

Everest is a likable tough guy

 By [Henrie Geyser](#)

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The Ford Everest smartly disguises and underplays its tough-guy capabilities with polished gentle giant looks, cossetting comfort, spacious living quarters and best-in-class flexible seating setup.



Having frustratingly struggled to fold multiple seats forward and flat (and to put them back into their original setup afterwards) in many of the latest large family-carriers, I found the Ford's seven-seat, user-friendly set-up dummy-proof and dead-easy to configure.

In many other ways, such as the one-switch selector to choose one of four drive settings, the Everest fully deserves the praise it has solicited from many motoring scribes and Everest owners since it arrived in this country.

OK, so it is only available in two specification levels, both powered by the same 3.2 turbo-diesel, but what is there not to like about a smooth six-speed transmission and a kick of 147kW and 470Nm.



It is probably not the most frugal vehicle in its class but then its off-road abilities are excellent, thanks to the tenacious grip provided by its with four-wheel drive.

Our test vehicle was the range-topping Limited version which shares the same standard kit with the less expensive XLT variant, including ABS brakes with EBD, Hill Launch Assist, Hill Descend Control, Roll-over Mitigation, a brace of airbags, Child Proof Locks and Trailer Sway Control.

To justify the sharp price difference the two, the Limited has larger wheels, ambient cabin lighting, dual Moonroof, powered boot lid, Park Assist and Parallel Park Assist as well as stepped up lighting.

I didn't have the time or opportunity to tackle rough terrain in the Everest this time round, but I had done so on a previous occasion and found it to be more stable and the ride more sophisticated than a number of its rivals (even some of really expensive top-enders) and this goes irrespective of whether you are on smooth black top, gravel road, dirt tracks and even when the going gets really tough.



SUV's are invariably dressed as bushwhackers but even some of the pricier snob-badges tend to stutter, grind to a halt, or get bogged down when up against real challenging terrain. The reality is SUV's are pavement posers and family haulers designed for outdoors fun, perhaps involving tame gravel roads and maybe the odd sandy track – they are not real dirt trackers and most of them are never even exposed to anything more challenging than dirt roads.

The Everest engine has a fairly loud growl when you pour on the coals but it's not intrusive and to be expected from a big SUV that competes with the likes of Jeep Cherokee, Hyundai Sante Fe, Land Rover Discovery Sport, Kia Sorento and Toyota Fortuner.

In spite of the fact that has basically the same under-carriage as the popular Ford Ranger bakkie, the ride is comfortable. Even at a fair pace the big wagon feels steady and sure-footed with very little body lean. The steering is also well-weighted and requires no arm-wrestling to squeeze into tight parking spots (made easy by a big screen, rear park camera combination).

The spacious cabin is well equipped with fancy kit, including a smart sound system and highly effective aircon. Leg room is generous, the seats are big and comfortable, and even in seven-seater configuration the luggage space is more than ample for a family holiday.



Fold the back rows of seats down and space becomes cavernous. We loaded in nine fully packed plastic crates, a few loose chunky things, three large framed pictures, two folding tables and two camp chairs with ease and there was space to spare! The wide-opening side doors and high-lift tailgate make loading even easier.

To find fault with the Everest would be nit-picking. It is extremely comfortable, ride quality is tops and the price tag is not eye-watering, even with the recent price increases that affected all new vehicles in this country.

The XLT sells for R634,900 and the Limited's price is R696,900, both prices inclusive of a five-year/100,000km Service Plan.

ABOUT HENRIE GEYSER

Henrie Geysers 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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