

# Fortuner: Petrol vs Diesel



By Godfrey Castle

Which Toyota Fortuner would you buy? A 4-litre V6 petrol automatic or a 3-litre 4 cylinder turbo-diesel manual?

**W**hen Toyota SA decided to marry the rugged strength and reputation of the popular Hilux with that of a family-orientated, leather-seated, sports utility vehicle, and to name it Fortuner, they certainly arrived at a very workable vehicle. It's one that constitutes both a solid workhorse and a recreational, fun, family vehicle.

There are five Fortuner model derivatives split over two engine sizes (3-litre diesel or 4-litre petrol) and just so you know, there is a waiting list of eager buyers that extends out of Toyota dealerships and around the block! Regrettably there is no automatic transmission option in the diesel derivative.

So which one would you choose?

Let's start off this tow test by stating that the national sales preference split for these two models is 70% of customers preferring the diesel while 30% prefer the petrol engined version.

Fact is, per litre, diesel is cheaper than petrol, and diesel is known to give more kilometres per litre than petrol, which is probably the main reason why buyers opt for this model. Personally, I think they should look further than just economy and I'll tell you why later.

## Power talk

Turbo diesel engines are known for packing low down, Blue Bulls-type scrumming torque that will move and shakes any obstacle in its path. However, compare the engine characteristics: the four cylinder diesel engine produces 120 kW at 3 400 rpm and 343 N.m of torque from as low down as 1 400 rpm versus the six cylinder petrol engine of 175 kW at 5 200 rpm and 376 N.m at a high 3 800 rpm. Technically this confirms

that the petrol engine has more power and torque than the diesel engine Fortuner, and for this extra power you pay a price premium of R24 100.

**"it does the job, any job, extremely well"**

For R24 100 you get an automatic transmission that's great for driving in traffic or over tough 4x4 obstacles versus the diesel's five-speed manual that requires more than dainty little calf muscles in rush hour traffic, and you get six cylinders that consume petrol at about 10.9 to 11.6 l/100 km versus the diesel's 9.5 l/100 km around town. Not a big difference.

The service intervals for the petrol Fortuner is every 15 000 km while the diesel requires servicing at earlier intervals of 10 000 km. Service costs appear a trade secret, probably because not every service is the same due to the fact that owners

may request extra work to be done. Perhaps a saving on the diesel service is the fact that although it requires an earlier oil change service interval, it does not have consumables such as spark plugs to be added to the bill.

We have been fortunate in having the petrol version on a 20 000 km test to see what ownership would be like and found the vehicle somewhat 'mundanely' efficient. I use this word tongue-in-cheek as it does the job, any job, extremely well and nothing ever seems to require attention. Fact is, in 20 000 km the only problem we experienced was a CD disc stuck in the CD player – there was not a rattle, not a mechanical failure, not a disappointment in any aspect other than pure enjoyment of ownership.

### Maximum towing capacity

So how does each model fare towing the same weight caravan? Both models have the same factory-recommended towing capacity of up to 750 kg for an unbraked trailer and up to 1 500 kg for a trailer with over-run brakes.

An interesting point is that according to the tare weight

printed on the licence disc the diesel's licence weight of 1 895 kg is heavier than the petrol automatic, at 1 845 kg. Even though our traffic regulations allow you to tow a weight up to the vehicle's licence weight (or heavier if you fit an extra hydraulic/vacuum/electric operated service brake to the trailer), Toyota still specify 1 500 kg as the maximum allowable tow weight.

In comparison to the smooth, effortless automatic transmission on the petrol model, the manual gearbox on the diesel Fortuner gets arguably heavy, but towing the Gypsy Regal (1 330 kg) is pleasant for both vehicles. Tyre pressures on the big radials were: front 240 kpa and rear 300 kpa.

The diesel with all its torque pulls strongly from 2 000 rpm in 4th gear, and having that big air intake on top of the engine bonnet provides a physiological impression of massive engine power and torque. Going up our standard hill climb, the petrol version took 1 minute, 29.53 seconds to cover the two kilometre route, whereas the diesel took 1 minute 37.41 seconds. The diesel did this in third gear at 3 000 r/min while the petrol could rev



Leather seats, electric windows, digital onboard fuel consumption and stereo radio and CD player is standard equipment, as is...



... electric rear diff lock for when you need more than conventional 4x4 traction...



...and a handy storage bin for sunglasses.



The interior is stylish and comfortable; middle seats fold forward for extra space, rear seats fold up against the side walls, and there are seatbelts for all!

to 4 000 quite easily.


Standard acceleration from standstill to 100 km/h with the Gypsy in tow took 19.62 seconds compared with 14.28 on the diesel, which was surprising, and a maximum towing speed was 143 km/h on the petrol and 140 on the diesel.

Even though the Fortuner has been equipped with coil spring suspension at the rear to provide car-like

passenger comfort, it does provide a rather firm ride; it also supports the additional weight of a caravan in tow without any sign of pitching on the rear axle springs.

Personally, the reason I prefer the six-cylinder petrol automatic relates to overall comfort. The few rands difference in the fuel price pale into insignificance compared to smooth six-cylinder power and a very quiet

engine. Plus there is the blessing of an automatic transmission, which, while being great for off-road excursions, is especially so when it comes to traffic and towing. Driven reasonably, the petrol engine will give you excellent life and mileage.

I guess I am a little biased towards the petrol engine so please read the comments from colleagues on our sister publications. 

## We thought...

### Neil Harrison

**Publisher/Editor SA4x4 magazine**

There're few vehicle configurations more satisfying to drive than a big 6-cylinder motor mated to a smooth auto box, so why do I prefer the manual diesel Fortuner over its petrol-engine sibling? Well, firstly the D-4D diesel motor is top notch; it's a new generation diesel that's quiet and refined, and with 120 kW and 343 N.m on tap, it's pretty darned powerful too. Sure, the big V6 petrol motor offers you an extra 55 kW, but at the cost of economy. Driving the petrol Fortuner, you'll struggle to get much more than 450 km from a full tank. In a big country like ours, the diesel Fortuner is the logical choice.

### Mark Samuel

**Features Editor Caravan & Outdoor Life magazine**

Off the bat, I have to say that I enjoy driving both variations of the Fortuner. But, for me, did one just pip the other as a favourite? I'm a money watcher – I just can't help it. I keep a careful budget and, unfortunately, when it comes to driving the big 4.0-litre petrol, I feel like there's a hole in the bottom of my wallet and the money's falling out. I particularly enjoy the auto gearbox, but the manual was also pleasurable to drive. At +9 l/100 km, the diesel gets my nod.



Caption