

4WD BUYERS GUIDE

LAND ROVER DEFENDER 110

LARGE WAGONS

The old warhorse gets a new powertrain and interior trim and soldiers on for another few years.

The Defender's post-2007 powertrain is straight from Land Rover's previous owner, Ford. The diesel is a modified Transit Van engine and the transmission is a version of the Getrag MT82 Ford Transmission that appears in several Ford-owned products, including Falcons and Jaguars.



The Defender's bonnet bulge accommodates an intercooled 2.4-litre turbo-diesel four that puts out 90kW at 3500rpm and 360Nm at 2000rpm, with 315Nm from 1500rpm.

The Defender comes standard with ABS brakes and traction control. It also retains a bush-preferred transmission drum handbrake. The Defender has full-time four wheel drive, via a lockable centre diff and rolls on aluminium wheels with tubeless tyres. Buyers can opt for the 130 ute's 7.50R16 tubeless rubber on steel wheels. Towing rating is a 3500kg braked trailer.



There's a DNA change inside the new Defender, where the dashboard is unlike anything that has gone before it: a single-piece moulding incorporating a plastic-covered binnacle with large, legible instruments, including – be still my beating heart – a rev counter! But there's more: four, fan-fed air vents that pipe standard, real, air-conditioned air (not the mildly cooled and dried puff of yesteryear), a CD/radio, switches for the front powered windows and a passenger-side bin with a solid grab handle.

The passenger's right foot no longer needs to fight for space with the heater plenum. Fear not, Landophiles: the clock is still analogue, not digital.

The Defender has remote central locking and front power windows, bucket front seats and a three-seat rear bench with tight legroom. The Defender is available for the first time with a pair of third-row seats as a \$2000 option, making it a seven-seater.

ON AND OFF ROAD



The Land Rover's driver's seat is still too far outboard and close to the door panel, but it's better than before. The new front seats remain a tad short in the cushion, but there's more shoulder support than previously and the second and optional third-row seats are reasonably comfortable for adults with shortish legs. It's possible to access the third row from the second-row doors or the cargo door.

The Defender's gear stick pokes out of a sound-deadened transmission tunnel and a new stubby lever operates the old transfer case and centre diff lock. Reverse and first are side by side, which should be handy for off-road 'rocking' manoeuvres, but in practice it doesn't work so well, because the detent spring on reverse is very stiff.

The new Defender has a funny clutch action – not funny so you'd laugh – that's lacking in friction-point 'feel'. Previous Defenders have been unhappy at speeds above 95km/h, but the new one sits on the legal limit without fuss and with surprisingly little wind noise.



With a half-tonne test load on board the all-coil Defender had great balance through the 'twisties', because the Defender's new suspension calibration has firmed up the ride somewhat and cornering is flatter. Its full-time 4WD system provides good cornering grip on most surfaces. Off road, what the Land Rover lacks in torque it makes up in gearing and its powerful traction control system matches many vehicles' cross-axle, diff-lock traction.

Unlike many traction-controlled wagons that substitute traction control for wheel travel the Defender retains its legendary long-travel suspension, so the traction control system doesn't get the same workout it does in road-oriented wagons. Low-range gearing in the new Defender is a class-leading 63:1 in low first.

With tyre pressures dropped for soft sand the Defender is virtually unstoppable.

A single fuel tank of only 75 litres' capacity is not ideal for Defenders that go seriously bush, but economy isn't bad: in mixed-cycle on and off road use it should average around 11-14L/100km. Servicing intervals are 10,000km.

PREVIOUS MODELS

Just as ergonomically tricky, but slower and without the benefits of traction control and ABS brakes.

BUSH MODIFICATIONS

The latest Defender wagons have traction control, but older models have open front and rear differentials. A pair of after-market diff locks is the traction solution. Long-range fuel tanks are available, to extend touring range and the squared-off cargo area is ideal for fitting drawer units and a fridge.



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