

# 4WD BUYERS GUIDE

## MAHINDRA PIKUP

### MEDIUM UTE

**The latest Mahindra PikUp might look a little strange to some people, but it works well and is very economical.**

‘Never judge a book by its cover’ our parents urged us as children and the old saw applies to the Mahindra PikUp. This work vehicle’s quirky exterior hides a roomy interior, a state of the art engine, a slick transmission and the first application in this market of Eaton’s mechanically locking differential (MLD).



For 2012 Mahindra has retained the strong chassis, axles and suspension that were introduced here in 2007, but has given the 2.2-litre diesel a variable geometry turbocharger and intercooler, feeding air into cylinders with Bosch common rail squirters that atomise fuel at 1600 bar injection pressure. The result is Euro IV compliance and output of 90kW at 4000rpm, with peak torque of 270Nm in the 1600-2800rpm band.

In place of the original limited-slip rear differential is an Eaton MLD self-locker – not a Detroit Locker or NoSpin – that operates without driver intervention and without the driveline ‘wiggles’ commonly felt with automatically locking diffs.

The 2007 model suffered from quite flimsy door panels that bowed-out at highway speeds, creating wind howl and making occupants fear for their safety, but the new machine’s bodywork seems much better built.

The former garish interior colours have been replaced with much more serviceable dark fabric.

The PikUp retains an older-style roof pressing, complete with gutters, making clamp-style roof racks easy to fit.

The RRP of \$30,499 for the Mahindra PikUp 4x4 crew-cab is around 20 grand cheaper than the competition and comes fully loaded: cruise control with steering wheel controls; steering wheel audio controls; power mirrors and windows; remote central locking; dual-power air conditioning; sound system with USB and auxiliary jack; armrests on both front seats; ABS disc/drum brakes; twin airbags; sill protection bars; soft tonneau and aluminium 16-inch wheels.

The Mahindra PikUp has four large cup holders, two 12V power outlets and aircon grilles in the back seat.

The high-roof design isn't pretty, but means that there's ample leg-room front and rear, and the seats can accommodate big blokes who are wearing hard hats. If there are only two passengers in the back seat they can share a broad centre arm rest that folds down from the seat back. The high roof line makes entry and exit easy.

## On and Off Road



We spent three weeks with a Mahindra PikUp test vehicle and came away impressed with the machine. Stand-out assets were obviously the low price and three-year warranty with seven-day road side assistance, but we also discovered that the Mahindra Pik Up rivalled the VW Amarok for economy. We put several tanks of fuel through the machine and returned figures of 7.85-8.0L/100km, giving it a 900+km range between fills.

The Mahindra rode and handled well on reasonably smooth bitumen and dirt roads, but reacted to ruts and corrugations with bump-steer at both ends and a hard-riding rear suspension. The plus side is that the rear springs and axle are dimensioned for Indian-style overloading and look quite capable of carrying a lot more than the rated one-tonne payload.

Off-road we found the gearing ideal, but the firm suspension didn't allow enough flex for jerk-free progress over rock shelves.



Downsides of the interior are plastic trim that looks tacky and doesn't fit very well, and only a lap belt for the centre rear seat





The five-speed box worked with two-finger effort and combined well with a light clutch that had a positive friction point. The part-loaded vehicle could be idled off the mark on the flat, but needed some wellie to help with hill starts. Although its chassis and suspension could handle more the Mahindra PikUp is rated to haul a 2.5-tonnes trailer.

The Eaton MLD worked brilliantly on and off road, eliminating rear axle wheel spin on tight, wet corners when in two-wheel-drive and in all off-road conditions. The design of the MLD prevents lock engagement above 30km/h, so there are no handling issues at highway speeds.

The diesel had a tell-tale rattle at idle, but was quiet through the rev range and interior noise levels were commendably low. The seats proved supportive and comfortable during long driving stints and we loved the folding arm rests.

In summary, the Mahindra PikUp is a basement-priced machine that has all the expected 'fruit' and has reasonable performance, with brilliant economy. Warranty is generous. A grand or so spent on after-market suspension wouldn't go amiss.



## Previous Models

The latest Mahindra PikUp is the company's third effort in this market and by far the best to date. The PikUp is a giant leap from the Jeep-like, open four-seater Mahindras that were imported here in the early 1990s. Had they been sold as non-road-registerable, light tractors the Mahindras would have appealed to farmers, because in low range they'd go virtually anywhere. A through-driving rear diff centre meant that fitting a splined three-way to the back was easy. However, as a road vehicle the Mahindra was a shocker and the imports ceased quickly. Interestingly Mahindra tractors are being imported and are reportedly selling quite well.

The first PikUp model that was introduced here in 2007 was quite a different vehicle from its Jeep-style predecessor, combining reasonable road manners with strong off road and load carrying abilities. A four-cylinder turbo-diesel with 79kW and 247Nm didn't compete head to head with more powerful Japanese fours, but overall gearing of 42.7:1 through a Borg Warner transfer case compared favourably with the Land Cruiser 70 Series' 44:1, meaning that it crawled at the same low speed in off-road conditions. The PikUp's limited slip rear differential was bigger than the Toyota's and gripped much better.

## Bush Modifications

Most utes need some after-market suspension rework and the Mahindra PikUp is no exception.

Under-bonnet, everything is where it should be: easily reached fuel filter and primer pump, and alternator positioned high-up in the engine bay for water protection. There's an air cleaner restriction indicator and space for a small auxiliary battery beside the huge starting volt box.



Under the chassis there are steel protection plates for the transmissions and a stone deflector in front of the fuel tank. A sump guard plate is needed, as is a better way of running the exhaust pipe over the chassis rail: the engine sump and the exhaust pipe are vulnerable.

## Who's Mahindra?

The Mahindra Group employs 117,000 people in 100 countries and turned over \$12.5 billion in 2010. The Group rates in the Forbes Global 2000 top company list and Dun & Bradstreet listed the Mahindra Group as the leading automotive company in India's top 500 companies. It's also currently the only automobile manufacturer in the top 10 in India's Carbon Disclosure Leadership Index.

Mahindra Group is made up of companies involved in automotive, aerospace, agricultural, defence, energy, industrial, logistics, consulting, real estate and steel industries. The Group also has a controlling interest in SsangYong Motor Company in Korea.

Mahindra Automotive Australia is a joint venture between Mahindra and Australian-based distributor Pacific TMI. The company now has 30 dealers in rural and metro locations in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, SA and WA.



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