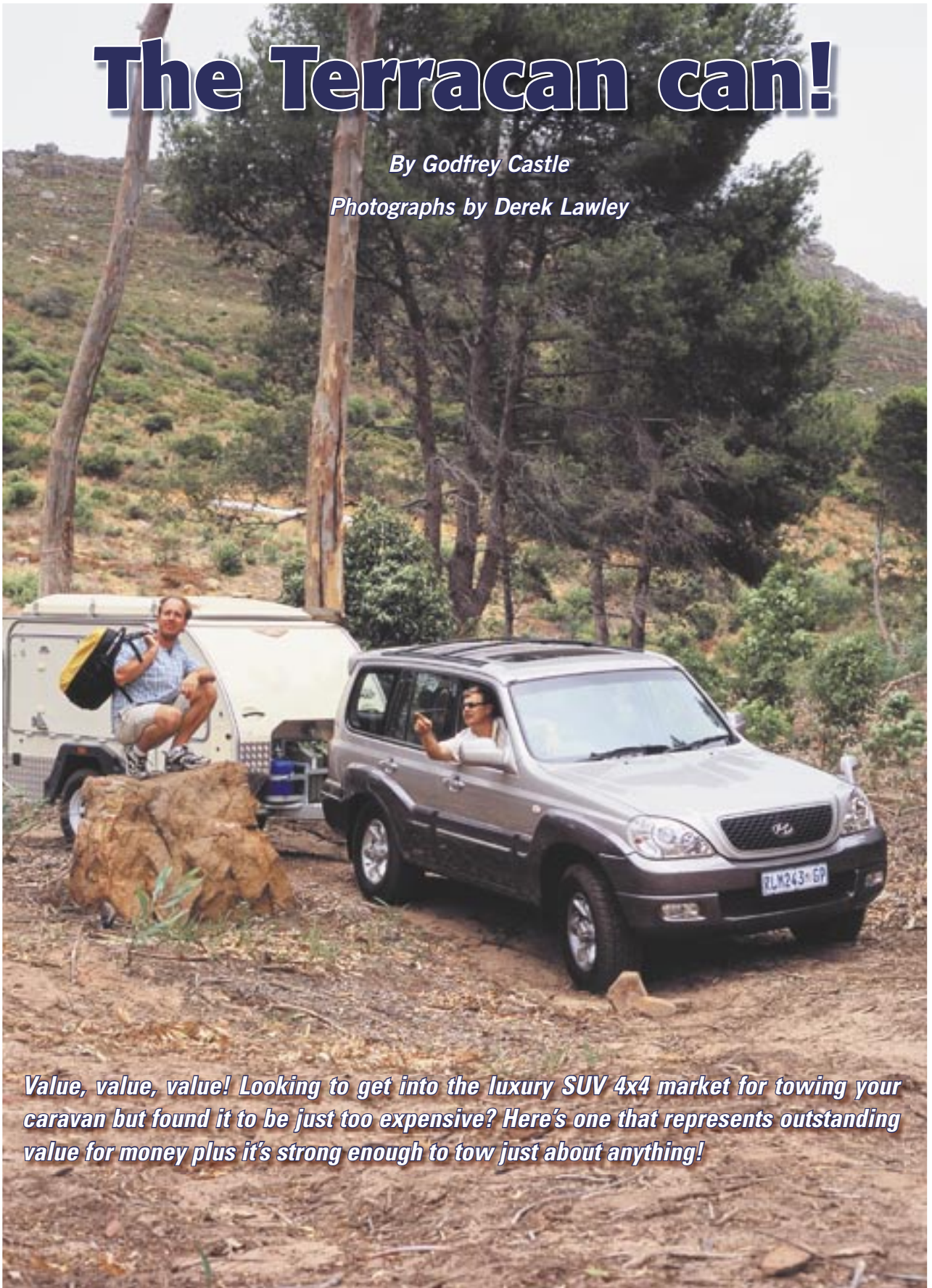


The Terracan can!

By Godfrey Castle

Photographs by Derek Lawley



Value, value, value! Looking to get into the luxury SUV 4x4 market for towing your caravan but found it to be just too expensive? Here's one that represents outstanding value for money plus it's strong enough to tow just about anything!

At the time of going to print the Hyundai Terracan carried a price tag of R299 000 which in many cases is half the price of its bigger named competitors and, yes ... wait for it, lacks nothing in terms of power, comfort and practicality to make it this well priced! Has Hyundai made an error and under-priced this vehicle?

A 3.5-litre V6 engine with automatic transmission, high and low range, 4-wheel drive, coil spring rear suspension for comfort...

The Terracan also features as standard, leather upholstery, metallic paintwork, a refreshing gimmick free dashboard that looks classy, yet lists all the important essentials such as cruise control to ensure stress-free long-distance towing. Plus it features one of the easiest to understand air-conditioning systems I have yet to come across – no pilot's license is necessary!

You don't need to be a 4x4 fundi when it comes to going off-road. Switching between rear wheel drive only and four by four high or four by four low is a breeze. It has a conventional automatic transmission with a rotary selector switch which you simply rotate to the desired gear choice and, as a bonus, changing between rear wheel high range

and four wheel high range can be done while travelling at below 50 km/h. You don't have to come to a dead stop!

Low range, on the other hand, can only be selected while the vehicle is stationary and when the automatic transmission lever is in neutral, so simple it's impossible to make a mistake.

Simplicity itself

The instrumentation cluster includes a large, clearly legible speedometer, odometer and trip meter on one side and a useful equally large rev. counter on the other. In-between are clearly defined overlapping twin dials, one is the temperature gauge and the other the fuel gauge. Adjacent to these instruments is a neat row of lights which indicate the gear you are in.

For added comfort between the driver and front passenger there is a glove compartment with a handy hideaway tray for storing wallet, keys or other valuable items.

The back of the glove box offers the rear seat passengers a fold out cup holder plus a 12 volt power socket for appliances that draw up to a maximum of 200w. This is useful for when adding extra gizmos such as satellite navigation (GPS), cellphone charger or in-car

entertainment for the children.

The cruise control function buttons are conveniently located on the steering wheel hub and offer the extra convenience of engaging cruise control or resuming speed without having to look away from the road ahead. The big 3.5-litre V6 petrol engine does not have much of a problem maintaining the desired speed on the open road. Acceleration is brisk, even with the caravan in tow and the automatic transmission makes light and smooth work of transferring this power to the drive train.

Bearing in mind that R299 000 price tag, the steering is also adjustable for height with a lever mounted on the steering wheel column and yes, it even has windscreen wipers. A front and rear windscreen wiper control is mounted on the left of the steering column while

The badging on the Terracan says it all: 3.5 litres of brute V6 muscle power that will take you and your family (together with your caravan) just about anywhere you choose, with the utmost ease.



While the Terracan offers all the luxury and comfort that one could ever ask for on open road cruising, it's really only once you get off the beaten track that this versatile 4x4 wagon really comes into its own.





A small knob on the centre console allows you to switch from two wheel drive high into four wheel drive at the drop of a hat. There are ample handy storage compartments that allow you to keep your valuables away from prying eyes.

the headlight and indicator arm is on the right.

To match the grey leather seats the door panels are finished in a synthetic leather with matching genuine leather insert trim, and each of the four doors have large loudspeakers to cater for the Pioneer sound system. (Again, I'd like to mention that even the radio is not beyond my level of simplicity to work.)

The Terracan has a typical five door sports utility vehicle configuration with seating for five. The rear back seat splits into two with the ability to fold flat and enlarge the loading bay. Unlike the more expensive 4x4s it does not offer extra seating by having fold out seats in the load bay which, arguably, do take up extra space.

I liked the fact that the Terracan comes with a roof rack as standard – great for tying on fishing rods or surfboards or even a few mountain bikes.

Finally, I think that at last the Koreans have come to grips with western styling expectations with the design of the Terracan. It does not look oriental or gimmicky at all, the only unusual extra is the kerb view mirror mounted on the front left fender which allows a view of the kerb-side for parking purposes, but the general exterior styling – particularly that of the radiator grille – is macho indeed.

This, when taken in context with big aggressively styled off-road tyres, presents a vehicle that will hold its own with the best 4x4s when the going gets tough.

As a towcar

It would have been a sin to hitch up a conventional caravan to the Terracan, which calls for doing more than towing on grass and gravel or the national highways, it just has too much of an off-road presence. So we hitched our off-road Jurgens Xcape caravan (license mass 1050 kg, gross 1 400 kg) and headed for the hills.

A new forestry track on the side of the Cape's Helderberg mountains caught our eye and a quick reassuring glance at my test team – yes/no? – extracted the answer "You're driving, not us! What's life without a challenge?"

So, onto the sand track and select 4x4 high range by twiddling the selector knob, select drive on the automatic transmission and apply a little accelerator pressure. Nothing could be easier!

(And again, this is what I like about the Terracan, it's so simple you don't have to go soft and dive into the handbook to find out how things work, that's for girls! Everything is obvious!)

For me an automatic transmission is the only way to go 4x4ing and this again came to the fore as we eased up one particularly steep sand track scattered with shale outcrops. With an automatic there is the advantage of not having to slip the clutch when anticipating the caravan's wheels having to climb over high obstacles, and with just enough engine revs. the combination seemed to become one unit which, at an easy speed had oodles of traction and climbed steadily over boulders. The coil spring



Instrumentation on the dashboard is clear and easy to read both during the day and at night.

rear suspension and independent front suspension literally soaked up any shock – did we still have the caravan in tow?

Yes, and the more we travelled on this path the more confused we got – more impressed with the Xcape's ability or that of the Terracan? Where the one went the other followed, in the same tracks, the same width, the same height and the same manner, both tough enough to take on anything.

What's more we still had low range in reserve.

"Hey, that was fun! Let's do the new trails in the Kalahari." "I want to do Mozambique!" were just a few of the comments from my team!

Open road

One area where we did not agree was that of braking and having to stop quickly in an emergency. Crash stopping from 100 km/h left us wondering if we would ever stop. Our hearts and minds said never, the stop watch said 2.95 seconds from 100 km/h to zero. We repeated this test over and over again and the stopwatch proved consistent. It DOES brake quickly but there is an illusion – possibly created by the fact that you sit high up in the Terracan – that it brakes slower than normal. Did we mention that it has ABS braking?

Stability, suspension carrying capacity, transmission and visibility are all excellent, as is comfort.

As with any car with a big engine, if you push the accelerator hard expect to consume a lot of fuel, if you are gentle the abundance of power is a delightful thing to have.

The only optional extra on the Terracan is the towbracket, it's your choice of a fixed towbracket or a detachable one.

For me, I would rate this as the best Hyundai I have driven, and at the price what a bargain!