

Elegant but pricey Discovery

By  Henrie Geyser

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The Land Rover Discovery has been an integral component of the South African passion for bundu-bashing and exploring faraway places for almost 30 years, perfectly slotting in between the now-departed Defender and the snooty elegance of the Range Rover clan.

As the popularity of the Range Rover grew, particularly as a snob-mobile, school run taxi and preferred commuter of wheeler-dealer suits, the Discovery has been leaning ever closer to the glamorous Range Rover side of the family.



Sadly, location and opportunity (as well as the jitters about scratching its expensive glossy paintwork or, heaven forbid, damaging one of its fancy rims) prevented me from an off-tarmac venture. However, comments from those who have taken the fancy HSE Td6 into the rough have been complimentary about its abilities.

The combined impact of its monocoque platform, reduced weight, grunt-rich V6 2.9-litre turbo diesel engine that pushes out 190kW and 600Nm (good enough for a 0-100km trot in 8.74 seconds and a top speed of 209km/h), as well as its 8x2/4 automatic eight-speed transmission, have received lots of praise.

For a firmer grip on rough terrain, Land Rover also offers an optional extra Capability Plus Pack for the HSE which will set buyers back a further close R30,000. Although, I doubt that many HSE owners will risk taking this glamorous and expensive

wagon on to seriously challenging terrain.



Road-holding is good, although finding a comfortable balance between smooth motorway cruising and uneven terrain crossing, is never easy. I found the 2.2-ton vehicle a little light on its feet, particularly in tight corners where body-lean comes into play. I would be hesitant to hustle it along a tight, snaking road.

Where the Discovery scores fairly well is with its smooth, rounded looks - typical of the Range Rover Sport. Although, fans might be saddened the sharp lines, squared shoulders, and folded-arm boldness of its predecessors are gone.

The HSE's cabin, too, is a much more refined, user-friendly environment which now boasts leather seating and a 10-inch touchscreen that provides easy access to a smart infotainment system (including cordless headphones and screens for rear-seat passengers).

On the flip side of the coin, I found the driver seat a tad cramped and tall, broad drivers might find long distances a bit tight and bum-numbing. Rear knee- and- shoulder space are generous for two but tight with three seats occupied.



While I made extensive use of the handy press-button boot lid door, it was an irritation that the central head-rest on the back seats completely blocked the driver's view of the traffic behind.

A reverse camera is a must-have, much-appreciated feature fixture of this vehicle, but why no front camera? The

Discovery is a big chunk of metal and not easy to squeeze into tight spots, particularly in crowded city parking areas and visibility is a key factor in preventing expensive 'oopsies'.

Niggles aside, the new Discovery ticks many right boxes and it will no doubt appeal to a dedicated five-door SUV segment of the market, although it's blistering price tag of R1,249,618 might nudge potential buyers into having a closer look at some of its closest contenders (including within the Land Rover fold).

The price of the Discovery HSE Td6 includes a five-year/100,000km maintenance plan.

ABOUT HENRIE GEYSER

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