

## Introducing Merc's C-Class dirt tracker

 By Henrie Geysler<sup>9 Nov 2015</sup>

Germany's top three executive brands are locked in a permanent all-out fight to match or better anything the opposition has to offer so it comes as no surprise that Mercedes-Benz has now finally introduced its own direct compact SUV to take on the BMW X3 and Audi Q5.

Branded as the GLC, the three-pointed star brings four models to the market, all of them equipped with 4MATIC permanent all-wheel drive and 9G-TRONIC nine-speed automatic transmission.



South Africans are passionate about SUV's (particularly the ones with genuine snooty badges and fancy prices) so it won't take long for Merc to snuffle away some potential BMW and Audi buyers with its new SL

Very few people, including motoring scribes, find it easy to keep up with the zillions of abbreviated vehicle descriptions so it comes as some relief that Mercedes have now decided to brand all its dirt-riders with a G badge (to reflect the proud heritage of its pack-leading Geländewagen semi-military vehicle).

To introduce the new GLC range and to show off the capabilities of its entire G-range of SUV's, Mercedes flew a large media group to Namibia where it chose the Namib, one of the toughest terrains on Mother Earth as demonstration arena.

On the tar and gravel sections, and even on some of the rocky, sandy roads, the GLC behaved faultlessly but when the going became a lot hairier with high, steep, boulder-strewn canyon trails and enormous, steep dunes posing really demanding challenges the GLC hit a few expensive wobbles.



Besides becoming bogged down in thick sand the terrain also took its fair share of GLC bits and pieces w body kit, particularly the plastic undercarriage protection fittings, and bumper pieces biting the dust. Quite a number of vehicles also had to be rescued after being bogged down in the thick sand.

Admittedly some of the above events could be blamed on a lack of off-road driving skills (and the fact that the vehicles were shod with ordinary road tyres) but it just again proved that SUV's are designed for the type of family fun that does not demand anything more challenging than Game Reserve gravel roads.

Brute power alone is not enough ammunition for the real rough stuff and is of no real use without the assistance of decent ride heights and more practical entry and exit levels. For those wanting to tackle more adverse conditions in one of the new GLC's, optional extras are available, including adjustable air suspension or an Off-Road Engineering package which adds downhill descent control, raises the ground clearance and gives the driver a choice of driving modes which changes gearshift timing and throttle response.



Typical of Mercedes-Benz the GLC is well decked out with cabin fancies, comfortable seats, good visibility all round, top notch insulation and a slick automatic transmission which transmits power to all four wheels. Passenger safety is enhanced with seven airbags and driver aids include ABS and stability control.

To add to its C-Class feel it has an infotainment system with 7-inch colour display with Bluetooth and USB

audio streaming. Other standard equipment Collision Prevention Assist, Crosswind Assist, Headlamp Assist and an ESP® system with Dynamic Cornering Assist and much, much more.

To reflect the owner's personality there is also a choice of 12 different paint finishes and 14 light-alloy wheel designs for wheel sizes up to 20-inches.

The GLC range consists of two diesel and two petrol choices, starting off with the GLC 220 powered by 2 litre turbo-diesel that kicks out 125kW and 400Nm. The next step is the 250d powered by the same engine but with a healthy power boost up to 150Kw and 500Nm (with a price difference of only R20 000 this would be my personal choice).

The two petrol-gluggers are the GLC 250 and GLC 300 which use the same engine also stepped up from the 250's 150kW and 350Nm to 180kW and 370Nm in the 300.

A diverse range of optional equipment enables GLC customers to configure their SUV according to their requirements and preferences even though the wide range of standard equipment already includes numerous features adopted from higher vehicle categories. Pioneering assistance systems such as Collision Prevention Assist Plus, Crosswind Assist, Headlamp Assist, Attention Assist or an ESP® system with Dynamic Cornering Assist are all standard.



On the occasion of the GLC's introduction Mercedes-Benz also used the opportunity to show off the rest of its SUV fleet (particularly as a large contingent of Mercedes dealers followed our trip) so we also got to play with some of the fancier models which provided lots of fun, particularly on the good tar and smooth gravel stretches.

I have to admit falling for the roar and muscle of the GLE 500 when its full barrage of 320kW and 700Nm moves into action. A beautiful handler, even at heavy-footed pace...just a pity about its eye-watering price of R1 166 000 which was upped by a further R190 450 because of all the extras it had on board.

The full range of Mercedes-Benz SUV's now on offer are

GLC 250 - R609 620

GLC 300 - R660 748

GLE 250 d 4MATIC - R863 000

GLE 350 d 4MATIC - R964 000

GLE 400 4MATIC - R959 000

GLE 500 4MATIC - R1 166 000

G 35V6 - R1 418000

AMG G 63 V8 - R2 156000

AMG G 63 - Edition 463V8 R2 156 000 (+ R152 000)

## ABOUT HENRIE GEYSER

Henrie Geysler 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](mailto:henrieg@iafrica.com)  
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