

Ranger targets the leisure market

 By Henrie Geysers 7 Sep 2016

Ford has strengthened its marketing onslaught with the addition of nine new 2.2 automatic derivatives to make it the most comprehensive line-up in the light commercial (LCV) sector in South Africa.



The Ranger is already hugely popular because of its ride-quality, load-carrying performance, technology, safety features and advanced six-speed automatic transmission (which has found increased grip in this country) and the introduction of the new 2.2 Duratorq TDCi models will enhance its status even further – particularly in growing leisure segment.

Under-the-bonnet attraction

Many of the likeable characteristics which made the 3.2 TDCi auto so attractive have been extended to the new smaller-engined diesel variants, particularly because the 2.2 TDCi XL is currently the only single cab bakkie locally with an automatic gearbox.

The Ranger 2.2 TDCi Auto models are available in Single Cab, Super Cab and Double Cab body styling and in three specification levels: XL, XLS and high-spec XLT. The under-the-bonnet attraction is the latest-generation 2.2-litre four-cylinder Duratorq TDCi engine, armed with a variable nozzle turbocharger, exhaust gas recirculation and high-pressure common rail diesel injection, with 118kW/ 385Nm on tap. Mated to a six-speed SelectShift automatic transmission it gives drivers the option of leaving it to do its own thing in automatic or selecting manual gear shifting. In the workhorse range, an economical mid-power 2.2 Duratorq TDCi 88kW/285Nm engine is also available in certain models, equipped with a five-speed manual transmission.

Of the new 2.2 TDCi Auto models, five are two-wheel drive and four are equipped with Ford's intelligent four-wheel drive system with Torque on Demand that allows drivers to tackle tough conditions with confidence. I put this to the test on a fairly demanding, bush, rock and sand off-road track close to Mossel Bay and the 4x4 coped with flying colours, at times displaying outstanding confidence and ability.

The 4x4 drivetrain has an electronically-controlled transfer case with shift-on-the-fly functionality which allows for a dial click between 4x2 and 4x4 high-range modes while on the trot. A rear differential lock adds even more traction. The Electronic Stability Program (standard on all but the entry-level models) incorporates Traction Control, Hill Launch Assist, Trailer Sway Control, Adaptive Load Control, Roll-over Mitigation, as well as Hill Descent Control on the 4x4 models. Further performance enhancements include class-leading 800mm water wading depth, 230mm of ground clearance and towing capacity of up to 3,500kg.



Bush and gravel performer

The Ranger is not only a capable bush warrior but also a very pleasant smooth top and gravel track performer. At the media launch we drove the new 2.2 along long stretches of country roads and farm tracks inland away from Mossel Bay, leading to George via the Robinson Pass and Outeniqua Pass.

The new Ranger is as quiet, comfortable, solid and as smooth as a sedan (even though the loading bay was empty, which usually tends to make bakkies a tad jumpy, even on slightly uneven surfaces) and the living quarters are pleasing on the eye with dials and gauges logically arranged. It feels, in many ways, very much like an SUV and driving long distances in one of them would be a doddle. A pleasant feature of the new 2.2 models is its electric power-assisted steering that adjusts its feel according to speed, cornering angles and acceleration. The brakes are good, without a hint of "grab", and the auto cog-shifting happens smoothly.

The two 2.2 Auto Single Cab models (XL 4x2 and XLS 4x4) are unique in the LCV segment, as they are the only automatic derivatives available in a sector dominated by corporate and fleet sales. Three versatile Super Cab variants of the 2.2 Auto are included in the expanded model offering, comprising the 4x2 XL, along with the XLS models in either 4x2 or 4x4 guise.

The Super Cab is particularly popular with farmers, contractors and lifestyle-oriented buyers seeking the added convenience of the extra space behind the front seats, as well as the convenience of the rear-opening doors.

The Double Cab Ranger has dominated its class since 2014 and the addition of four new 2.2 auto models will boost its popularity even further. Ford says "outstanding value for money" is the hallmark of the 2.2 TDCi XL Double Cab Auto, which is available in both 4x2 and 4x4 variants. The XLS 4x4 takes the features list up several notches, with the luxuriously appointed XLT Double Cab 4x2 rounding off the new Ranger 2.2 TDCi Auto line-up.



Competitive pricing

In summary, Ford Ranger is not only one of the best performers but also one of the most attractive bakkies and the nine n additions lift the bar even further with impressive frugality and competitive pricing. The new models and prices (inclusive o four-year/120,000km warranty, five-year/100,000km service plan (optional on Base models) and three-year/unlimited km roadside assistance) are:

- 2.2 TDCi XL Single Cab 4x2 Auto - R311,900
- 2.2 TDCi XLS Single Cab 4x4 Auto - R426,900
- 2.2 TDCi XL Super Cab 4x2 Auto - R357,900
- 2.2 TDCi XLS Super Cab 4x2 Auto - R411,900
- 2.2 TDCi XLS Super Cab 4x4 Auto - R472,900
- 2.2 TDCi XL Double Cab 4x2 Auto - R384,900
- 2.2 TDCi XL Double Cab 4x4 Auto - R426,900
- 2.2 TDCi XLS Double Cab 4x4 Auto - R517,900
- 2.2 TDCi XLT Double Cab 4x2 Auto - R482,900

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