

Range Rover Vogue TDV8

It costs a cool million rand and is rated by Land Rover to be capable of towing up to the legal limit provided by a code 8 driver's licence of 3 500 kg – that's more than twice the weight of the tandem-wheeled Jurgens Exclusive!

Just imagine owning a towcar with a towing capacity of 3 500 kg and an engine developing 640 Nm of torque and 200 kW of power! You could tackle anything with a tow hitch.

When they handed us the keys to this Range Rover Vogue we felt we had to challenge Land Rover and tow something really big and heavy, something far in excess of a mere caravan. Since this vehicle has the power to move mountains, what about towing an implement that does move mountains – a digger loader (otherwise known as a TLB).

To tow a trailer of 3 500 kg you need three basic components – prime concern is stability, and to have this, the tow vehicle must, in itself, be a substantially heavy vehicle so as to prevent the 'tail from wagging the dog'. The next item is the ability to power both its own weight and that of the 3 500 kg trailer to acceptable, safe speeds. The third item is traction, both for braking and acceleration.

The Range Rover Vogue TDV8 has all this and more, with a relatively small engine capacity of 3630 cm³, twin turbo diesel engine. First impression of the Vogue was that the shape is a little dated and a far cry from the stylish Range Rover Sport that oozes macho appeal. Land Rover, you see, has undergone a remarkable metamorphosis since first being taken over by BMW and then Ford, and for the price of this vehicle, you can expect some serious levels of luxury and technology.

There are three areas that establish the Vogue in a class of its own – ride comfort (it rides on air suspension), smoothness of engine and transmission (powered by a Peugeot V8 diesel engine) and interior quietness.

"ever tried stopping three tons from fish-tailing?"

This Vogue has two very useful features: self-levelling suspension and – a wonderful feature for towing – towing stability control. Get into an unstable towing situation and its onboard computer automatically applies brakes to the appropriate wheels to take control of the situation. Ever tried stopping the equivalent of three tons from fish-tailing from side to side? It's a nightmare!

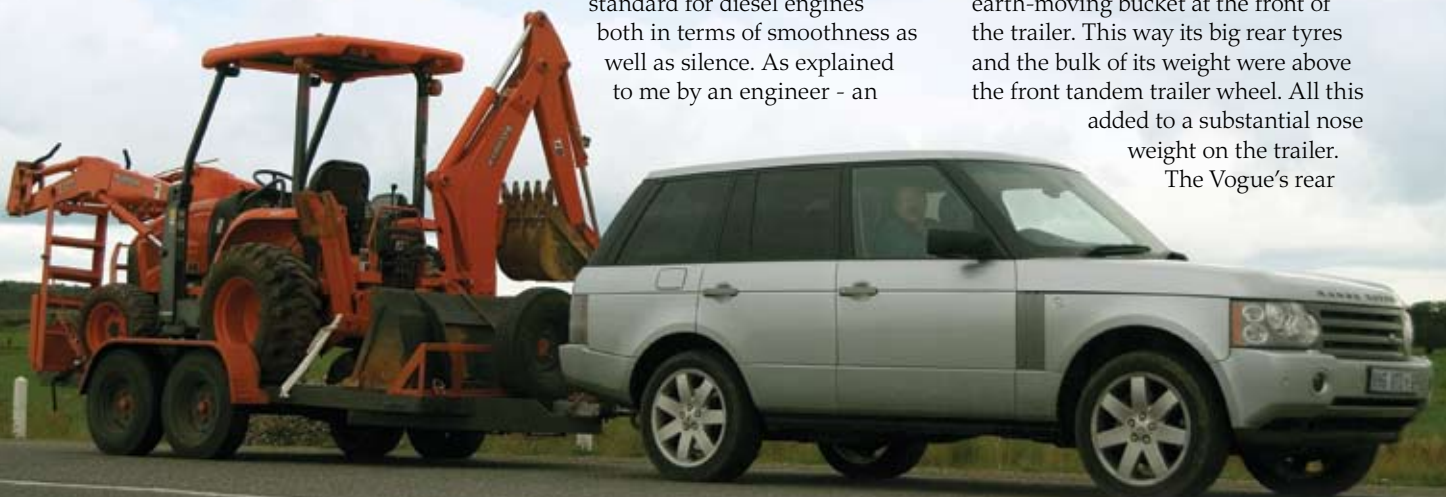
The twin turbo V8 diesel engine (one turbo per bank) sets a new standard for diesel engines both in terms of smoothness as well as silence. As explained to me by an engineer - an

engine crankshaft performs much like a wet dog shaking as each piston has to race one way, stop, and race in the opposite direction thousands of times per minute. The simple action of a piston causes vibration. If you reduce the milliseconds between each cylinder firing by adding extra cylinders, you end up with far less vibration (so evident here) and there are no diesel fumes. This diesel engine must be the quietest and smoothest running we have ever had the privilege of driving.

So how does it tow?

There is always a first time and for me placing the digger loader on the trailer was a bit of an experiment. I thought I had it right with the digger loader facing forward, its big earth-moving bucket facing towards the Vogue's back window and each wheel on the tandem trailer showing equal air pressure. Wrong, at 60 km/h the digger loader took command and we had 3 169 kg of steel moving from left to right behind us in ever increasing arcs. Foot off the power and Vogue's braking computer decided to take over. Anxious moments, but with speed gently down to 20 km/h the towing stability control brought the combination into line and we stopped to make plan 'B'. The Vogue's brakes were hot and smelly, similar perhaps to a Comrades marathon runner after breaking the winning tape!

We reloaded the digger loader the other way round, first depositing the earth-moving bucket at the front of the trailer. This way its big rear tyres and the bulk of its weight were above the front tandem trailer wheel. All this added to a substantial nose weight on the trailer. The Vogue's rear





If the Vogue can tow heavy earth-moving equipment then the lighter Jurgens Exclusive certainly is a breeze, with a fuel consumption of only 15.4l/100 km.


suspension reciprocated by going down literally to its knees under the weight. The marvellous thing, however, was to start the Vogue's engine and see the self-levelling suspension bring everything back to normal. Now we could travel at 80 km/h and accelerate up to 100 km/h on the hills, slowing on the downhill.

Three and a half tons is a lot of weight to tow and I would not recommend this to the faint-hearted. When this amount of weight wants to fishtail there is very little that will stop the action except slowing the whole combination down.

I was surprised by the Vogue's ability to assist in monitoring

stability, and when necessary, to assist in reducing speed to controllable levels. And above all, what added to the enjoyment of towing with this vehicle was the overall smooth ride and absence of pitching onto the rear suspension. Overall it sets a new benchmark in towing comfort. Really impressive.

If you are fortunate enough to own a vehicle such as this the fuel consumption will not be a worry – considering its overall weight.

The Vogue offers so much more than its styling leads to believe; it offers a ride level – in my opinion - better than most German SUVs and yes, it costs a-plenty. 



Luxury personified: the cabin features all creature comforts, including a remote video camera as well as in-car digital entertainment for the rear seat passengers.

Specifications

Towing performance

Models:

Range Rover Vogue TDV8
Jurgens Exclusive

Car specifications

Engine: Twin turbo V8 diesel 3 630 cm³

Power: I.S.O (kW/revs) 200 @ 4 000 rpm

Engine torque: (Nm/revs) 640 Nm
@ 2 000 rpm

Caravan:

Licence weight 1 380 kg
Gross weight 1 700 kg

Acceleration:

0-60 km/h 5.43 secs
0-80 km/h 10.32 secs
0-100 km/h 14.45 secs

Overtaking ability (seconds):

60-80 km/h 3.35 secs
80-100 km/h 6.1 secs

Braking: 100 km – 0 3.1 sec

Hill climb 200 m height:

1 min 13 secs over 2 km

Fuel consumption:

Steady 100 km/h = 15.4l/100 km