

Isuzu's X-Rider marks the spot

By [Alan Duggan](#)

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It's war out there, and Isuzu is taking on the enemy with a battle-hardened warrior in shiny new armour. Meet the D-Max 300 Double Cab X-Rider, a lifestyle-workhorse combo that blends a pretty face with rugged reliability. You may not care either way, but it's worth noting that this bakkie attracts attention.



Image credit: Alan Duggan

Manufacturers generally “freshen” their model line-up towards the end of their life cycle by adding all manner of interior and exterior accoutrements, from nice upholstery and sexy dashboards to alloy wheels and body trim – and, of course, cool badges. This is perfectly okay if the upgrades go beyond glitz. Having spent a week with the X-Rider, I reckon Isuzu has pulled it off: the beauty is more than skin-deep.

Devotees of the brand tend to wax eloquent about the KB range – re-badged and upgraded to D-Max a few years ago – and its rock-solid record for reliability, although it has to be said that Isuzu’s understated approach to styling may have left a few feeling abandoned. With the arrival of the Double Cab X-Rider, that little issue falls away, as does the criticism that the smaller diesel powerplant didn’t offer quite enough grunt.

Bakkies aren’t for wimps

Power is provided by a 4-cylinder, 3-litre turbodiesel engine producing 130kW at 3,600r/min and 380Nm of torque from 1,800r/min to 2,800r/min. Coupled with a six-speed automatic transmission, it delivers spirited highway driving and adequate overtaking ability when you plant your right foot.

Tight urban manoeuvres require a little work, thanks in part to those big wheels and chunky tyres, but hey, bakkies aren't for wimps. There's plenty of room inside for five normal-sized adults and the seats are comfortable if not luxurious. In fact, when we emerged from an unbroken four-hour drive, the expected groans and creaks from immobilised knees – a dead giveaway in vehicles with constrained legroom – were conspicuously absent.

Cabin equipment includes a 6.5-inch touchscreen, radio tuner with RDS, front-loading CD player, MP3 functionality and Bluetooth audio streaming with integrated mobile hands-free. If you need satnav, simply link your phone and it will mirror the map on the bigger screen.



Image credit: Alan Duggan

I appreciated the teensy camera mounted in the tailgate latch, which made reversing and parking much easier by transmitting a surprisingly clear image to the dashboard screen. Stay in the green zone and you won't back into anything expensive.

Why? Because it just keeps going

Why buy an Isuzu? My friend Felicity Collen, who runs a home renovation company in Cape Town and has driven a KB 250D for the past 13 years, reckons the answer is quite simple: it just keeps going. Bought second-hand, her 2002 model bakkie has covered 358,000+ kilometres and has never had the engine opened.

Says Felicity: "I come from a farming community in the Northern Cape, where Isuzu was the only brand worth considering because its track record among farmers was very good. My Isuzu has worked hard every day, carrying heavy loads of builders' rubble or new materials. The body is showing wear but the engine is still going strong. This bakkie is my lifeblood and I would not consider buying any other brand."

Okay, and why an X-Rider? It's all about versatility. The small business owner gets eye-catching wheels with a useful-sized load bed plus a great family transporter for a weekend or longer getaways – for the record, three or more surfboards easily

fit inside the back when laid diagonally. Oh, and did we mention that it looks good?

Just the facts

- Price: R590,300
- Engine: 4-cylinder, 3-litre turbodiesel
- Power: 130kW at 3,500r/min
- Torque: 380Nm from 1,800 to 2,800r/min
- Transmission: 6-speed automatic
- Payload: 1,056kg
- Towbar capacity: 3,500kg
- Fuel consumption: 7.5 litres/100km combined cycle (claimed)
- Fuel tank capacity: 80-litres
- Safety features: Driver and front passenger airbags, brake assist system, electronic stability control with traction control, antilock brakes
- Off-road stuff: Approach angle, 30 degrees; departure angle, 22.7 degrees; wading depth, 600mm

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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