks
- Luxury feel

What's Not:

- No Apple CarPlay®/Android® Auto
- Limited off road capability
- Pricey options

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 82/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 7 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 6 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 8 |



MASERATI LEVANTE GRANSPORT 3.0L

\$198,991 RDAP



The idea of a revered Italian sports car manufacturer producing an SUV is a contradiction in terms to some purists. But Maserati points out that fifty-seven percent of the world market of luxury vehicles are now SUV models and the percentage is still climbing.



by David Brown



The idea of a revered Italian sports car manufacturer producing an SUV is a contradiction in terms to some purists. But Maserati points out that fifty-seven percent of the world market of luxury vehicles are now SUV models and the percentage is still climbing. The first Levante SUV in Australia was launched at the beginning of 2017 and they now account for nearly 60 percent of Maseratis' sold in this country.

That first Levante came here in February 2017 and had a diesel engine, It had the look of a Maserati but very little of the feel. They have now launched the Levante S which has a twin turbo petrol V6. There is a base model and a GranSport and GranLusso variance. It makes some major steps with technology and it brings to this vehicle some of the traditional feeling and sound you would expect from this Italian marque. If you buy a Maserati you want it to look like one. From the front the Levante is as unmistakable as the Trident logo. It has the familiar grille design as seen on the sedans that looks like pouting lips. In the sedans the grille is lower and appears to have more of a pout, whereas in the SUV it is higher and looks a better balance.



Among other things the first thing you notice is the 21-inch wheels with low profile tyres which is not really heavy off-road type. The wheels are much more a fashion statement and now come with seven different alloy styles, five of which are new in 2018.

Down the side of the vehicle it is smooth without flowing creases and has that lovely touch of three small vents on the front mudguard panels. Towards the back of the car is the Trident badge that makes such a simple yet sophisticated statement. The overall impact is one of understated elegance without trying too hard to be a fastback sedan. The doors close softly and gently and then pull himself in if you have not shut them completely.

by David Brown

There are four different colours for the outside of the vehicle none of which seem to be over flashy. Colour can help you tell the difference between models. The GranSport has red brake callipers appearing through the mag wheels. In Australia red is the defined calliper colour that says "sportiness" although in Europe it is yellow.

When I first got into the car I was just a little bit overpowered by the layout. To see the gauges, I had to set the steering wheel up to its maximum height while keeping the seat low. I felt the layout was a bit dominating when an SUV is intended to make me feel king of the castle, sitting up in an elevated position both in a physical and emotional sense. But I soon got used to it.

The layout of the dash across the front of the whole car included some leather panelling and clear stitching. It certainly felt as though I was in something special. Although there was a slight feeling of patchwork. There are large leather sections on the dash not unlike a Range Rover SVR but in this case, they hadn't succeeded quite as well in giving the feel of overall design rather than filling some spaces. There are five different interior trim choices and two different steering wheels.

I know Maserati wants to make a statement about its own unique features but thankfully it had Apple Carplay so that I could immediately feel comfortable with setting up my phone and listening to a podcast without having to break the enigma codes that beset the "human/machine interface" in some other vehicles.

The engine is a breath of fresh air. In sport mode the twin turbo V6 has a highly credible 321kW of power at 5,750rpm and a substantial 580Nm of torque in sport mode between 1,750 and 5,000rpm. The engine is matched to an eight speed ZF automatic transmission and Q4 intelligent all-wheel drive system, with standard limited slip differential, for power to all wheels when needed. For most SUVs this means firstly driving the front wheels and the bringing in power to the back wheels when you need it. The Maserati reflects its more sporting image by reversing that approach giving 100% of the power to the rear wheels in less stressful driving conditions but then moving to a 50/50 split when needed.

We drove the car over some of the rural secondary roads around the regional town of Bathurst some 200km west of Sydney. In a normal Ute this can be a jarring experience. Befitting its price and status, the Maserati Levante was a whole different ride all together. The air spring suspension with variable ride height handled the sweeping bends with aplomb and was not unduly put off by the frequent uneven surfaces and significant bumps. The vehicle surged forward when called upon on the open road especially in overtaking manoeuvres. The gear box worked well to the point where you didn't notice it. The thing I missed most with the earlier diesel Levante was a good sound. The twin turbo V6 was not quite as loud as you would get from the Quattroporte sedan but when you gave the car it's head on the open road you felt more at one with the vehicle.



by David Brown

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Model | Levante GranSport |
| Model Price | \$198,991 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.0L V6 Twin Turbo |
| Drivetrain | 8 Sp AT AWD |
| Power | 321kW @ 5,700rpm |
| Torque | 580Nm @ 5,000rpm |
| Safety | TBA ANCAP |
| CO2 | 253g/km |
| Economy ADR | 10.9 L/100 km |
| Servicing | TBA Price |
| Tow Rating | 2,700kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 270kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km Opt Roadside Assist |



The Levante is now the first Maserati model to feature adaptive cruise control with stop & go, forward collision warning, advanced brake assist system, lane departure warning system and surround view camera. In Australia this ADAS safety package is a no cost-option on the Levante and also includes active functions such as highway assist, lane keep assist, active blind spot assist and traffic sign recognition.

Being able to recognise traffic signs is a backup system to the usual GPS mapping information. It is not linked, however, to a clock so a school zone sign will always be read as 40 kilometres an hour in New South Wales no matter what the time of day. So why are they adding these features now? Some of the technology is going to become a legal requirement such as a reversing camera to become mandatory in America and automatic emergency braking to be an essential criterion for getting a 5 star ANCAP safety rating in Australia.

A Maserati comes at a premium price although compared to their sedans, the SUV is not as expensive as some may think. The petrol Levante S starts at \$169,990 while the GranSport and GranLusso upgrades are an additional \$10,000 making the top of the line model \$179,990 to which you have to add on-road costs. By comparison, the smallest Maserati sedan, the Ghibli, does start at \$139,000 but the top of the range Quattroporte hits \$350,000!

Maserati's promotional video for the Levante has images of them plowing through the desert sands of Dubai which is a classic SUV image but in reality, we can't see people travelling to the outback regions of Australia to try and experience the car in this way. The Levante S gives Maserati's SUV much more of the feel and sound of a Maserati and if you are going to take it into the country it is good enough to make you feel like the landed gentry.



What's Good:

- Sweet engine
- Style
- Safety features

What's Not:

- Drivers position
- Poor aural performance
- Warranty behind competitors

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 77/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 7 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 7 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 7 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 7 |



LEXUS LX 570 5.7L V8 4WD

\$154,310 RDAP



The Lexus LX570 is unique amongst prestige SUV's in that it combines a level of luxury expected (and beyond in some cases) with the only true robust 4WD capability. Others will venture further than the dirt roads, but all will stop way before the Lexus even raises a sweat.

by Rob Fraser



Back in January 1989 Lexus stunned the automotive world with the debut of the LS 400 sedan. Here was a Japanese manufacturer daring to encroach on the Europeans turf. Lexus produced, what was for many, a flawless sedan. Since then the Lexus name has been amongst the world prestige brands.

It has developed from nothing AWD SUV's in the RX and NX range but for their premium 4WD SUV they have relied on the ubiquitous Landcruiser underpinnings. This brings many advantages and some disadvantages for the LX570. Make no mistake, the LX570 is a genuine 4WD SUV though.

Externally it looks from a distance like a Sahara Landcruiser. It does carry the Lexus familial style though with the nose and grill, some extra features around the rear light binnacle and wheel and tyre combinations. The 20-inch standard alloys also feature a bright, machined finish with a sophisticated, multi-spoke design. They run 285/50R20 tyres. Both the auto levelling LED headlamps and daytime running lamps illuminate in an L-shape to express strong brand identity. It still looks like a Landcruiser though from a

distance and again this is both good and not so good.



It is inside where Lexus really differentiates itself from the donor vehicle. In typical Lexus fashion the interior is packed with features and function. Lexus has managed to improve what was already a sumptuous, luxurious cabin with a completely redesigned, premium luxury interior. The changes include new steering wheel, console storage, full instrument panel, door trims, ornamentation, instrument display, multimedia screens and seats.

The enhancements are evident immediately upon entering the LX cabin, with new, silky white light from the all LED interior lamps, including the overhead console lamp.

by Rob Fraser

The driver's seat has a 12-way power function for the reclining angle, lumbar support, vertical adjuster and cushion front. It is superbly comfortable. The front passenger seat has a 10-way power function to meet individual preferences.

The high grade leather-accented and wood-trimmed, electronically adjusted three spoke steering wheel provides comfort and increases functionality with a new control switch layout. The dash is clear, easy to read and houses a 4.2-inch TFT display screen. There is also an adjustable HUD with current speed and navigational waypoints.

Driving-related switches, including off-road system controls, are positioned in the centre console while comfort-related switches are positioned on either side to enhance operability. The cup holders have also been repositioned for greater ease of use. However all this switch gear means that small storage areas are at a premium? Have I mentioned I am not a fan of the Lexus mouse system?

A 12.3-inch multimedia display features at the top of the centre stack to provide for crisp, high definition controlling of vehicle functions, including the 19 speaker Mark Levinson audio system and climate controls. The LX facelift sees the audio updated with the latest multi-media system, a digital tuner and an AUX (VTR) input terminal on the front of the console for external video input. This display also shows the back monitor with four-camera multi terrain monitor (MTM) and panoramic view monitor (PVM). LX 570 features a new clock design that is housed in a genuine metal casing with luxurious piano-black backing. The clock hands also illuminate to provide enhanced visibility and a feeling of luxury.

Rear passengers are treated to reasonable space and luxurious features, via a rear console panel, that enables adjustment of the climate control and seat heating and cooling. New high definition 11.3-inch entertainment screens are installed on the front seat-backs for rear seat entertainment.

In the third row of seats there are A/C vents, cup holders and room for pre-teen children. However the third row seats, even though they are electric fold up and down, intrude on the available space for the boot. A poor design that Toyota continues to persevere with. The fold down rear door provides practical load space but can also hamper accessing parcels at the rear of the boot etc.

Other Lexus features include: four-seat independent control air conditioning, front cool box, front seat heaters, illuminated smart entry system with smart key card and smart start, optional ventilated/heated rear seats, LED ambient lighting in cabin and cargo area, touch-sensor overhead lighting, manual second-row sunshades and wireless charging tray for Qi-compatible phones.



by Rob Fraser

The heart of the Lexus LX570 is the 5.7L quad cam V8 petrol engine. This beast produces power of 270kW @ 5,600rpm and torque of 530Nm @ 3,200rpm. This runs through a new eight speed automatic transmission that improves the responsiveness and fuel economy. The new Lexus AE80F transmission gives LX 570 a shorter first gear, longer top gear and closer spread of intermediate ratios than the superseded six-speed transmission. It also features Lexus' Artificial Intelligence (AI) shift control, with a raft of sophisticated electronic control features. The AI Shift control can adjust the shift pattern to suit different drivers and provide engine braking for hill descents.

The new LX 570 has CUSTOMIZE mode as part of newly adopted Drive Mode Select. Drive Mode Select allows LX 570 drivers to adjust key vehicle systems to suit their driving style and preferences. Modes can be adjusted via the circular knob beside the gear selector. Drive Mode Select communicates with LX 570's powertrain, power steering, and variable gear-ratio steering, adaptive variable suspension and air conditioning system to suit different driving needs.

The CUSTOMIZE feature allows free setting of the powertrain, chassis and air conditioning to settings not available in the other five modes. Those five modes are NORMAL, ECO, COMFORT, SPORT S, and SPORT S+. NORMAL mode balances fuel economy and performance to suit both suburban and freeway driving and is pre selected when the vehicle starts. It can also be engaged by pressing down on the knob when any other mode is selected. ECO mode optimises engine output, throttle opening and air conditioning to maximise fuel efficiency. COMFORT mode lowers the damping force sets of the AVS system for improved ride comfort. SPORT S mode provides dynamic acceleration and maximum steering feel by adjusting engine output, throttle opening and steering assistance. SPORT S+ mode provides POWER setting for the drivetrain and adds SPORT settings for the steering and AVS.

Lexus LX570 has 4WD capability second to none in the prestige SUV segment. The full-time all-wheel-drive driveline includes two-speed transfer and variable fore-aft torque split via a Torsen mechanical limited-slip centre differential. A four-wheel hydro-pneumatic suspension package with adaptive variable Ssuspension (AVS) and active height control (AHC) ensures optimum tyre contact with the road surface while minimising body roll and optimising ride comfort.

Lexus made a substantial investment during the LX 570 development program in off-road driving aids. These include the Crawl Control feature, which helps the driver to manoeuvre over rough or difficult surfaces at low speeds, without the need for throttle or brake application. AHC, AVS and crawl control work cooperatively to ensure that the vehicle negotiates the roughest terrain with ease. LX 570 also has a multi-terrain ABS braking system designed to help reduce stopping distances on slippery surfaces such as sand or gravel.



LEXUS LX 570 5.7L V8 4WD

\$154,310 RDAP

by Rob Fraser

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | LX 570 |
| Model Price | \$154,310 RDAP |
| Engine | 5.7L V8 Petrol |
| Drivetrain | 8 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 270kW @ 5,600rpm |
| Torque | 530Nm @3,200rpm |
| Safety | TBA |
| CO2 | 334g/km |
| Economy ADR | 14.4L/100 km |
| Servicing | Capped Price |
| Tow Rating | 3,500kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 350kg |
| Warranty | 4 Yrs / 100,000 km 4 Yrs Roadside Assist |



LX 570 offers a wide view front and side monitor system as standard for off-road driving. The monitor allows the driver to identify, via cameras mounted in the grille and passenger-side mirror, potential objects that may be obscured from view. This provides a clear view of the front and passenger side of the vehicle. LX 570 has a total of four cameras, including the back-guide and panoramic view cameras. It also has clearance and back sonar.

The Lexus will tow 3,500kg with ease and with a tow ball rating of 350kg there isn't much it won't trail behind. However the petrol engine will be thirsty when towing. Diesels are simply better for that.

As you would expect, safety features play an important part in the LX570 story with Lexus Safety System+. The Lexus Safety System+ (LSS+) combines four driver-assist technologies. These include pre-collision safety system (PCS), all-speed active cruise control (ACC), lane keeping assist (LKA) system (lane departure warning) and automatic high beam system (adaptive high-beam system (AHS)). The new model adopts a raft of additional active safety technology including: 10 SRS airbags, head-up display (HUD), blind spot monitor (BSM), rear cross traffic alert (RCTA), individual tyre pressure warning system (TPWS) and autonomous emergency braking (AEB). The sway warning system (SWS) function monitors the vehicle's position within the lane and the driver's steering operations to detect sway - which may be the result of driver drowsiness, fatigue, inattention or distraction.

There is one enhancement pack available for LX 570, which includes 21-inch high grade alloy wheels, heated steering wheel, front seat ventilation and second row seat heater and ventilation for an additional \$16,500. The Lexus LX570 is unique amongst prestige SUV's in that it combines a level of luxury expected (and beyond in some cases) with the only true robust 4WD capability. Others will venture further than the dirt roads, but all will stop way before the Lexus even raises a sweat. This capability comes at the expense of a limousine ride. The choice is yours as to what is more important.



What's Good:

- Luxury features
- Towing and 4WD ability
- Value for money

What's Not:

- No diesel or Hybrid option
- Poor fuel economy
- Fold up rear seats - seriously?

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 88/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 8 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 8 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 10 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 9 |

OZROAMER 2017 PRESTIGE SPORTS SUV AWARD



The Prestige Sports SUV segment is rarified territory with vehicles often at the pinnacle of technology, design and performance. They however, for the most part, remain relatively attainable as well. This attainability factor excluded the real exotic or hideously expensive options. Remember these awards are for buyers. The number of buyers for these super expensive vehicles are minimal.

If you think about it, the very concept of a Sports SUV is a misnomer. Sports cars are low to the ground, stiff suspension, often coupes and serve one purpose only. A sports SUV has multiple purposes, usually needs to carry a family as well as gear, has a high body position, hence higher centre of gravity and many other factors that are opposite of the typical sports car.

These cars are often around or more than 2000kg, which alone means that you have a fair amount of bulk to transport before anything is added. Yet these vehicles, nominated here, manage to do all that is required of them. Selecting finalists ironically, was a hard task, keeping the list to four nominations. However we came up with an interesting cross section of the market we believe.

First up is last years winner the stunning Audi SQ7 with its seven seats, super smooth V8 diesel engine, huge torque and abundant technology. Given its dominance last year it will be hard to beat. Against this is another previous winner, the brutish Jeep Grand Cherokee SRT. Here is a SUV that has genuine 4WD ability powered by a thumping 6.4L Hemi V8. It is a complete aural delight.

A new entrant this year is the Range Rover Sport SDV8 HSE Dynamic. Now this may appear an odd choice given that the supercharged petrol engine is faster, but its about balance as well as outright performance. Sitting along side this and rounding out the four nominations is another previous winner of this category. The BMW X5 M50d is one of my all time favourites. Power, economy, style and dynamic handling. Having won in 2012 the upgrades over the years keeps it in the nominations.

These vehicles all are around or well in excess of \$100,000, all have amazing technology associated with them and some have different design philosophies such as the brutish Jeep Grand Cherokee SRT compared to the sophisticated Audi SQ7.

It made for an interesting time and to be honest it really wasn't that hard work. The winner may not surprise you!



AUDI SQ7 V8 TDI QUATTRO**\$168,828 RDAP**

There are few cars that I get really excited about, or have a grin that won't go away when I drive it. The SQ7 provides a truly SATISFYING drive experience. I have been trying to think of another car that provides the same degree of luxury, performance, handling, practicality and composure. To be honest I am struggling to come up with a direct comparison. It is in a league of its own.

by Rob Fraser



The SQ7, while based on the brilliant Q7, brings to the market some awesome new technology, interior and exterior changes and a design that looks smaller than it is. The design embraces what appears to be flavour of the month in an almost coupe style but manages that sleek form and low drag coefficient in a practical body shape.

Externally, SQ7 specific details include a choice of 12 paint finishes, a singleframe grill, the air inlets with their dual slats, the upper section of the exterior mirror housings and elements of the door trim gleam in an aluminium look. The roof edge spoiler is wider and more distinctive than that of the Q7. A diffuser insert with an aluminium clasp encloses the four rectangular exhaust tailpipes. SQ7 TDI and V8T emblems adorn the front, the fenders and the rear. LED headlights and dynamic rear turn signals are standard. Optionally available is Matrix LED technology that include intelligent cornering lights. While it is over 5m long it has a squat appearance being 1.97m wide and only 1.74m tall. Surprisingly, for a large vehicle its drag coefficient is just 0.34 and the

centre of gravity is low. This factor also sharpens the sporty character.



Step inside the SQ7 and the immediate ambience is luxury and space. The standard sports seats for front occupants are comfortable and supportive over long periods in them. The optional sports seats plus for the front driver and passenger are some of the best I have sat in.

There is electric adjustment for everything from the usual height and tilt, to lumbar support and shoulder and base wings that adjust to provide a perfect fit for any driver. The customised contour seats with seat ventilation and optional massage function offer even more comfort.

by Rob Fraser

The three spoke flat bottomed steering wheel feels superb in your hands and provides precise feedback from the road. Unusually the adjustment for height and reach isn't electric. In front of the driver is the Audi virtual cockpit with 12.3-inch display which presents its information in brilliant, high-resolution graphics. It displays a special screen when the car is started and a special S design when driving. These elements also appear on the 8.3 inch monitor of the MMI navigation plus with MMI all-in-touch. The driver uses the multifunction steering wheel to choose the view in the virtual cockpit. Audi supplements this with a head-up display that projects important information, such as speed and navigation data onto the windshield in the driver's direct field of vision. It is amongst the best in the industry.

Audi is taking a new approach to controls with the optional MMI navigation plus with MMI all-in-touch. The driver can enter characters on the large touchpad or perform multi-finger gestures to zoom in on the map, for example. The system provides acoustic and haptic feedback after each command. The MMI logic with its flat hierarchies and free text search is oriented on modern smartphones. The natural voice control system understands a large number of expressions from everyday speech.

The middle row seats are comfortable enough for my large frame to sit in. Better suited to two but accommodating three, there is plenty of head, shoulder and leg room. The third row seats while having a comfortable seat squab and backrest are limited in foot and leg room. They are suited to pre-teen occupants mainly.

The three-piece backrests in the second row can be folded down separately, and the third row can be lowered electronically into the floor of the SQ7 TDI to provide a long flat load area. The rear can also be lowered to assist with loading parcels. With a full load of passengers, the seven-seater model has a luggage capacity of 235 litres. With the third row folded down, this becomes 705 litres with a maximum of 1890 litres, which is cavernous. A power tailgate is standard.

The SQ7 TDI ups the ante with elegant interior details. A red ring surrounds the start-stop button, and the pedals are plated with stainless steel. The centre tunnel console, the standard sport leather steering wheel, the key and the illuminated door sill trims all bear SQ7 logos. The interior lighting shines in LED technology. There is a standard ambient lighting package, which can be adjusted over a range of 32 colours. Besides the three colour profiles familiar from the Q7, the SQ7 TDI also offers the Sport light profile in red/white.

Black is the dominant colour in the interior. The two-piece inlays combine brushed aluminium with chrome paint finish, slate grey. Carbon Atlas, piano finish and other materials are available from Audi Sport GmbH. The sport seats come standard in Valcona leather. The sport seats plus come factory fitted with the high-grade leather upholstery, including a diamond pattern.



by Rob Fraser

As this is a family car after all, keeping the troops entertained and connected is important and Audi doesn't disappoint. The top infotainment system uses the second-generation modular infotainment platform. Its central computer comprises two main units: the radio car control unit and the MMX board (MMX = Multi-Media eXtension). The MMX board integrates, along with the working and flash memory, a super-fast processor that processes all online, media, voice control, navigation and telephone features. The board is a plug-in module. Audi can keep it at the state of the art during the development process and thus bring innovations in consumer electronics into the car at an early stage. A Wi-Fi hotspot enables the passengers to web surf with up to eight mobile devices. The standard Audi connect package brings numerous online services on board, including navigation with Google Earth and Google Street View, and it can also serve as a Wi-Fi hotspot.

The Audi smartphone interface brings Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto into the car. If the customer connects an iOS or Android smartphone to the USB port (iOS from 7.1, Android from 5.0 Lollipop), the smartphone's contents such as navigation, phone, music and select third party apps are offered in a separate MMI menu. They can be accessed conveniently by MMI or voice control. Two Audi tablets (optional and expensive), that can be fastened to the backs of the front seats, provide entertainment for the rear passengers. Networked with the MMI navigation plus with MMI all-in-touch, they serve as rear seat entertainment. At the end of the trip, the passengers can unclip the tablets and continue to use them outside the car. The sound systems on board provide an extraordinary sound experience. The standard sound system is the innovative Bose system with 3D sound. It includes 19 speakers, two of which are integrated into the A-pillars to depict the spatial dimension of height. To be honest this system is more than enough. For those who simply must have better there is the \$11,340 optional Bang & Olufsen advanced sound system.

So what is the Audi SQ7 like to drive? Let's see, we have a 5+m long 2,270kg seven seat vehicle that feels like it is a metre shorter and some 500kg lighter. It is powered by a smooth and powerful 4.0l V8 TDi producing a healthy 320kW of power and a massive 900Nm of torque from a low 1,000rpm through to 3,250rpm. This drives through a slick 8 speed tiptronic transmission and delivers all that power and torque to the road through Audi's brilliant Quattro permanent AWD system. An rpm-adaptive torsion damper balances out undesired engine vibrations to enable efficient driving at particularly low engine speeds.

It has some pretty cool engine management technology with sequential charging from two turbochargers, combined with an electric powered compressor, for strong boost at low engine speeds. There is a 48 volt electrical subsystem to supply the electric powered compressor, that regenerates power from harnessing energy from the vehicle itself. It will rocket from 0 to 100 km/h in 4.9 seconds, delivering instantaneous effortless acceleration from standstill through to well in excess of 200km/h with a top speed of 250km/h (electronically governed). The official combined consumption is just 7.2 litres per 100km and I can confirm that although on the test the SQ7 was driven rather "enthusiastically" it sipped fuel at a measly 9.1 litres per 100km.

by Rob Fraser



The SQ7 TDI rolls standard on 20-inch wheels with size 285/45 tyres. Alternatives range up to 22-inch tyres from the Audi sport line from Audi Sport GmbH. The brakes are big and powerful. Mounted on the front axle are internally ventilated, lightweight discs measuring 400 millimetres in diameter. They are gripped by black (optionally red), six-piston callipers with S logos. A brake system with particularly lightweight and abrasion-resistant carbon fibre-ceramic discs are also available.

The SQ7 will also tow 3,500kg with a 350kg tow ball rating and has all road and some modest off road capability. With height adjustable suspension the SQ7 has up to 300mm of ground clearance and a fording depth of up to 600mm. The modest approach and departure angles and road performance tyres are the main limiting factors. However towing your boat trailer or seadoos along the forest trails or on the beach will pose no problem. The SQ7 caters for the active lifestyle aspired to by many.

In standard format the ride and handling of the SQ7 is superb. The chassis adheres to the principle of strict lightweight



construction. Its five-link suspensions front and rear are made largely of aluminium. Electromechanical power steering, the Audi drive select dynamic handling system and the adaptive air suspension with S-specific tuning are standard.

As an option, Audi will equip the SQ7 TDI with a driving dynamics package, comprising three technology modules: the sport differential, all-wheel steering and electromechanical active roll stabilisation. You don't need it to enjoy the SQ7, it just takes the experience to another level. It provided an engaging driving experience that brought smiles to our faces constantly.

by Rob Fraser

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Model | Audi SQ7 V8 TDi |
| Model Price | \$166,828 RDAP |
| Engine | 4.0 L V8 TDi |
| Drivetrain | 8 Sp AT QUATTRO |
| Power | 320kW @ 5,000rpm |
| Torque | 900Nm @ 1,000rpm |
| Safety | 5 STAR ANCAP |
| CO2 | 190g/km |
| Economy ADR | 7.2L/100 km |
| Servicing | Service Plan |
| Tow Rating | 3,500kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 350 kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / Unlimited km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



Somehow through this awesome technology, Audi have managed to almost defy the laws of physics. The effect is taut and sporty handling. The car leans less in bends, and the tendency to understeer is further reduced. This enables higher lateral acceleration and thus faster cornering. The front and rear stabiliser can be adjusted independently of each other. This active distribution of power between the front and rear axles significantly enhances steering precision and the agility of the automobile.

The SQ7 balances the conflicting requirements of smooth and luxurious ride and race track handling like very few cars. While scooting along some delicious windy alpine mountain roads, the SQ7 remained composed at all times. Mid corner bumps were like a mosquito biting an elephant. It may be biting but you hardly feel it. Throughout the drive the word 'balance' kept coming to mind. If somehow you manage to make the SQ7 lose composure you had better be by yourself on a closed section of road, because you would have to be driving in a ridiculous manner to achieve that. This is a vehicle that behaves in a manner that belies its size and weight and through clever non-intrusive technology allows you to always be in control. Important safety features include the park assist, cross traffic assist rear, exit warning system, collision avoidance assist and turn assist as well as the Audi pre sense systems. In a critical situation, the system warns the driver and initiates full braking, if necessary. Additional assistance systems round out the range. These include night vision assistant, Audi active lane assist, Audi side assist and the 360 degree cameras.

There are few cars that I get really excited about, or have a grin that won't go away when I drive it. I have to admit I am always looking forward to spending more time in the SQ7 in future road tests. It really was that much FUN! I have been trying to think of another car that provides the same degree of luxury, performance, handling, practicality and composure. To be honest I am struggling to come up with a direct comparison. It is in a league of its own. Starting from around \$166,834 RDAP the SQ7 could well be the ultimate family sports SUV and therefore is again the winner of this years Prestige Sports SUV Award



What's Good:

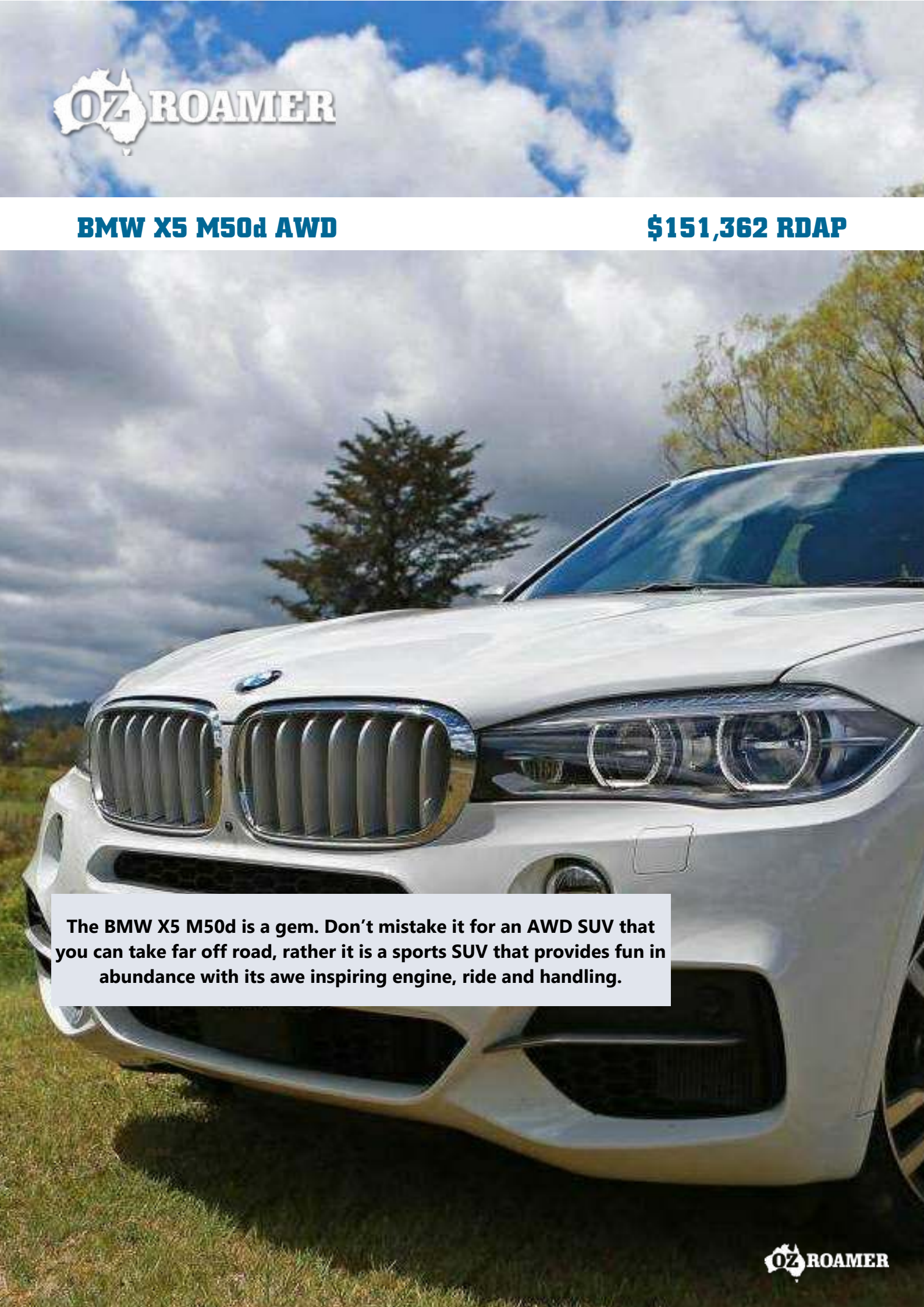
- **Awesome performance**
- **Ride and dynamic handling**
- **Technology and safety**

What's Not:

- **Poor small storage areas**
- **Manual steering wheel adjustment**
- **Not owning one**

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 91/100

| | | | |
|------------------|----|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 10 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 10 |
| Performance | 10 | Off Road Ability | 7 |
| Ride & Handling | 10 | Value for Money | 8 |

BMW X5 M50d AWD**\$151,362 RDAP**

The BMW X5 M50d is a gem. Don't mistake it for an AWD SUV that you can take far off road, rather it is a sports SUV that provides fun in abundance with its awe inspiring engine, ride and handling.

by Anthony Hood



When you first approach the BMW X5 M50d it really looks like the rest of the X5 range with some modifications. What lurks beneath is a sporty AWD SUV that has awesome performance. The M Performance accruements are subtle but obvious to aficionados. The BMW X5 M50d is another rare beast. Here is an AWD SUV that has style, performance and street cred. BMW have done an excellent job with the styling to make the car look smaller than it really is.

The exterior of the BMW X5 M50d displays the M Sport package equipment. This includes: M Aerodynamics package with front apron, side skirts, wheel arch trims, double-spoke style 467 M with mixed tyres, 20" M light alloy wheels, adaptive M suspension, adaptive suspension package 'Dynamic', BMW Individual high-gloss shadow line, BMW Individual exterior line aluminium satinated, M designation on the sides, exterior mirror caps in body colour, tailpipe trim strip in chrome high-gloss in M Sport package, specific design, exclusive paintwork in Carbon Black metallic, BMW Individual roof rails, high-gloss shadow line roof rails aluminium satinated. That's a mouthful!



Step inside and you immediately feel comfortable in the BMW leather sport seats for driver and front passenger, with multiple electric adjustments, especially the lumbar support. In front of the driver is the M leather steering wheel with gearshift paddles and all the controls you need. It is really very comfortable.

Also in front of the driver is an excellent heads up display ,that projects speed and arrow directions for navigation, directly into the driver's field of vision. The dash is typically BMW, which means crisp, clear to read and functional. There are adequate spots for drinks and 'junk' etc in the centre console, however the split lid is annoying.

by Anthony Hood

The Navigation System has a high-resolution 8.8-inch colour display (one of the best in the market), arrow and map display, favourite buttons, DVD drive, split screen function, 12GB hard drive for storage of audio files, 3D display, electronic owner's handbook and Internet functionality. The On-board computer displays average speed, fuel consumption, range, temperature, time and date etc. The iDrive controls are easy to use and surprisingly intuitive.

M Sport package interior equipment includes: M door sill finishers, M driver footrest, sport seats for driver and front passenger, exclusive Alcantara/leather combination with M designation on the seat piping, other upholsteries are available, M Leather steering wheel with multifunction buttons and gearshift paddles, BMW Individual headliner, Anthracite Interior trim finishers in Aluminium Hexagon; other trims are available and finally the car key with exclusive M designation.

Jump in the rear and the seats are more suited for two people but have enough head, shoulder and knee room to be comfortable for most adults. Boot space is great for a family of four. Visibility in the rear is also pretty good. It is comfortable for longer trips for adults or teenagers. We have driven a previous version from Sydney to Melbourne and arrived relaxed and without any issues.

The heart and soul of the BMW X5 M50d is the M Performance TwinPower Turbo inline 3.0L 6-cylinder diesel engine, combining common rail direct injection and triple turbocharging. Mated to an 8-speed sport automatic transmission with Steptronic, this lusty powerplant pumps out 280kW of power @ 4,400rpm and an awesome 740Nm of torque @ 2,000rpm. This combination grips the road through the intelligent xDrive, permanent all-wheel drive system with fully variable torque split between front and rear axles, M Sport suspension with self-levelling suspension and pneumatic rear suspension. In short it's a ripper to drive. It's hard to describe the exhilaration of planting your foot deep towards the firewall and feeling the linear acceleration that only a powerful diesel engine can provide. It smooth delivery rests totally on your right foot. The responsiveness allows for spirited yet safe driving. The combination of silky smooth engine, 8 speed transmission, X Drive surefootedness, responsive steering and dynamic suspension yields an engaging driving experience that still is amongst the best in SUV's even after all these years.

At no time do you feel you are driving a large SUV. The BMW X5 weighs in at around 2,200kg. It measures an overall length of 4,886mm, width of 1,985mm, height of 1,762mm and a wheelbase of 2,933mm. To keep this bulk firmly planted to the road, the X5 M50d runs 255/50 R 19 W front and 285/45 R 19 W rear tyres. That's a lot of SUV to throw around. Given these dimensions and weight, the performance is more amazing. The BMW M50d will accelerate from 0-100kmh in 5.3 seconds and top out at an electronically governed 250kmh. Driving around I found the BMW able to handle everything I asked of it. It took all the shoddy roads I threw at it in its stride as well as the good high speed ones. The eight-speed auto was always in the right gear to keep us moving and the engine was smooth and quiet.



by Anthony Hood

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| Model | BMW M50 d |
| Model Price | \$151,362 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.0 L Straight 6 |
| Drivetrain | 8 speed AT AWD |
| Power | 280Kw @ 4,400rpm |
| Torque | 740Nm @ 2,000rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 191g/km |
| Economy ADR | 7.5 L/100 km |
| Tow Capacity | 3,500kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 350kg |
| Servicing | Service plan |
| Warranty | 3 yr/130,000 km full roadside assist |



Safety is provided by driver and front passenger airbags, seat occupancy detector for front passenger airbag; head airbags in the front and rear; side airbags for driver and front passenger, dynamic braking lights, dynamic stability control (DSC) incl. ABS, brake assist, cornering brake control, dynamic traction control and hill descent control.

The driving assistant combines the lane departure warning and approach warning systems. The approach control and person warning with light city braking function, issues a warning if there is a risk of collision with vehicles or pedestrians and brakes the vehicle in the event of an emergency. From a speed of approx. 70km/h, the lane departure warning draws the driver's attention to an unintentional lane change by means of slight vibrations in the steering wheel.

Other features include rear view camera, Bi-Xenon headlights, adaptive headlights with variable light distribution, cornering lights and high-beam assist. Like all BMW's there is an extensive options list and packages. Some are worthwhile, some are hideously expensive. However the desire to individualise your car drives these packages.

Even though the X5 is all wheel drive, I wouldn't venture past maintained dirt roads, as there is little ground clearance. It could get ugly pretty damn quick. It is however, ideally suited to weekend pastimes, towing boats, horse floats and regular trips to the snow. Towing is impressive at 3,500kgs but from personal experience the fitment of electric brakes is expensive and can only be done through a BMW dealer.

The BMW X5 M50d is a gem. Don't mistake it for an AWD SUV that you can take far off road, rather it is a sports SUV that provides fun in abundance with its awe inspiring engine, ride and handling. At almost \$152,000 it is expensive but could be considered a bargain. It also won this category in 2012.



What's Good:

- Awesome diesel engine
- Ride and Handling
- Space and practicality

What's Not:

- Definitely AWD only
- Long and expensive options list
- Not owning one

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 83/100

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|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 8 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 10 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 5 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 8 |

JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE SRT V8**\$98,653 RDAP**

What can you say about the Jeep Grand Cherokee SRT other than it has prodigious power, a luxury interior and true 4WD ability? The truly impressive thing about the Grand Cherokee SRT is its balance between power, luxury and increasing price.



by Rob Fraser



What can you say about the Jeep Grand Cherokee SRT other than it has prodigious power, a luxury interior and true 4WD ability? The truly impressive thing about the Grand Cherokee SRT is its balance between power, luxury and increasing price.

Driving the Grand Cherokee SRT is both an aural and tactile delight. It always attracts attention from people passing by. The exhaust tone also evokes memories of the older pre catalytic converter V8 burble. It is just awesome and I have been known to just sit in the driveway starting and stopping the SRT simply to listen to the burble. Previously I have been approached by a total stranger who does the same with his SRT. It's great to know there are other enthusiasts out there that makes my idiosyncrasies seem normal.

Externally the SRT presents an imposing muscular frame, especially in black and features include a brawnier black front grill with chrome inserts, black background adaptive bi-xenon headlights, LED daytime running lights and exclusive bonnet bulge.



Internally the Grand Cherokee SRT exudes luxury and comfort. There is a choice of an exclusive leather interior in two distinctive colours combinations – Black Nappa leather with perforated suede and light slate grey accent stitching as standard and all-new Laguna leather with perforated suede in Sepia with Silver accent stitching as an option. Both leather trim combinations are matched with carbon fibre trim adorning the instrument panel and doors.

The SRT interior is further distinguished by a unique heated three-spoke steering wheel with a race-inspired flat bottom and more pronounced, ergonomically efficient paddle shifters that I have to say work well given my hatred of these adornments.

The high performance Nappa leather SRT monogrammed front seats are heated, ventilated and exceptionally comfortable.

by Rob Fraser

Combine the electronic seat controls with the height and reach adjustable steering wheel and it's easy to find a perfect driving position. Luxury features include the Uconnect system with 8.4-inch touchscreen and the new 7.0-inch TFT colour customer configurable instrument cluster display. The SRT is available with command view roof and a state-of-the-art 19-speaker, 825-watt Harman Kardon surround sound audio system as an option package.

The true four wheel drive ability that Jeep is legendary for comes from an exclusive-to-SRT, Quadra-Trac active on-demand four-wheel-drive system. The Grand Cherokee SRT also features brake traction control system (BTCS) on the front differential and a rear electronic limited slip differential (ELSD).

The Selec-Track system as mentioned is fitted exclusively to the Grand Cherokee SRT model. This system interacts with several different systems (stability control, active damping, transmission shift strategy, transfer case torque proportioning, electronic limited slip differential performance, throttle control and cylinder de-activation) to automatically tune the dynamics of the vehicle according to the drivers' habits and current driving conditions.

The driver can manually choose between the following dynamic modes – Auto, Sport, Track, Tow and Snow – for specific driving performances. On the new SRT model, software improvements to Selec-Track further distinguish the five dynamic modes, enabling drivers to choose a vehicle setting that more closely meets their requirements and ambient conditions. Drivers will find the torque split change in Track Mode provides a vehicle that is more responsive from mid-corner to exit and one that delivers faster lap times at their favourite track.

The Grand Cherokee SRT is fitted with the proven and powerful 6.4-litre Hemi V8 engine equipped with fuel saver technology, which produces 344kW of power at 6,250rpm and 624Nm of torque at 4,100rpm to deliver benchmark SRT performance through an 8 speed Tiptronic transmission. It sounds AWESOME! I must admit to sitting in the driveway continually starting the engine just to hear the V8 burble. I must have been deprived as a child. This powerplant will propel the Jeep Grand Cherokee SRT from 0-100kmh in 4.9 seconds, has a maximum speed of 255kmh and again, if driven sensibly, will consume fuel at an ADR rate of 14.0l/100k. That will raise substantially with enthusiastic driving to somewhere north of 20l/100k.

Fuel saver technology on the Hemi V8 engine optimises fuel efficiency and reduces emissions by alternating between a four-cylinder mode when less power is needed and a V8 mode when more power is in demand. However while it may sip frugally on the highway, if you bury the right foot the fuel disappears at an alarming rate.



by Rob Fraser

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | Grand CherokeeSRT |
| Model Price | \$98,653 RDAP |
| Engine | 6.4L Hemi V8 |
| Drivetrain | 4WD 8 speed AT |
| Power | 334 Kw @ 6,250 rpm |
| Torque | 624 Nm @ 4,100 rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 153 g/km |
| Economy ADR | 14.0 L/100 km |
| Tow Capacity | 2949 kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 300 kg |
| Servicing | Service plan |
| Warranty | 3 yr/100,000 km full roadside assist |



Also for Grand Cherokee and included on the SRT model is the Launch Control system, which has been paired to the new eight-speed automatic transmission. Launch Control mimics a professional driver's inputs to optimise the SRT's performance by bringing engine, transmission, driveline, stability control and suspension in line for a textbook launch. Controlled by a button located behind the new T-handle shifter on the centre console, it delivers enhanced, more consistent straight-line acceleration.

In addition to its standard safety equipment, including electronic stability control (ESC) with electronic rollover mitigation (ERM), ABS with off-road calibration, brake traction control system (BTCS) and seven airbags (advanced multi-stage driver and front passenger, front seat side airbags, side curtain airbags for front and rear occupants, driver knee airbag). The Grand Cherokee SRT offers upgraded forward collision warning with crash mitigation, blind spot monitoring, adaptive cruise control, ParkView rear back up camera with dynamic grid, ParkSense park assist system and new Selec-Speed Control with Hill Ascent Control and Hill descent control, assisting the driver climbing and descending steep grades.

The Grand Cherokee SRT is one of the few vehicles that I would go for a drive 2 or 3 times a day simply for the fun of it. The SRT is hypnotic. It entices you to experience its pleasures and embraces you like a lover when you do. Driving the SRT is an experience right from sitting in the Nappa leather seats and hearing that exhaust burble upon start up, through to powering through a series of bends where the agility and dynamics of the suspension belie its bulky proportions. Do yourself a favour and visit a dealer, start up the engine and you will fall in lust with the beast; drive one and you will fall in love.

At a RDAP of \$98,653 it is starting to become a little expensive but still represents reasonable value. As mentioned, what you have here is a sports SUV that has true 4WD ability, prodigious power and luxury, with a comfortable interior at a reasonable price. Not to mention the aural delights of that melodic 6.4L Hemi V8. Nothing comes close for the now arguably growing price.



What's Good:

- Hemi V8 Engine
- Awesome performance
- Aural delight

What's Not:

- Fuel economy with heavy foot
- Left foot room
- Not owning one

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 88/100

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|------------------|----|------------------|---|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 8 |
| Performance | 10 | Off Road Ability | 7 |
| Ride & Handling | 10 | Value for Money | 8 |

RANGE ROVER SPORT SDV8 HSE DYNAMIC \$165,448 RDAP



The Range Rover Sport in some ways is the ideal size, shape and balance of the Range Rover model range. For a large vehicle it cuts a svelte shape. One that belies its real 4WD capability.

RANGE ROVER SPORT SDV8 HSE DYNAMIC \$165,448 RDAP

by Rob Fraser



It has been a while since I have driven any Range Rover product and my first vehicle was the Range Rover Sport SDV8 HSE Dynamic. Not a bad reintroduction to the brand. The Range Rover Sport in some ways is the ideal size, shape and balance of the Range Rover model range.

For a large vehicle it cuts a svelte shape. One that belies its real 4WD capability. From its low fully integrated family front grill it slopes in a linear fashion through to the rear. Its lines are subtle yet impressive. The large 21inch wheel tyre combination fills the muscular bulging wheel arches (there is even a full size spare). This is one fine looking beast.

Other exterior features of the HSE include: matrix LED headlights, automatic headlights, daytime running lights (DRL), follow me home lighting, centre high mounted stop light, rear fog lights, headlight power wash, roof rack mounting provisions, heated rear window, acoustic laminated windscreen, rain sensing windscreen wipers and integrated exhaust.



The Dynamic pack adds the following features over the impressively featured HSE. Dynamic response (Active Roll Control), terrain response® 2 dynamic program, torque vectoring, top speed increase, red brake callipers', 21" 5 split-spoke 'Style 507' alloy wheels with satin grey finish, bright sport pedals and illuminated treadplates.

Stepping inside the Range Rover Sport is like stepping into a lounge room. The front leather seats are extremely comfortable with adequate squab length and plush side bolsters for hips and shoulders.

RANGE ROVER SPORT SDV8 HSE DYNAMIC \$165,448 RDAP

by Rob Fraser

They are multiply electronically adjustable so that even larger drivers such as myself can find a comfortable driving position. This is aided by the electronically adjustable leather thick steering wheel.

The steering wheel itself houses a number of controls, that once you get used to them increase user efficiency. The two stalks behind the wheel sit proud of the steering wheel spokes to allow good visibility without taking your eyes off the road. There are paddle shift selectors, but as regular readers know I find these simply a waste. The 12inch customisable instrument panel allows the driver to select the view that best suits them. This optional heads up display presents key data such as speed, navigation and gear position on the windscreen, so you never have to take your eyes off the road. It utilises lasers to avoid 'washout' and is configurable to your preferences.

One thing I noticed was that while I had plenty of head and leg room, I felt a little constrained or cocooned, not sure which. For such a large car I felt that the front occupants could use a little more space. But remember I am considerably larger than the average bear. Visibility from the driver's seat is excellent, with clear rear view and large external side mirrors and the brilliant all round camera system displayed on the 10 inch screen in the centre stack.

The centre console and stack again puts occupant comfort at the forefront. The console bin not only provides a good arm rest but houses a two stage bin arrangement with the USB ports etc. Sitting next to the drivers hips is the transmission hub. This houses the electronic controls for some features such as auto stop start, hill descent control etc, in addition to the controls for the brilliant 4WD system. Next to the transmission lever is a covered section for cups, out of the way.

The sloping centre stack allows easy access to the A/C controls and above that is the large 10inch touchscreen. This houses the InControl Touch Pro's next-generation hardware and software systems. Designed to advance Range Rover Sport's connectivity and entertainment to the highest level, this is a system that takes a little getting used to. It features a 10" touchscreen, Touch Pro Navigation and a Range Rover Audio System. It also displays the surround car camera system as previously mentioned.

There are also little luxury touches throughout like the one touch anti trap electronic windows, illuminated visor vanity mirrors, 2 zone climate control air conditioning system, dual lockable glove boxes and grab handles everywhere.

Rear seat passengers are also treated to luxury. Again there isn't as much room as you might expect but the individually tailored seats are sculptured to provide maximum comfort for two passengers. There is the optional rear seat entertainment with screens in the front seat headrests. While there is plenty of head and shoulder room, the leg, knee room is a little restricted.



RANGE ROVER SPORT SDV8 HSE DYNAMIC \$165,448 RDAP

by Rob Fraser



In contrast the boot space is quite large with a load tie down system along with the 60/40 split rear seats provides a flexible load area. The electronic tailgate could open a touch higher for taller users.

The SDV8 is certainly not the fastest Range Rover Sport but the best balanced in my view. It combines pretty good performance while not breaking the bank at the fuel pump. The SDV8 is powered by a 4.4L V8 Diesel that produces power of 250kW @ 3,500rpm and torque of 740Nm @ 1,750-2,000rpm. This is delivered to the wheels through a silky smooth 8 speed transmission and dual range 4WD Selective Terrain Response system.

The SDV8 will accelerate from 0-100kmh in 6.9 seconds and top out at 225kmh. This places it behind the other vehicles nominated in the category of Prestige Sports SUV but is certainly no slouch. The benefit of the diesel, and trade-off for the outright performance of the supercharged petrol engine is that it will sip fuel at the miserly rate of 8.4L/100K. Around town the difference is about half of what the petrol engine will realistically use. The power delivery has a slight but noticeable lag early on but then feels linear and almost unstoppable.

Let's have a look at some of the dimensions and capabilities of the Range Rover Sport. The overall length is 4,850mm with a wheelbase of 2,923mm. It has a peak height of 1,780mm and width of 2,073mm (with folded mirrors). The kerb weight of the SDV8 is 2,398kg. So you can see that while it looks svelte, it certainly carries its bulk well, especially given how well it rides and handles. The Sport has adaptive dynamics along with torque vectoring, both of which enhance the handling dynamics.

It is almost a given that buyers of the Range Rover Sport are buying the aspiration of adventure rather than the actual participation. However that doesn't diminish its capabilities. Make no mistake about it, the Range Rover Sport is an extremely capable off road vehicle. This is enhanced by the electronic air suspension.

Where to start? The wading depth is between 800 and 850mm (with air suspension). The vehicle in off road mode has an approach angle of 33 degrees, ramp over of 27.2 degrees and departure angle of 31 degrees. Ground clearance is an impressive 278mm. The Range Rover dual range 4WD Selective Terrain Response system is amongst the best in the industry.



RANGE ROVER SPORT SDV8 HSE DYNAMIC \$165,448 RDAP

by Rob Fraser

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Model | RR Sport SDV8 HSE |
| Model Price | \$165,448 RDAP |
| Engine | 4.4L SDV8 Turbo |
| Drivetrain | 8 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 25 kW @ 3,500rpm |
| Torque | 740Nm @ 1,750rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 219g/km |
| Economy actual | 8.4L/100 km ADR |
| Servicing | Fixed price plan |
| Tow Rating | Max 3,500kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 350kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



It has been proven time and time again over the harshest of conditions around the globe. Then there is the suspension. Nobody sorts their suspension to balance the demands of varying road and off road conditions like Range Rover. They are simply the best.

The major limiting factors in owners utilising all this capability are the low profile sport tyres, that would get messy very quickly, and the somewhat natural reluctance to take their near \$200,000 car bush. To further complement the capability the towing capacity is 3,500kg, with a tow ball rating of 350kg and electronic towing stability aids. Realistically the torquey V8 diesel engine will tow without fuss.

As you would expect the Range Rover Sport is packed with all forms of driver assistance systems. These include: dynamic stability control (DSC), low traction launch, electronic traction control (ETC), roll stability control (RSC), cornering brake control (CBC), hill descent control (HDC), electric parking brake (EPB), electronic brake-force distribution (EBD), gradient acceleration control (GAC), and gradient release control (GRC).

Additional driver assistance systems include: emergency braking, lane departure warning, cruise control and speed limiter, rear and front parking aid and rear view camera. Safety features include: anti-lock braking system (ABS), emergency brake assist, customer configurable autolock, power operated child locks, front airbags, with passenger seat occupant detector and seat belt pre-tensioners

So we have a large 4WD SUV which has reasonable performance, but the best 4WD capability in the segment. It will tow 3,500kg with ease and cocoon its occupants in absolute luxury. Overall it's pretty bloody good. It is expensive and has a very long and expensive options list but has a well-deserved reputation. Well worth a look I feel.



What's Good:

- Occupant luxury
- On/Off road capability
- Engine/transmission

What's Not:

- No Apple CarPlay®/Android® Auto
- Acceleration lag occasionally
- Expensive

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 83/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 8 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 10 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 8 | Value for Money | 6 |

OZROAMER 2017 4WD DUAL CAB UTE AWARD

It may come as a surprise to some readers, but one of the most competitive and exciting, yes exciting, segments is the Ute market in Australia. Since 2011, when there was a major shakeup with four new entrants with total redesigns, the segment has been growing and trending towards more up market offerings whilst not losing sight of its work base.

The Dual cab Ute has been described by Rob Fraser, as the 'Swiss Army Knife' of the car market. No other vehicle has as many diverse and contradicting demands on them. They are often asked to tow heavy trailers, carry huge payloads, all while transporting its occupants in relative comfort and increasing sophistication.

As such, we believe that the finalists must best represent these qualities overall and be robust and reliable off road, as well as comfortable on road, tow the family boat as well as carry the load. This requirement precludes some trendy Utes but we aren't about following trends, rather we are about helping buyers make the right choice.

Our finalists, we believe, are the best 4WD Dual Cab Utes on the market. These are the popular Ford Ranger XLT, the Holden Colorado LTZ, the robust Isuzu D Max LST, the well balanced Mitsubishi Triton Exceed, Mazda's underrated BT50 GT and the legendary Toyota Hilux SR5.



FORD RANGER XLT 3.2L 4WD**\$64,142 RDAP**

The Ranger XLT is a good 4WD Ute. It has the rugged external style that appeals to many buyers, is relatively full of standard features, has a powerful engine and transmission, is an excellent off road and towing vehicle and comes with the backing of Ford dealers everywhere in Australia. It is however relatively expensive compared to others in the segment, but has built surprising sales success despite the pricing.

by Anthony Hood



Ford has been very successful with sales of its Ranger Ute since the launch. Being a previous winner of the coveted OzRoamer Dual Cab Ute of the year award, the Ranger XLT is again a nominee for the award. As Ford was unable to supply us a vehicle for the review we sourced one privately from one of our readers and we thank her for supplying it to us. Developed alongside the Mazda BT 50, the Ranger is now more SUV like in ride and handling, features and appearance, but retains the rugged off road capabilities that has led to its sales success. The updates in 2017 have brought even more technology and safety features to the range.

Externally the Ranger has an American pick-up truck like appearance, trading off the super successful F Truck series. It looks big, tough and bold. Some people like that some like the more subtle appearance of say, the Isuzu D-Max. The exterior remains as it has been for a few years with the exception of a black fog lamp bezel. The XLT has a tow bar, projector headlights, 17 inch alloy wheels, heated external mirrors, a load box illuminator, daytime running lights and a bed liner with a 12V plug in the rear.



Inside the Ranger, the feeling is more SUV like than the external appearance would lead you to believe. The driver's seat is manually adjustable 6 ways with a lumbar support.

Many opt for the leather options at \$1,650, but our test vehicle had the fabric seats. Having said that the seats are comfortable.

The steering wheel is nice and thick and has the usual controls on it but it is only height adjustable. In front of the driver is the unusual dash with one large dial and two side dual colour 4.2" instrumentation screens. It's clear and concise. Overall it feels spacious and relaxed.

by Anthony Hood

The 8 inch centre stack screen is home for Sync III. This is Ford's system that now comes with voice control which can be a little temperamental. The system makes all functions available from the home screen which is split into 4 functions: climate, audio, phone and navigation, and has Apple CarPlay/Android Auto. The XLT now has Sat Nav with traffic management channel. The system has the unusual feature of allowing access to alternative screens from each screen making it easily navigable. The 6 speaker sound system belts out a good rock tune to keep me focused while driving long distances.

The rear seats are again pretty comfortable and what you would expect. Noting that there is plenty of headroom, there is average room for three people. I have previously had a Ranger XLT as a work Ute and I could fit both kids seats back there with some comfort. The Ranger has reasonable storage with cup and bottle holders everywhere, a huge centre console bin, reasonable sized glove box and more. The overall feel inside is one of good visibility, especially rearwards with the reversing camera. Other XLT features are: rain sensing wipers, tyre pressure monitoring system, dual zone climate control, cooled centre console, plastic side steps, electrochromatic rear view mirror, heated exterior mirrors, illuminated vanity mirrors, privacy glass and front parking sensors. There is available an optional \$800 XLT Technology Pack which includes adaptive cruise control with forward collision alert, automatic high beam control, driver impairment monitor, lane keeping aid and lane departure warning.

The cabin is more refined, quieter and there is a reduction of wind, road and tyre noise. This continues the evolution of Utes to SUV's. The other thing you notice is the on road ride. Previously it was good, not the best, but better than most. Now it challenges other Utes for the best ride prize. Don't get me wrong it still bounces around when empty, especially unladen, but it has improved.

The Ranger is home to the 5 cylinder 3.2L turbo diesel engine. This is a good performer producing power of 147kW @ 3,000rpm and torque of 470Nm @ 1,750-2,500rpm running through a 6 speed automatic transmission and driving the wheels through a dual range box. This makes for relaxed freeway cruising and excellent towing ability. It's no powerhouse but scoots along when pushed, yet is still reasonably economical.

The Rangers dimensions are an overall length of 5,426mm, width of 1,860mm and height of 1,821mm. Giving it that internal spacious feeling is the wheelbase of 3,220mm. Showing its 4WD credentials are the ground clearance of 237mm, wading depth of 800mm, approach angle of 29 degrees, rampover angle of 25 degrees and departure angle of 21 degrees. Around town you feel its size, but it has a relatively tight turning circle of 12.7m. On the freeways and secondary roads it seems to come into its own. Here the size is an advantage and the engine can purr along untroubled. The linear delivery of torque feels like it just propels you forward. Off road the low down torque allows most situations to be controlled from your right foot. That is what you want



FORD RANGER XLT 3.2L 4WD

\$64,142 RDAP

by Anthony Hood

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Model | Ranger XLT |
| Model Price | \$64,142 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.2L 5 Cyl TDi |
| Drivetrain | 4WD 6 speed AT |
| Power | 147kW @ 3,000rpm |
| Torque | 470Nm @ 1,750rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 229g/km |
| Economy ADR | 8.7L/100km |
| Tow Capacity | Max 3,500kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 350kg |
| Servicing | Capped Price |
| Warranty | 3 yr/ Unlimited km 1 Yr roadside assist |



I have driven the Ranger pretty much on all surfaces such as on road, forest trails, on the farm, gravel rocky tracks, sand etc. It always feels in control. It's a great 4WD. The dial 4WD controls are simple and intuitive to use. The other benefit of the Ranger off road is the rear diff lock. This should be used more to get you through somewhere you need to go or to get out of trouble, not take you further into the bush than your skills dictate you should go.

With a 5 Star ANCAP safety rating and the optional technology pack, the Ranger features include: adaptive cruise control with forward collision warning, multiple airbags everywhere, dynamic stability control incorporating anti-lock brakes system (ABS), rollover mitigation, trailer sway control, and traction control system, emergency brake assist, front and rear parking sensors, hill descent control, hill launch control, lane keeping system and rear view camera etc.

One thing that the Ranger does very well is tow things. With a tow rating of 3,500kg and tow ball rating of 350kg it is perfect for an active lifestyle. The trailer sway control, linear delivery of torque at low revs and good feedback through the steering wheel means that the Ranger is amongst the best of the Utes for towing. It gives the driver a solid feeling of control. There has been some reliability issues with the engine management systems and a few other niggles with the engine, but overall the Ford Ranger is a good option for a family 4WD Ute. Make no mistake it drives like a 4WD Ute, a smooth one, but a Ute.

The Ranger XLT is a good 4WD Ute. It has the rugged external style that appeals to many buyers, is relatively full of standard features, has a powerful engine and transmission, is an excellent off road and towing vehicle and comes with the backing of Ford dealers everywhere in Australia. It is however relatively expensive compared to others in the segment but has built itself sales success despite the pricing.



What's Good:

- Towing and 4WD ability
- Engine / transmission
- Ride for a Ute

What's Not:

- Relatively pricey
- No reach adjustable steering
- Some safety optional

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 88/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 10 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 8 |

HOLDEN COLORADO LTZ 2.8L 4WD

\$58,052 RDAP



The MY17 Colorado is a substantial improvement over an already impressive product. The design and engineering development is like a jigsaw puzzle. There are a myriad of little things that have been improved.

by Rob Fraser



It may come as a surprise to some readers but one of the most competitive and exciting, (yes exciting), segments is the Ute market in Australia. Since 2011, when there was a major shakeup with four new entrants with total redesigns, the segment has been growing and trending towards more up market offerings while not losing sight of its work base.

The dual cab Ute has been described as the 'Swiss Army Knife' of the car market. No other vehicle has as many diverse and contradicting demands on them. They are often asked to tow heavy trailers, carry huge payloads, all while transporting its occupants in relative comfort and increasing sophistication.

Into a very competitive segment that has undergone radical change over the last 6 years, started by Holden itself, Holden released its revamped 2017 MY Colorado, with redefined levels of power, torque, ride comfort and towing capacity. The MY 17 Colorado has taken these features to a new level again.



Launched early August the MY17 Colorado is a substantial improvement over an already impressive product. The design and engineering development is like a jigsaw puzzle. There are a myriad of little things that have been improved that all add up to the smoother ride and improved handling.

Some of the revamped features are subtle, such as the new grill, LED headlamps etc. some are more obvious, like the new Apple and Android connectivity. Some revisions you can't see, like the numerous engineering improvements, but you can certainly feel them. In addition to these improvements, Holden has an almost complete range of Original Equipment accessories that has advantages over after market fittings.

by Rob Fraser

Let's start at the outside and ignore the obvious marketing over sell like "The redesigned Colorado adopts a global design language that communicates power, strength and prestige. Sculptural artistry and precision are emphasised by a distinctive, sporty front fascia, combined with an extended slim line grille and more muscular bonnet that give the vehicle a tough, strong stance..."

I really wish I could write like that!!!! However one thing is for sure, the redesign is a more stylish and robust design. It has a stronger truck like appearance that strangely is at odds with improved sophistication. I especially liked the new grill, halogen headlights and daytime running lights. A clever and practical touch that simply combines form and function. Other features include heated external mirrors, side steps, LED tail lamps, front fog lights, 18 inch alloys running 265/60 R18 110T HT tyres,

The other thing that impresses are the additions to the already long list of existing original accessories. These include: bull bars, safari bar, bash plates, extended rail sports bars, steel rear step, tubular steel side steps, led driving lights, fender flares, nudge bar, snorkel, 18in wheels and all terrain tyres. These look the goods and on the surface mean that buyers can option up their Ute with Holden accessories and benefit from the full manufacturer warranty and not feel they have an inferior product. Big tick there. I hope they extend to suspension upgrades in the future as well.

Inside the story just gets better. There is a definite feeling of a higher level of passenger comfort. The soft touch dash, door trims, seats etc. all have improved materials and the interior feels more integrated.

The seats are relatively comfortable. Our test vehicle had fabric seats, but I would DEFINITELY opt for the \$1500 leather heated seat package, more for the benefits and ease of cleaning of the leather than anything else. The driver's seat is electronically adjustable for side and squab tilt but no lumbar support. They are also a little flat in the seat squab, meaning that on long trips they can lead to a numb bum syndrome.

The leather steering wheel is comfortable in the hands, with thick spokes housing the usual controls for audio and cruise control. The indicator and wiper stalks are visible above the steering wheel spokes which is a good thing. Unfortunately the steering wheel is height adjustable only which means that taller drivers with long legs will be reaching for the wheel.

The dash is clear and easy to read, providing pretty much all the information the driver needs with the MFD. The electrochromatic rear view mirror provides excellent rear vision along with large external rear view mirrors. They can be adjusted to the perfect angle, which is important as there is no blind spot indicator. Some good features however are the automatic headlights and wipers.



by Rob Fraser



The centre stack houses the new Holden MyLink infotainment system equipped with Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto connectivity, delivered through a colour touch screen housed in the vehicle's centre stack. When coupled with Digital (DAB+) radio, embedded satellite navigation and voice recognition, it is actually pretty good to use and simple and the touch screen is quite responsive. Above the centre screen is a little ridge under the dash, which has a sharp edge on it that can be intrusive. Take note Mitsubishi, Holden provides satellite navigation additionally to the smart phone system, so drivers that venture far from reception can still determine where they are!

Below the Sat Nav system is the usual array of buttons for A/C and stereo etc. The safety feature buttons are further down as well as the controls for the heated front seats. Storage is a little limited with a small centre console, smallish glove box and room for small bottles only in the door pockets. One thing I don't like is that Holden has removed the slide out cup/bottle holders below the side A/C vents. They along with Isuzu created that design and it was simple but brilliant, yet they have done away with them. Other features include rain sensing wipers, remote vehicle start as a party trick, and electronic climate air conditioning,

The rear bench is likewise, comfortable but also a little flat in the squab and isn't as comfortable over long distances as some other Utes. Rear seat room is limited but there is plenty of head room. There isn't really much more to say about the rear section.

The Colorado is powered by the 2.8L Duramax Turbo Diesel Engine type 4-cylinder Capacity. This drives through either a six speed Auto or Manual transmission. Maximum power is 147kW @ 3,600rpm and maximum torque of 440Nm @ 1,600-2,800rpm for the manual and 500Nm @ 2,000-2,200rpm for the automatic.

One big criticism in the past of the Colorado was that while it had the headline 500Nm of torque it didn't translate well to everyday driving. In late 2014 I think, Holden changed the transmission calibration to extract more of the available power. It helped but still wasn't enough? This time the engineers have, through the compiling of the jigsaw pieces, finally allowed Colorado to extract what seems like the full torque. It drives like it should now and tows much better.

The Colorado has shift on the fly 4WD system, but with the rear LSD, unfortunately misses out on a rear diff lock. Taking the Colorado on 4WD tracks is a breeze. It has plenty of control on your right foot, easily adapts to specific conditions and plenty of grunt when needed. It will tow 3,500Kg with a 350Kg tow ball rating and with the trailer sway control, tows easily and safely. Holden has a great payload calculator on its website. You really should check it out. They have been excellent in educating the drivers about the variances in what can be towed and carried etc.

by Rob Fraser

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | Colorado LTZ |
| Model Price | \$58,052 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.8L 4 Cyl Duramax |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 147kW @ 3,600rpm |
| Torque | 500Nm @ 2,000rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 228g/km |
| Economy ADR | 8.6L/100 km |
| Servicing | Lifetime Capped |
| Tow Rating | 3,500kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 350kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 1 Yrs Roadside Assist |



Holden engineers have also introduced something quite clever called the Centrifugal Pendulum Absorber (CPA) torque converter. This basically in simple English, counteracts and smoothes torsional vibrations in the driveline normally felt in the cabin. Combine this with: balance shaft relocation, engine acoustic pack including – Injector Insulator – Metal timing cover – Oil pan insulator and the wind noise package, all new engine mounts, all new chassis tune and you feel the quietness inside while idling and driving.

In comparison to competitors it now rivals the VW Amarok on road for ride and handling and probably surpasses it for quietness. Off road it rides as good as any of its competitors. Another big tick here!

As you would expect the new Colorado has a 5 star ANCAP safety rating with additional active and passive safety features. This ensures that Colorado is not only one of the most high-tech Utes in Australia, but also one of the safest. For slow speed reversing manoeuvres, a rear-view camera is available as standard across the range. The forward collision alert and lane departure warning accompany front and rear park assist and tyre pressure monitoring system, traction control system (TCS), electronic brakeforce distribution (EBD), descent control system (DCS), electronic stability control (ESC), hill start assist, trailer sway control (TSC) and anti-lock braking system (ABS) combine to provide a comprehensive active safety package. However inexplicably it doesn't have blind spot monitors? An upgrade in passive safety features includes key structural improvements in addition to a new driver's knee airbag, which takes Colorado's total airbag count to seven.

I have always been a fan of the Colorado, it is a robust and solid 4WD Ute with excellent safety credentials. Despite some glaring deficiencies like no lumbar support, no blind spot monitors, no rear diff lock and no air conditioned seats it currently is the best overall balanced offering on the market. However this is an extremely fast moving and competitive segment, with competitors already surpassing the Colorado with some features that the buying public are looking for.



What's Good:

- Engine/transmission
- Towing and 4WD capability
- Factory accessories

What's Not:

- No lumbar support
- No rear diff lock
- No reach adjustment steering

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 91/100

| | | | |
|------------------|----|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 10 |
| Performance | 10 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |



ISUZU D-MAX LST 3.0L 4WD

\$59,632 RDAP



It has always been my belief that Isuzu's are one of the toughest Utes on the market and they don't make enough noise about the small truck connection with their engines. These engines are plain bullet proof. If you want an honest, robust, tough, economical, value for money and comfortable (I have run out of superlatives) Ute, do not overlook the upgraded Isuzu.



by Rob Fraser



Amongst the top 5 or six Utes on the Australian market, Isuzu holds a special place. The latest Euro 5 compliant Ute heralds a cost effective, hardworking, robust Ute that is as equally at home on the road, working for tradies, on the farm and on Australia's outback roads towing something adventurous behind. From the first time I drove an Isuzu Ute I was impressed with their honest approach. Here was one tough Ute. We still have an old Rodeo (Isuzu) Ute belting around the farm which is almost indestructible.

When the MU-X came along it blew away the opposition, taking honours in its segment in the OzRoamer COTY awards for a number of years running. In fact my best mate asked me what Ute to buy. I gave him a choice of two and he chose the Isuzu. We have reviewed the D-Max and MU-X a number of times and are big fans of the ride, handling, comfort and 4WD ability.

However while it was at the forefront of design when it was launched some 5 or 6 years ago, it has started to lag a little behind the aggressive competition. So the recent upgrade was long awaited and well received, but noticeable for a few things that weren't included. Given that Utes are now expected to be all things to most people, they are more car like and the Isuzu now has improved cabin comfort (NVH) and safety features.



What is noticeable by its absence is the reversing camera across the range, rear diff lock, some safety features, A/C seats and reach adjustable steering wheel.

There have been a few design modifications to the external appearance of the Isuzu. A newly designed engine hood and bold grille gives the D-MAX a bolder yet sleeker appearance. It seems there are two schools of thought for Ute design. The truck like appearance of the Ranger and Colorado, or the more subtle sleek look of the Isuzu and Mitsubishi Triton.

by Rob Fraser

As part of the front end redesign there is a new headlamp design that accentuates the flowing lines of the front fascia and bumper and includes projector headlamps with LED Daytime Running Lamps. The LS-T variant 17MY D-MAX also receives new design alloy wheels. These are 18 inch wheels, that while they look great, they aren't the best for finding true off road tyres to fit.

The D-MAX's aerodynamic wedge shape and roof design provides one of the lowest coefficient of drag (Cd) in its class. Extensively tested in various wind tunnel test facilities around the world – including the Japan Railway Research Institute and wind tunnel facilities in Europe – the Cd of the 17MY D-MAX is 0.4% better than the previous model.

Internally the D-MAX has received significant improvements to cabin comfort with the addition of new sound and vibration insulation that provides a more composed driving experience for all occupants. They certainly are quieter inside. The front seats are now more comfortable with greater squab padding and back support. The older seats could be a little hard on the bum after a while, not so now. The driver has in front of them, the dash with two large dials and a dual centre MFD. The steering wheel is only height adjustable, but feels great in the hands and frames the dash perfectly. Taller driver will reach for it though.

To the centre lies the 8-inch touch screen display with audio system and in-built Sat Nav. In addition, for great audio sound there are eight speakers, delivering audio for all occupants: two roof mounted speakers, two front door mounted speakers, two dash mounted tweeters and two rear door mounted speakers. On top of the dash is a handy little enclosed storage area. Below on the centre stack is a round dial for A/C and other features, while it looks large it is handy.

Behind the transmission is the 4WD select dial for shift on the fly changes and cup holders. Storage is good with dual glove box and little door pockets etc. USB ports now number three. Two are located in the front dash and one in the rear, providing convenient charge points for mobile phones and other portable devices with USB charge ports.

Rear seats are as most Utes, a little flat and upright. Things are a little tight back there for taller occupants but there is some flexibility with fold up seats. Eventually manufacturers will continue the urbanisation of the interior to the rear section.

Let's have a quick look at the new Euro5 compliant 3.0 litre turbo-diesel engine (world first for Isuzu), pumping out an improved 430Nm of torque. To assist with transferring the higher torque to the road there is a new 6-speed auto or manual transmission. We had the opportunity to drive the new D MAX over a range of different conditions, ranging from city peak hour, highway driving, secondary back roads, beach driving and a relatively simple 4WD track. I have always liked the way the Isuzu's drive, now more so!



by Rob Fraser

The main feature of the upgrade is introduction of a Euro5 emission compliant 3.0 litre 4JJ1-TC Hi-Power turbo-diesel engine. This new engine is a world first for Isuzu. It was developed exclusively for the Australian market after exhaustive research and testing into the use and demands of existing Isuzu owners, and no other Isuzu D-MAX or MU-X market currently features an Isuzu 3.0 litre Euro5 compliant engine.

While its delivery was always punching above its weight, the previous engines 380Nm of torque was lacking compared to serious competitors! Thankfully now, Isuzu have bumped that headline maximum torque figure to 430Nm. However, being Isuzu and having all that truck experience, they understand that a shallow peak torque figure, while sounding good, often translates poorly to the real world use. So compared to the previous engine, 380Nm of torque (previous maximum) is now on tap from 1,700 - 3,500rpm – which is 100rpm lower and continues 700rpm higher – meaning the same engine rpm provides more power and the same torque can be generated at lower engine rpm.

By producing more power at lower engine rpm, and more torque, the new “Pumped Up” D-MAX is both more fuel efficient and produce less toxic exhaust emissions – but still deliver Isuzu’s famous “tree-stump-pulling grunt”, that’s fit for the biggest of jobs. Having towed lots of trailers with anything from an old Nissan Patrol through to a furniture trailer, loads of hay and camper trailers, caravans with an Isuzu, I can attest to the real world usability and economy of the previous engine and again the new engine is better. Much better. Off road the D-Max is equal to any of the top 4WD Utes.

As I have mentioned previously I have little interest in what makes my vehicles go, more what they can do for me. However on this occasion I actually listened when they were espousing all the engineering changes that took place. It was absolutely apparent that the improvements are a jigsaw puzzle of little and big changes, throughout a myriad of areas, to achieve the result and ensure that Isuzu’s legendary durability and reliability lives on. The second main story here is the new Aisin AWR6B45 6-Speed Automatic Transmission with “lock-up” torque converter. There was absolutely nothing wrong with the previous transmission, this one is simply better.

As mentioned before the once humble Ute now occupies multiple uses for the family. One pleasing aspect of that change is a renewed focus on safety upgrades. The D Max LST offers an extensive and impressive level of occupant protection, including, six airbags (dual front, side and full-length curtain), 4-channel 4-sensor anti-skid brake system (ABS) with electronic brakeforce distribution (EBD), electronic stability control (ESC), traction control system (TCS) and brake assist (BA), as well as hill start assist (HAS) and hill decent control (HDC) for both 4X4 and 4X2 vehicles, plus dual pre-tensioners with load limiters for the front seatbelts and reversing camera.

ISUZU D-MAX LST 3.0L 4WD

\$59,632 RDAP

by Rob Fraser

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Model | D-MAX LST |
| Model Price | \$59,632 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.0L 4 Cyl TDi |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 130kW @ 3,000rpm |
| Torque | 430Nm @ 2,000rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 209g/km |
| Economy ADR | 7.9L/100 km |
| Servicing | 5 Yr Service plan |
| Tow Rating | 3,500kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 350kg |
| Warranty | 5 Yrs / 130,000 km 5 Yrs Roadside Assist |



However some of the competition has taken safety features even further with features, like forward collision alert, blind spot indicators, trailer sway control, and lane departure warning. So while the upgraded Isuzu is certainly better than the previous model it still is lagging a little. There are height adjustable head restraints for all occupants along with ISOFIX child restraint points.

Every Isuzu vehicle is backed by the Isuzu UTE Australia 555 Service Plus Program which includes a 5 year warranty, 5 year Roadside Assistance and 5 year/50,000 kilometre Capped Price Servicing program. The capped price service kilometre is a little low I believe but better than before.

A couple of other thoughts. I am pleased that Isuzu have kept the immensely practical pull out cup holders on the dash, after Holden inexplicably removed them, even as Toyota introduced them on the Fortuner and Hilux. Also following a general trend, Isuzu has available a wide range of OME accessories like snorkel, canopy etc. Not as many as the Holden Colorado, but the range has increased. Finally, even though NVH has reduced you can still hear enough of the diesel rumble to provide comfort to the ears.

So to sum up, the upgraded Isuzu D-Max has received a much needed and awaited Euro 5 engine that boosts not only the headline torque figure but also the spread of delivery. They have a new Aisin 6 speed transmission in both manual and auto format. They have both external and internal design changes that improves comfort and reduces NVH. They are priced at excellent value. Overall Isuzu deserves a number of big ticks for the upgrade.

It has always been my belief that Isuzu's are one of the toughest Utes on the market and they don't make enough noise about the small truck connection with their engines. These engines are plain bullet proof. If you want an honest, robust, tough, economical, value for money and comfortable (I have run out of superlatives) Ute do not overlook any of the upgraded Isuzu's.



What's Good:

- Towing ability
- Torque band
- Reliability and robustness

What's Not:

- Surprisingly pricey
- Lacking some safety features
- No rear diff lock

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 90/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 8 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 10 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |

MAZDA BT 50 GT 3.2L 4WD**\$59,627 RDAP**

The BT 50 has been a success for Mazda in sales and is an important part of their range. It looks are more subtle than some others, but especially the GT is packed with features, has a well combined engine and transmission, is comfortable both on and off road, is great on all 4WD surfaces and tows like a dream. It in some ways is an under appreciated 4WD Dual Cab Ute, which is a pity given how good it is.

by Anthony Hood



Mazda developed the BT 50 alongside the Ranger Ute a few years ago and despite there being many similarities the market perceived them differently. For some strange reason the more expensive Ranger outsold the BT 50. This is something I just can't understand, even though the Ford has some extra features, buyers can essentially get the same Ute cheaper? The BT 50 GT has a softer exterior appearance than the Ranger, with a sloping nose and grill and softer lines through the side, but muscular wheel arch bulges. External features of the BT 50 GT include: 17 inch alloy wheels running 265/65 R17 tyres, front halogen fog lamps, auto headlamps, rear step bumper, side steps, and a battery in the tub.

Inside the BT 50 GT is reasonably spacious. The leather 8 way electronically adjusted driver's seat is fairly comfortable. The leather steering wheel is only height adjustable unfortunately but does have audio and cruise control buttons for ease of use. There is enough seat slide for my lanky 195cm frame and head room as well. In front of the driver the dash is a two dial design with the centre split into two distinct information areas. Pretty easy to understand.



The centre console has the transmission lever and the 4WD select dial in front of the cup holders. It is a clean and simple design. Above that on the stack are the buttons for the rear diff lock, traction control and hill descent control and then air-conditioning controls. The centre stack houses the new Alpine 8-inch high-resolution colour touch screen which now includes a fully integrated reverse camera and an improved Sat Nav. system that also features point-to-point four-wheel drive off-road navigation with 3D digital terrain.

by Anthony Hood

For the first time in a BT-50, the infotainment system has split screen capabilities, allowing both audio and navigation content to be viewed at the same time and displays HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) information, while incoming mobile calls can be answered via the steering wheel controls. Video enabled and connected via USB or HDMI cable, passengers will be able to watch their favourite pre-loaded television shows and movies while the vehicle is stationary, as well as play MP3, WMA, AAC or FLAC audio and MP4 and MKV video files. Also, the HDMI input replicates shows being watched via streaming services (Netflix/Stan/Foxtel) or on portable DVD players and tablets within the vehicle.

Including DAB+ digital radio there is improved audio quality from the four 50 watt amplifiers. The system also offers standard live traffic updates through the Radio Data System (RDA), hands-free phone functions are voice controlled via Bluetooth, and the dashboard now includes more accessible USB, HDMI and 3.5mm AUX ports.

Rear seats are good for three people and they have rear A/C vents and controls which is pretty cool. It actually is one of the better rear seat areas amongst the Utes on the COTY program. Like the Ranger, I have had my two boys back there in their child seats. Other features of the BT 50 GT include: wipers (front) 2-speed with rain-sensing function, air-conditioning (dual-zone climate control), rear-view mirror auto dimming, power mirrors (heating and folding function) with turn indicator and privacy glass. The BT 50 GT has reasonable storage with cup and bottle holders everywhere, a centre console bin, reasonable glove box, under rear seat and more. The overall feel inside is one of good visibility, especially rearwards with the reversing camera.

The BT 50 GT is home to the 5 cylinder 3.2L turbo diesel engine. This is a good performer producing power of 147kW @ 3,000rpm and torque of 470Nm @ 1,750-2,500rpm running through a 6 speed automatic transmission and driving the wheels through a dual range box. This makes for relaxed freeway cruising and excellent towing ability. It's no powerhouse but scoots along when pushed yet is still reasonably economical.

The BT 50 dimensions are an overall length of 5,365mm, width of 1,850mm and height of 1,821mm. Giving it that internal spacious feeling is the wheelbase of 3,220mm. Showing its 4WD credentials are the ground clearance of 237mm, wading depth of 800mm, approach angle of 28 degrees, rampover angle of 25 degrees and departure angle of 26.4 degrees.

Similar to the Ranger, around town you feel its size, but it has a relatively tight turning circle of 12.4m, but on the freeways and secondary roads it seems to come into its own. Here the size is an advantage and the engine can purr along untroubled. The linear delivery of torque feels like it just propels you forward. Off road the low down torque allows most situations to be controlled from your right foot.



by Anthony Hood

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|-----------------|---|
| Model | Mazda BT 50 GT |
| Model Price | \$59,627 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.2L 5 Cyl TD |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 147kW @ 3,000rpm |
| Torque | 470Nm @ 1,750rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 | 229g/km |
| Economy ADR | 9. L/100 km |
| Servicing | Fixed Price |
| Tow Rating | 3,500kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 350kg |
| Warranty | 2 Yrs / Unlimited km 1 Yrs Roadside Assist |



I have driven the BT 50, like the Ranger pretty much on all surfaces, road, forest trails, on the farm, gravel rocky tracks, sand etc. It always feels in control. It's a great 4WD. The dial 4WD controls are simple and intuitive to use. The driver can shift between 2H and 4H with the vehicle moving at speeds up to 120km/h and the accelerator pedal released. The other benefit of the BT 50 GT off road is the rear diff lock. This should be used more to get you through somewhere you need to go or to get out of trouble, not take you further into the bush than your skills dictate you should go. One thing you notice is how good the ride is either laden or unladen. It's amongst the best in the segment. Also the steering provides direct feedback in line with the Mazda philosophy.

Safety features include for the 5 star ANCAP rating: Airbags SRS: front (driver and passenger side (front) and curtain (front and rear), anti-lock braking system (ABS), dynamic stability control (DSC), emergency stop signal (ESS), hill descent control (HDC), 4x4 only , hill launch assist (HLA) , locking rear differential (LRD) – 4x4 only, roll stability control (RSC), traction control system (TCS) and trailer sway control (TSC)

Like the Ranger the BT 50 GT is great at towing heavy trailers. With a tow rating of 3,500kg and tow ball rating of 350kg it is perfect for an active lifestyle. The trailer sway control, linear delivery of torque at low revs and good feedback through the steering wheel means that the BT 50 GT is amongst the best of the Utes for towing. It gives the driver a solid feeling of control.

The BT 50 has been a success for Mazda in sales and is an important part of their range. It looks are more subtle than some others but, especially the GT, is packed with features and has a well combined engine and transmission, is comfortable both on and off road, is great on all 4WD surfaces and tows like a dream. It in some ways is an under appreciated 4WD Dual Cab Ute which is a pity given how good it is.



What's Good:

- Build quality / Style
- Value for money
- Towing and 4WD ability

What's Not:

- Missing some safety features
- No Apple Car Play or Android
- No reach adjustable steering

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 90/100

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|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 8 | Towing Ability | 10 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |

MITSUBISHI TRITON EXCEED 2.4 DT**\$53,127 RDAP**

The Mitsubishi Triton Exceed remains our choice for the best balanced Ute on the market but like all things automotive the competition is close and Holden has surpassed it for safety. As mentioned, this award was extremely close with a number of vehicles one or two points behind.



by Rob Fraser



Launched earlier in 2015, the 5th generation Mitsubishi Triton Exceed is previous three time winner of the Dual Cab Ute Award. Again this segment is very competitive and the winner was just one point in front of three competitors. As in previous years there was strong competition from Ford Ranger, Isuzu D Max and this years winner the Colorado LTZ.

The all new Triton design looks way better in the flesh than in photos, keeping the distinctive grill and front end, but the sides have a subtle high waistline and lower curve. The rear end loses the slab back from the last model and gains crisp lines. The Australian influence is strong with customer feedback sessions and many kilometres of local testing showing through in the design functionality, engine's torque characteristics, high speed stability on gravel surfaces and overall towing performance and stability. More so than almost any other vehicle, the humble Ute - an Australian invention - has to suit a multitude of purposes, from a work horse in the mines, hardworking trade or farm Ute, comfortable family 4WD to heavy duty tow vehicle, the Ute, design has many divergent outcomes required.



Perhaps the hardest of these is the suspension and engine transmission combination. The characteristics that make a good riding and handling on road Ute are almost opposed to those that make a good tow vehicle and far removed from those that make a robust off road vehicle.

Some Utes get it right for on road handling but are crap off road, like the Amarok, and some are better suited to off road work but crap on road. Some, like the Ranger, Colorado, BT 50 and D Max, achieve a good balance. At the risk of starting a debate amongst the 'experts', the Triton is probably the best balanced handling Ute available on the market today, equalled now by the Colorado.

by Rob Fraser

The Triton is certainly well balanced on dirt roads, on sand and on the highway. We also had a chance to test the articulation off road and again it feels as though it equals the best in class there as well. That's a big wrap coming from me as I am often critical of the balance of Ute ride and handling. The Triton has always been a great performer off road, being robust, honest and reliable. Exceed models are fitted with Mitsubishi's new generation Super Select 4WD II system, which offers four driving modes including locked 4WD mode. Key benefits include better fuel economy and quietness in 2WD mode and Triton's interesting and clever 40/60 front/rear torque distribution in full time 4WD mode for superior cornering stability.

Inside, the new model brings with it front and rear seats that have been specifically redesigned and are very comfortable and there is plenty of rear seat room (thanks to the clever J design), a dash that is more upmarket, modern, stylish and easy to use and read. In fact, that is the catchphrase for the interior as a whole; easy to use and comfortable. With a height and reach adjustable small leather steering wheel and enhanced seat travel, it's easy to find that all important comfortable driving position. Like all the Utes, the Triton has moved to a more sophisticated car like interior.

The new Triton range is powered by a new 2.4-litre MIVEC turbo diesel engine. It achieves 133kW of power at 3,500rpm and 430Nm peak torque at 2,500rpm. While this is slightly lower than some of its competitors, the key here is that the majority of that torque comes in at around 1500 rpm with another hit at 1750 rpm and the delivery makes for relaxed and economical driving. The Exceed comes with a new 5 speed auto. Mitsubishi could have taken the opportunity to introduce a 6 speed auto box, but the transmission works great with the low down torque delivery of the engine and fuel economy is frugal at around 7.5L/100km. However it falls further behind the competition in transmission. Another key improvement is the throttle response. The other related area is towing. While the 3.1T tow limit is below the headline figures spouted by its competitors, the real world situation is that it is more than adequate. This, coupled with a generous Gross Combination Mass rating of 5,885kg and low kerb mass, provides the Triton with a practical, real world balance between towing capacity and payload.

The Australian market presents a unique challenge for engineering towing requirements due to the vast range of towing situations and load types that need to be catered for. Key attributes of new Triton have contributed to the new model's outstanding towing performance. These include engine torque delivery, auto transmission calibration and throttle response to provide strong, composed towing performance across a vast range of situations. Also complementing Triton's towing performance is the new steering system, which enables Triton to handle challenging towing manoeuvres with ease. Trailer Stability Assist has been fitted to all models as a standard safety feature. This system, in combination with the new, well-balanced suspension set up, ensures Triton delivers a stable and secure tow vehicle package that's suitable for towing a variety of loads.



MITSUBISHI TRITON EXCEED 2.4 DT

\$53,127 RDAP

by Rob Fraser

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|-----------------|---|
| Model | Triton Exceed |
| Model Price | \$53,127 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.4L DT-D 4Cyl |
| Drivetrain | 4WD 5 speed Auto |
| Power | 133kW @ 3,500rpm |
| Torque | 430Nm @ 2,500rpm |
| Safety | 5 Star ANCAP |
| CO2 Emissions | 201g/km |
| Economy ADR | 7.6L/100km |
| Tow Capacity | Max 3,100 kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 310kg |
| Servicing | TBC |
| Warranty | 5 yr/ 100,000 km with 1 Yr roadside assist |



Exceed models also gain an electronic rear diff lock as standard. The new Triton has a best in class approach angle of 30 degrees and departure angle of 22 degrees. The manoeuvrability of the Triton off road is enhanced by the tight turning circle of 11.8 m and a lock to lock ratio of only 3.8 turns, making it surprisingly nimble off road and on tight trails.

Triton's new flagship model ,Exceed, offers a full array of standard equipment. Highlights include: automatic transmission with steering wheel mounted paddle shifters, electronic diff lock, one touch start with smart key, dusk sensing headlights, rain-sensing automatic intermittent wipers, 4-way adjustable electronic driver's seat, HID headlights, LED daylight running lamps, front fog lamps, side steps, sports bar, leather trim steering wheel and gear shift, dual zone air conditioning and premium audio system. There is a 7-inch colour touch screen, CD player, SD card and satellite navigation, Bluetooth hands-free with voice control and audio streaming. New Triton models have an official 5-star ANCAP safety rating. Triton's exceptional safety performance is underpinned by Mitsubishi's proven RISE (Reinforced Impact Safety Evolution) body technology. Passive safety features include driver and front passenger SRS airbags, side and curtain airbags and driver's knee airbag, while seat belts are fitted with pre-tensioners and force limiters. Other features include active stability and traction control or ASTC, Mitsubishi's emergency stop signal function, brake override system which uses sensors to recognise when both accelerator and brake pedals are being pressed at the same time and gives priority to the brake system, and a rear view camera is a standard feature on Exceed.

We really can't say much more than we did last year. It remains our choice for the best balanced Ute on the market but like all things automotive the competition is close and Holden has surpassed it for safety. As mentioned, this award was extremely close with a number of vehicles one or two points behind. Any of the top 6 Utes which include Ford Ranger, Isuzu D MAX, Holden Colorado and Toyota Hilux Mazda BT-50 could be the winner with minor adjustments. That is how competitive this segment is. In fact any of those 6 Utes would make their buyer happy.



What's Good:

- Value for Money
- Internal Comfort
- Robustness

What's Not:

- Slightly low towing capability
- Interior a little dark
- Prefer the 8 speed Pajero Sport

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 90/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 8 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 8 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 9 |
| Performance | 9 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 10 |



TOYOTA HILUX SR5 2.8L 4WD

\$61,882 RDAP



The Toyota Hilux continues to be a premier 4WD Ute. Recent improvements have made it better and stronger. It is now better at towing and driving off road, while cocooning the occupants in more comfort and style. It missed the award by one point but to be honest I have never met a buyer that has regretted buying a Hilux.

by Rob Fraser



Australia is one of the most competitive Ute markets in the world and demand for a better class of Ute has increased. The Ute market is shifting and Toyota needs to stay relevant in the ultra-competitive segment with more refined and improved offerings from Ford, Mitsubishi, Holden, Mazda and Isuzu in the last few years.

More buyers are wanting more features, more SUV like interiors, more luxury, better handling, better towing capability, better economy with more power, more crossover ability from work Ute to family adventure chariot.

Toyota Hilux has been an outstanding sales success for Toyota over the years with over 850,000 sold in Australia alone since 1968. That equates to better than 1 in 20 globally and as such Australia is an important market for the Hilux. To put it in perspective the Hilux in all its variants has been the highest selling vehicle for the last couple of years, yes a Ute is the top selling vehicle in Australia To say it is important to Toyota Australia is an understatement.



When Toyota released the eighth-generation HiLux they made it stronger. Everything has been strengthened, including a thicker frame, stiffer body, new high-torque turbo-diesel engines, advanced six-speed transmissions, beefed-up suspension and brakes, and expanded off-road ability.

Externally it has a very distinctive grill and protruding nose. I actually like it but many don't. The SR5, as you would expect, has plenty of external bling like LED headlights and daytime running lamps as standard, front fog lights, a sports bar in the tub, chrome radiator grille, chrome rear step and new 18-inch alloy wheels which are fitted with a new 265/60 R18 highway tyre that is designed to assist with fuel economy without compromising handling

by Rob Fraser

Internally our SR5 was fitted with the optional pack that included leather seats, which were well worth it. They are electronically adjustable and very comfortable. There is enough slide for even the tall drivers to sit and with the height and reach adjustable leather steering wheel, everyone can get comfortable.

The dash has a two dial blue light style with a MFD between. Very clear and easy to use and read. The steering wheel frames the dash perfectly. Some vehicles, when you drop the wheel, you lose the top of the dash from sight. The wheel itself feels great in your hands and houses the audio and MFD controls. The cruise control is the familiar stalk below the indicator stalk. I actually really like this simple and functional system. Indicator and wiper stalks are slightly higher than the steering wheel spokes to allow for clear sighting. Toyota has introduced the slide out cup/bottle holders below the side vents, a brilliant idea copied from Isuzu.

The centre console is uncluttered with the transmission lever and a drive select mode button. In front are two cup holders and behind a clever storage area. The centre console is padded on top and a reasonable size. The selection dial for the 2WD/4WD system is located just below and to the left of the steering wheel. This sits alongside the rear diff lock, downhill descent control and traction control switches. Just above are the A/C controls etc. Sitting proud on top of the centre stack, is the 7 inch screen that houses Satellite Navigation, Toyota Link, audio system etc. It works well enough but Toyota keeps refusing to include Apple CarPlay® and Android® Auto and that is a pain for some drivers.

The rear seats are comfortable for three people with reasonable knee clearance but good head and shoulder room. There is a top-tether anchor and two ISOFIX child-restraint anchors, and a 60-40 split-fold rear seat base with central armrest and A/C vents.

Top-of-the-line SR5 also has keyless smart entry and start, automatic air-conditioning, chrome door handles, premium steering wheel and shift knob, an alarm, auto-levelling LED headlamps, front air conditioned cooler box capable of heating or cooling two 600ml bottles, auto on/off LED headlamps with auto-levelling and LED daytime running lights (DRLs), 2 x 12V accessory plugs, 220V accessory socket, USB input and silver interior highlights. The SR5 offers SUV-like features including a more compliant ride, quieter cabins and higher levels of comfort and convenience.

Hilux is powered by an improved 2.8L high-torque turbo-diesel engine. It produces power of 130kW @ 3,400rpm and torque of 450Nm @ 1,600rpm. This is much better than the previous engine and translates directly to a more relaxed driving experience. This aided by the intelligent 6 speed automatic transmission that has been specifically developed for the engine. It is quieter on the road, more responsive to throttle inputs and more direct steering means better handling. The Hilux has always been an outstanding 4WD Ute and it is now even better and stronger with unique underbody protection and a heavy duty suspension package. The shift on the fly features an electronic 4x2 & 4x4 transfer switch and a rear diff lock.



by Rob Fraser

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|-----------------|---|
| Model | Hilux SR5 |
| Model Price | \$61,882 RDAP |
| Engine | 2.8L 4Cyl CRD Turbo |
| Drivetrain | 6 Sp AT 4WD |
| Power | 130kW @ 3,400rpm |
| Torque | 450Nm @ 1600rpm |
| Safety | 5 STAR ANCAP |
| CO2 | 223g/km |
| Economy ADR | 8.5 L/100 km |
| Servicing | Capped Price |
| Tow Rating | 3,500 kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 350 kg |
| Warranty | 3 Yrs / 100,000 km 3 Yrs Roadside Assist |



More than one million kilometres of testing, including 650,000km in Australia, over 6 years, has confirmed the performance, reliability and durability of new HiLux over the widest possible on-road, off-road and climatic conditions. The locally developed and tested suspension package is now standard for "tough" regions including Australia, South America, South Africa, the Middle East and Russia.

The off road capability has been improved with 20% more wheel articulation and better approach and departure angles. Hilux dimensions are overall length of 5,330mm, width of 1,855mm, height of 1,815mm and a wheelbase of 3,085mm. It has a wading depth of 700mm and clearance of 279mm, which is awesome. Approach angle is 31 degrees and departure angle is 26 degrees. There really is no need to discuss the 4WD ability of the HiLux. It is superb.

Towing has now been increased to 3,500kg and this makes a huge difference to the competitiveness of the Hilux. Again it always has been a good tow vehicle, but felt lacking at times. The increased torque and the low rpm delivery now means that towing with the Hilux gets a big tick.

A wide range of Toyota Genuine accessories – including many produced for the first time – have been developed in tandem with new HiLux, including airbag-compatible bull bars and an industry pack to meet the requirements of mining, construction and other industrial users. The new range is covered by Toyota Service Advantage capped-price servicing at \$180 per service. The Toyota Hilux continues to be a premier 4WD Ute. Recent improvements have made it better and stronger. It is now better at towing and driving off road while cocooning the occupants in more comfort and style. It missed the award by one point but to be honest I have never met a buyer that has regretted buying a Hilux.



What's Good:

- Towing ability
- Comfort and features
- 4WD ability

What's Not:

- Missing some safety items
- Its a little pricey
- No Apple CarPlay®/Android® Auto

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 90/100

| | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|----|
| Behind the Wheel | 9 | Practicality | 9 |
| Comfort | 9 | Fit for Purpose | 9 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 10 |
| Performance | 8 | Off Road Ability | 10 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 8 |