

Isuzu bakkies are tough contenders

 By [Henrie Geyser](#)

8 Feb 2016

Bakkies are hugely popular in this country, just like "utes" in Australia and "trucks" in Yankeeeland, and South Africans have a vast choice of brands and models in 4x2 or 4x4, single or double cab guises to pick a load-carrying chariot of their choice.



As an indication of the size of this segment, last year 102,921 bakkies were sold in this country with Ford Ranger, Isuzu KB and Toyota Hilux raking in the most sales while Nissan's Navara and Hardbody and the Volkswagen Amarok options ranked lower in the sales statistics.

The Isuzu range was upgraded and extended in the last quarter of 2015 and included stepped-up power for its 250TEQ engine. (To read a full review of the Isuzu range, [click here](#).)

I recently spent a week in the company of the KB250 4x4 LE Double Cab, the flagship of the 250 range which is powered by a 2.5-litre engine that kicks out a willing 100kw/320Nm. Given the choice, this model would probably be my pick of the litter.

A look at loading

The cabin is comfortable and as well insulated as one could expect from a vehicle of this nature and the ride is fractionally better than the average bakkie, but only when carrying a load. Unloaded it does tend to hop skip and jump, but not disturbingly so.



Speaking of loading, the cover of the Isuzu's load bay is probably the most impractical to remove and re-fit. It is one aspect of the Isuzu which gets a definite thumbs-down. Although our test vehicle was relatively new, it already had scuff marks on the loading bay floor, sides and back of cabin and the load gates. Some of the struts were also damaged. (Although all of this could have been done by inexperienced drivers who drove the vehicle before me, but could easily have been prevented with rubberised protection mats.)

Seeing that the Isuzu is a proud GMSA achievement, being made in Port Elizabeth and exported to 21 countries in sub-Saharan countries, this issue deserves improvement across the range. In 2015 Isuzu sales totalled 16,288 which places it firmly in 3rd place in the bakkie ratings behind the Ford Ranger and Toyota Hilux.

Little not to like



As for the rest of the KB there is very little not to like. The brand has a good reputation for rugged toughness and I would have enjoyed subjecting it to a demanding off-road course (which, unfortunately time and opportunity did not allow). But it certainly makes off-roading as easy as flicking a dial on the central console between 2 High, 4 High and 4 Low and pressing a diff lock button.

However, it is a pleasure to pilot this tough 4x4 in the city and even in congested traffic. The steering is easy and the visibility is good. Braking is sharp and the clutch action is gentle. Communication and entertaining goodies include excellent all-round visibility. The connectivity facilities include MP3, USB/AUX and cellphone connection.

The Isuzu also scores good Brownie points in the safety department with all LE and LX (as well as the Fleetside models) armed with ESC (Electronic Stability Control) as well as SBS, EBD and EBA.

Cherry on top



Cabin features include cruise control, height adjustable steering column, a good quality audio system and an exemplary aircon set-up that jumped into full action within seconds of being called to duty during an extended heat wave over the Western Cape.

The cherry on top of the KB fleet cake is an excellent customer care programme which includes all routine maintenance, regular servicing and roadside emergencies, a five-year warranty and roadside assistance as well as a five-year/90,000 service plan (at intervals at 15,000km or one year year) for all derivatives.

Our test model KB 250 D-Teq LE 4x4 retails at R429,100. The range is priced between R219,400 and R529,700).

ABOUT HENRIE GEYSER

Henrie Geyser joined the online publishing industry through iafrica.com where he worked for five years as news editor and editor. He now freelances for a variety of print and online publications, on the subjects of cars, food, and travel, among others; and is a member of the South African Guild of Motoring Journalists. henrieg@iafrica.com

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