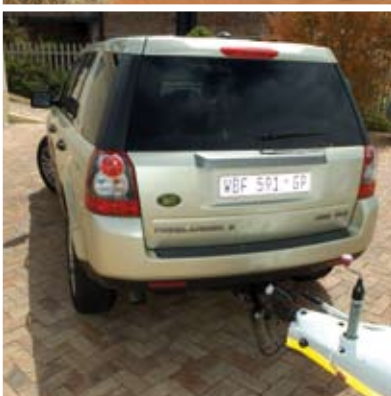


Freelander 2

No question of quality



Words by Mark Samuel
Photos by Mark Samuel and Rob Till



To me, the new Land Rover Freelander 2 undoubtedly resembles its larger sibling, the Discovery 3. Knowing the Disco's towing prowess, we couldn't wait to put the little brother through its paces to see how it measures up.

Let's be brutally honest: Land Rovers have, for the past number of years, acquired the unfortunate reputation of being a tad unreliable, especially when you're kilometres from nowhere in the middle of the African bush. When a manufacturer obtains a negative reputation such as this, they have to do everything in their power to turn potential buyers' perceptions around. This they may very well have achieved with the new Freelander 2. If you're in the market for a new mid-sized SUV for towing, it definitely warrants more than just a second glance.

Diesel power

There are two engine derivatives in the range, namely the 3.2-litre petrol (auto gearbox) and the 2.2-litre turbo-diesel, which is available with a six-speed manual or auto gearbox. Both the petrol and diesel vehicles' automatic transmissions feature Land Rover's Commandshift® manual

sequential gear mode, which allows you to select your desired gear. I found this feature particularly useful when descending long hills where I required engine braking to keep me at my chosen speed.

Because of its excellent torque specs (and also because we like towing with modern auto vehicles), we opted to test the top-of-the-range HSE TD4 Auto. On paper its power and torque statistics seemed ideal for towing. But, how would it fare on our standard test circuit, when coupled with an average-weight Gypsy Romany (GVM 1 225 kg)?

Towing ability

My immediate impression with the Romany in tow was that the steering was extremely light and precise. At speeds of around 110 - 120 km/h I noticed a slight caravan tail sway, which was particularly obvious through the sensitive steering. I attributed this to the unusually strong south-easterly wind on our test day.

Power delivery was above average, especially considering the small 2.2-litre engine. As with many automatic turbo-diesels, I noticed a slight turbo-lag when accelerating sharply, but an instant later full power was delivered through the dynamic 4x4 system, without any hint of wheel spin.

I found that the automatic gear selection never left me wondering when the vehicle would opt to change up or down, which was well demonstrated during our standard hill climb. For our maximum acceleration exercise on flat terrain, 40 km/h was achieved in first gear, 70 km/h in second and 110 km/h in third.

The driving position is almost too comfortable; by this I mean sometimes a slight degree of discomfort helps to keep you awake on those long hauls. Fold-down armrests for both the driver and passenger mean no more knotted shoulders after hours of driving. Electronically adjustable front seats (with a variable lumbar support switch on the driver's seat) make getting comfortable an easy task.

The emergency braking exercise yielded one of our top results; a reading of 2.99 sec was registered when braking from 100-0 km/h. This bodes well for those rare occasions when slamming on anchors and coming to an abrupt stop may mean the difference between life and death.

Features

The HSE top-of-the-range model is packed full of features. Most noticeable for me was the touchscreen


GPS unit located in the centre of the dashboard. Below the GPS are the CD/radio controls and the dual climate control aircon. Additional sound system buttons and cruise controls are conveniently positioned on the steering wheel.

"The driving position is almost too comfortable"

A tinted sunroof stretches from the front to above the second row of seats; a rollaway shade mesh reduces the amount of light entering through the roof. Seat upholstery throughout is plush grey/black leather. Park assist sensors help with reversing and parking. The vehicle's key is a nifty plastic sealed unit which is inserted into a slot on the dash. Once in place, and with the brake depressed, the handy start/stop button does the rest.

Also worth mentioning is the inclusion of Land Rover's Terrain Response System, which, at the turn of a switch, adjusts the vehicle setup to negotiate different terrain.

Bi-Xenon headlights (with dynamic levelling) are extremely effective, and the rain-sensing wipers are a nice touch.

The Freelander 2 HSE TD4 is a competent tow vehicle, assuming the high price tag isn't a deterrent for you. Its only remaining hurdle is the test of time – if it makes it through unscathed, I have few doubts it will go a long way to remedying Land Rover's reliability woes. 

The Terrain Response System controls are at the front of the centre console.



Side mirrors fold away when the doors are locked.



Dashboard finishes are of a high quality.



Depressing a button with the key inserted starts the car.



Towing performance

Towcar:
Land Rover Freelander 2
(HSE TD4)
Caravan:
Gypsy Romany

Caravan
License weight: 1 000 kg
GVM: 1 225 kg

Towcar specifications

Engine
Turbo-diesel 2.2-litre Common Rail
Tare weight: 1 923 kg
GVM: 2 505 kg
Power I.S.O. (kW/rpm)
118 kW @ 4 000 rpm
Engine torque (N.m/rpm)
400 N.m @ 2 000 rpm

Acceleration
0-60 km/h in 8.03 sec
0-80 km/h in 13.12 sec
0-100 km/h in 19.03 sec

Overtaking ability
60-80 km/h in 4.43 sec
80-100 km/h in 5.19 sec

Top towing speed
125 km/h

Braking
100-0 km/h in 2.99 sec

Hill climb (height of 200 m)
1 min 29.13 sec over 2 km

Fuel consumption towing
Steady 100 km/h = 13.7 l/100 km

Towball height (without caravan)
477 mm
Towball height (with caravan)
450 mm
Drop on towball with 80 kg
27 mm

Price
R429 000 (incl. VAT)

