

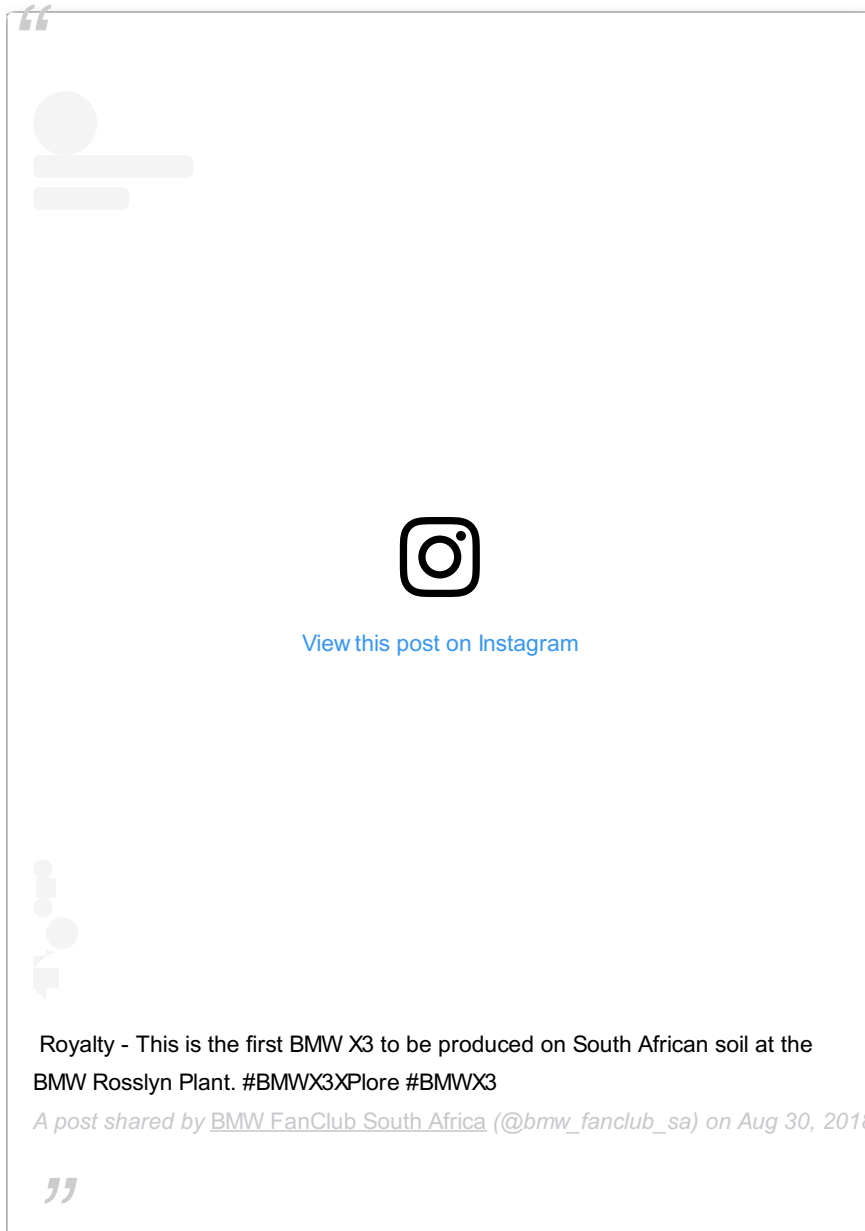
BMW X3 - proudly produced in SA

By  Evan-Lee Courie

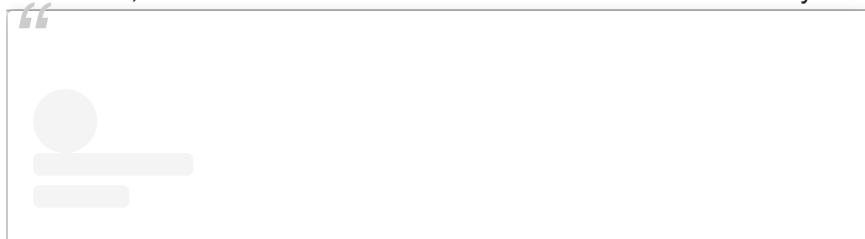
20 Dec 2018

If you find yourself in the market for a new vehicle, especially in the SUV segment, look no further than the locally manufactured BMW X3.

BMW Group South Africa, earlier this year, started a new chapter with the start of production of the new BMW X3 at its Rosslyn plant, right here in South Africa Pretoria.



I had the amazing opportunity to attend the national launch of the BMW X3. Not only was it just the national launch, but it was also an Xplore Tour, which saw us test driving the vehicle while exploring through three provinces in South Africa. I must admit, I had never been on a launch like this and I was definitely in for a ride of a lifetime.





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Locally produced

In 2015, BMW Group announced a R6bn investment into South Africa in order to prepare BMW Group Plant Rosslyn for the BMW X3 production. This year was the culmination of three years of hard work and planning, resulting in production starting on time in Rosslyn.

BMW Group Plant Rosslyn was the first plant built by the BMW Group outside of Germany and a first for Africa. The plant has built the BMW 3 Series for 35 years, manufacturing a total of 1,191,604 units during the period, and increasing production with every model. With a planned maximum capacity of 71,000 units of the BMW X3, which was later increased (with an additional R160m investment) to 76,000, BMW Group Plant Rosslyn has the opportunity to flexibly match volumes to demand and to build more cars than ever before.



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According to Tim Abbott, CEO of BMW Group South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, said “The allocation of production of such a crucial model to our plant is about as big a vote of confidence as it gets,”

“The demand for the BMW X3 globally is powerful, and ramping up on time and to the right standards is vital to the model's success.” BMW Group South Africa is certainly proud of its progress in terms of localising production of as many components as possible for the BMW X3, which makes this model the most “local” vehicle it has ever built. Equally, BMW Group is a leading participant in a proposed venture fund to develop more black-owned suppliers in the South African automotive supply chain.

Since the launch of the BMW X3, a mid-size SAV (Sports Activity Vehicle) segment in 2003, it has been recorded more than 1.5 million new registrations of the X3 across the two model generations so far. Since the global launch in the last quarter of 2017, the new BMW X3 is set to write the next chapter in its success story featuring more technology, improved on-road dynamics, and a striking design. This vehicle is a good example of the type of SUVs that caters to many different buyers.

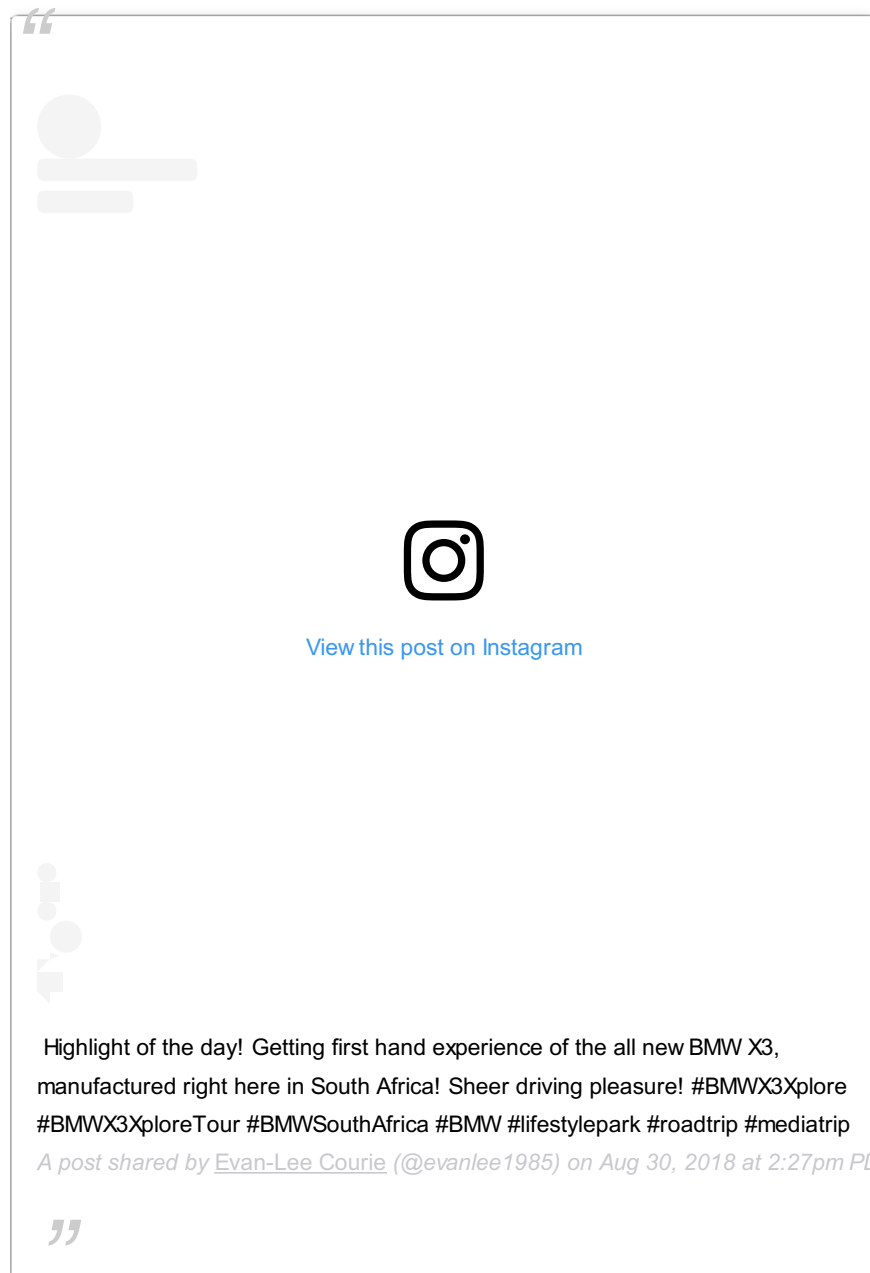
What to expect

The first thing you will notice about the third-generation BMW X3 is its framework. At first, it appears to be huge, but the SUV does well to mask its true size, with dimensions of just over 4.7 meters long, 1.6m high, and ground clearance of 204mm. Even with its true SUV diameters, the weight of 1.8 tons doesn't make its presence felt. But this X3 looks striking in its paintwork and topped off by 21-inch wheels.

This was my very first time getting to drive a vehicle of this standard, and let me say I was very impressed. Let me tell you why...

Before hitting the roads across South Africa, we got the opportunity to play on BMW South Africa's new testing ground: the BMW X Lifestyle park, which opened its doors in November 2018.

Here X3 owners can test their cars' abilities in a controlled environment and, what's more, friendly instructors are on hand to offer assistance. This was needed as I had never had any sort of off-road driving experience before.



What I found, was that the steep inclines, loose sand and water crossings could all be handled pretty easily by this car. I must add that BMW has focused its technical prowess towards the SUV's sturdiness at low speeds and its ability to absorb bumps. This experience put my mind at ease and definitely set the tone for the cross-country journey. At low speeds it is nice and weighty, but not to the point where the car feels heavy - even with a turning circle of 12m.

On the open road, this car really comes into its own; devouring the kilometres and a master cruiser while using as little fuel as possible. One can be forgiven for thinking that the inline six-cylinder 3.0-litre diesel engine will run your budget into the ground but it's anything but a fuel-guzzler.

The 195kW/620Nm turbocharged engine is not afraid to unleash its full power when the need arises but most of the time there is rarely any need to exploit everything. At high speeds, there are no hints of uncertainty as the vehicle is assertive at what it does. There are three driving modes (Sport, Comfort, Eco), which seems to be the standard. Alternating between these modes, you definitely feel the difference and for me, it was a pleasure to drive in the Comfort mode. The eight-speed automatic gearbox will assist in bringing fuel consumption down to around the 7.0-liter/100km mark. It has an all-wheel-drive

system and BMW claims that this X3 will average 6.2-litres/100km.

Pricing in South Africa

All BMW X3 models sold in South Africa come with BMW's all-wheel-drive system and all feature automatic transmissions. An 8-speed Sports Automatic Transmission is available as an option, except for the X3 M40i, where it is standard. There are 4 levels of trim: Standard, xLine, Luxury Line and of course the M Sport package. There are plenty of options to consider to truly make each and every X3 unique.

- xDrive20d: R684, 200
- xDrive30i: R739, 800
- xDrive30d: R868, 300
- X3 M40i: R991,100

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