

Getting from A to B in the lap of luxury

Lerato Matebese put on his flat cap and tweed jacket and headed off into the country to test the new Range Rover

FROM where I stand, I do not envy Land Rover SA one bit, mainly because it has a huge task at hand. Yes, that like every other manufacturer it has to keep afloat during these adverse economic conditions is a given, but then again — even if a little less significant — having to improve on an already accomplished product brings with it an even greater challenge.

Last week Motor News travelled to the border of Lesotho

where Land Rover was to showcase to the motoring media its 2010 Range Rover. Now, if you have ever had the chance to perch inside one of these, you will certainly agree that it is one of the nicest places to be. From the luxurious appointments, vast acres of space and the comfort afforded by those leather pews, there is little to want for in there.

To the untrained eye, the pictures may not quite depict any cosmetic changes from the previous

until you decide to push the start button. Yes folks, no more fiddling around to find the ignition slot.

What occurs thereafter is an illuminated 12-inch screen that displays the speedo and tachometer dials and a host of other vital information including that of the Terrain Response System.

Once the ignition is switched off, a screen saver displaying a sunset illuminates, which heightens the interior's visual appeal. Opening the centre console, one can find connection points for external music devices such as an iPod or USB and these can be operated via the vehicle's interface or buttons on the steering wheel.

Then there is the dual screen functionality, which lets the front passenger and driver watch two different images from one screen, through 3D technology similar to that used at movie theatres.

Other toys, of the safety kind this time, include no less than five cameras which display to the driver, on the navigation screen, a 360° view around the vehicle. There are two in the front of the vehicle, two on the wing mirrors — also equipped with blind spot illuminating lights — and one on the boot lid. So whether you are reversing, parallel parking or entering into a busy road or even going off-road where your peripheral vision could possibly be obstructed, the cameras work a treat.

Even reversing with a trailer on tow has been made easy with the

model, but let me highlight these.

Foremost, I'll start with the most discreet, which is the front grille badge that now sports a black background as opposed to the traditional green-themed one, while the lower bumper now has a slot that splits it into two. The headlights, together with those in the rear, feature LED technology, which gives the vehicle an even better on-road presence.

Jump aboard and on face value everything looks quite familiar,

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ON TOP: The Range Rover proves it is still master of all it surveys. The new model features a number of styling changes including LED lamps at the front and rear.

company's new reverse tow assist, which illustrates both the vehicle and trailer's trajectory guidelines on the navigation screen so the driver can anticipate the direction that the trailer will take next. Also included is an adaptive cruise control, which controls the following distance between you and the vehicle ahead via a radar system.

The new generation is also available with two engine derivatives, a 3.6/ V8 turbodiesel (TDV8) and a 5.0/ supercharged V8 petrol. The former is carried over from the previous model and makes 200kW and 640Nm, while the latter is an all-new engine and replaces the previous 4.2/ V8 supercharged, with an increase in power to 375kW and 625Nm.

It is a similar unit to that utilised in the Jaguar XFR, which

features direct injection and variable valve technology. Unlike its predecessor, this new engine hauls the Range Rover's body without breaking a sweat, while the electronics have done well to quell dive and pitch when setting off or braking in haste. In fact, going around a bend at speed is no longer a bum-clenching experience as was the case with the previous model.

Although it produces 29% and 12% more power and torque respectively, those clever engineers

have managed to reduce fuel consumption and carbon emissions by more than 7%, which now stand at 14.9/ and 348g/km respectively in the petrol version.

However, these figures were, according to Roland Reid of Land Rover SA, achieved in Europe, which currently offers the highest quality of fuels that conform to Euro5 emission standards — we still have to wait a few years until we get anywhere near catching up. The diesel derivative also returns

good consumption figures of 11/100km while carbon emissions are pegged at 294g/km.

As one would expect of a Land Rover, the vehicles were as equally impressive off-road as they were on tarmac, thanks to the adaptive air suspension and the intuitive Terrain Response system with its new rock crawl mode that saw us cresting and descending ancient rock as though we were conquering termite mounds, so much so in fact that my lady and I were in great awe of the vehicle's ability.

We can but hope that one day we will win that elusive Lotto jackpot, in which case this would be our preferred family car.

The Range Rover look set to continue to sell in niche numbers, as it caters for the more discerning buyer, and having sampled the car last weekend, I think what was already a very good vehicle is now punting for a badge of excellence.

Pricing:

V8 3.6 Diesel R1 164 000
V8 5.0 Supercharged Petrol R1 204 000

