

Everest is hard to beat

 By [Henrie Geyser](#)

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The Toyota Hilux bakkie was well-entrenched as South Africa's most popular bakkie until along came the Ford Ranger to erode its popularity. Now Ford is doing it again with its locally-built Ford Everest seven-seater which is arm-wrestling the Toyota Fortuner for market share - and doing a good job of it.



The Everest has eight variants in its lineup, available in three specification levels, XLS, XLT and Limited with a choice of 2.2-litre and 3.2-litre TDCI engines, manual or automatic transmissions, 4x2 or 4x4 drive.

I recently spent a week with a 2.2 XLT version cruising around the Western Cape and it is easy to understand why the Everest is gaining traction in the highly contested sport utility market against competitors such as the Fortuner, Chevrolet Trailblazer, Mitsubishi Pajero, and Land Rover Discovery.

Ruggedly handsome pavement pose

Although it is not easy to make a high-riding, box-like multi-seater look sexy the Everest's ruggedly handsome pavement pose, from its prominent chrome grille and matching door handles to its running boards and prominent 18-inch gleaming alloys, give it an air of quality and sophistication.



The living quarters are equally smart with furnishings such as leather upholstery, a top-notch infotainment system, multi-function steering wheel controls, climate control (which can be individually adjusted to suit the second and third-row passengers) and fold flat third-row seats.

The Everest is one of the best in class when it comes to comfort, convenience and safety features and the XLT's bragging rights include an integrated communications and entertainment system with 10 speakers and two USB ports.

Other nifty features include electronic stability programme (ESP) with traction control, hill launch assist, trailer sway control and a rear parking camera linked to an 8-inch touch screen.

The XLT I had on test is powered by 2.2-litre Duratorq TDCI engine which produces 118kW and 385Nm and is linked to a six-speed automatic transmission with a choice of Sport and Manual modes.

No tarmac scorcher



Performance and speed are not what big seven-seaters are all about and, like the rest of this big wagon clan, the XLT is no tarmac scorcher but then it does have the benefit of Sport mode to make overtaking easier when necessary. In spite of its Ranger underpinnings, the ride quality is good, even on gravel. It also handles the corners with ease and with very little body lean.

Falling for the many charms of the “Big Easy”, Everest doesn’t take long and its growing popularity is easy to understand.

The 2.2-litre XLT automatic we had on test retails for R509,900. The eight model Everest range varies in price from R459,900 to R699,900 which include a five-year/100,000km service plan.

ABOUT HENRIE GEYSER

Henrie Geysier 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@africa.com

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