

Right on

Q



The Audi Q7's smaller brother was long overdue. Dieter Losskarn took the performance-SUV into the Little Karoo, over the Swartberg Pass and into Die Hel – and enjoyed the ride in the dynamic sibling that perfectly fills a vacant slot in the range's line up.



'The Q5 felt more like a sports car than an SUV.'
Dieter Losskarn

The guy in front of us wouldn't give an inch. Whenever there was a slight chance for us to pass, he pulled his Nissan X-Trail into the centre of the narrow road. He obviously couldn't cope with what he was seeing in his rear-view mirror. He seemed to think he and his elderly passengers, all dressed in various shades of khaki, were the real adventurers, the rightful owners of the bumpy track from

Swartberg Pass into Gamkaskloof, known as Die Hel, in the heart of the Karoo. Not the city-slickers with their black Audi Q5 with those piercing, pushy daytime running lights. For them it must have been like being passed on a hike up Table Mountain by a guy wearing an Armani suit and Gucci loafers.

Before I developed symptoms of (dirt) road rage, I decided that the



wise head gives in. We stopped, enjoyed the mountain fynbos scenery and had another look at our vehicle. It was so much more attractive than its bigger brother, the Q7, which is just intimidatingly large. The Q5 looks clean, simple and sporty, despite being 4,63 metres long and offering ample space with its five seats. The backrests for the rear seats are angle-adjustable and fold down to increase the luggage space from 540 to 1560 litres.

The signature large, single-frame Audi grille dominates the front and the headlights can be supplied with xenon-plus bulbs and LED daytime running lights, in which case the rear lights feature LED technology. It

shares lots of components with the A4 sedans and wagons, plus the A5 coupés, including the latest all-wheel drive Quattro system with 60 per cent of the torque directed to the rear wheels in normal driving. Depending on driving conditions, the Quattro powertrain can divert up to 65 per cent of the torque to the front wheels, or as much as 85 per cent to the rear.

The Q5 has the lowest roofline in the compact SUV segment, giving it a sporty, coupé-like styling. In the looks department, it has more in common with BMW's X6 than with the Q7. The interior features the expected high-quality leather/wood/aluminium finish.

The Q5 fills one of the few vacant slots in the Audi range and they describe it as a performance-SUV. The competition consists of the VW Tiguan (20 cm lower), the BMW X3 (7 cm shorter) and Merc's GLK (10 cm shorter), which is not yet available in South Africa.

For more serious bundu-bashing, Audi offers an off-road package with underbody protection steel plates in the front and back and 19-inch wheels. The S line sport street version comes with a variety of fancy wheel and tyre combinations in

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various sizes, measuring up to 20 inches in diameter.

The Q5 did surprisingly well on the rough dirt road into Die Hel. When we reached the steep drop-off into the valley, a couple of really hairy hairpin bends posed no problem for the vehicle. The standard-fit hill-descent assist system maintained the speed below 30 km/h,



ABOVE and RIGHT: Creature comforts – the Q5's inviting interior and panorama glass sunroof. **LEFT:** Sundown Karoo-style as the Q5 bathes in the last light of a stormy day.



while ESP and ABS systems switched to special programmes for off-road driving. The ESP focused on maximum traction, while the ABS automatically identified surface conditions and selected the ideal approach for sand, gravel or rough scribed.

There is a beautiful campground in Die Hel and a few nicely restored farm buildings, which can be booked as self-catering units through CapeNature. There is also a rustic farm-stall lunch place in the valley and, after a hearty bite, we decided to leave this heavenly hell. Luckily, on the way back towards Swartberg Pass, there was no moving obstacle in front of us.

But what about the black stuff, you might ask. The Q5 is not a typical off-roader after all. Like most SUVs, it will spend the larger part

The low-down

Audi Q5

Price: The Q5 entry level model is the 2,0-litre TDI manual (R409 500), followed by the 2,0 TFSI automatic (R463 000), the 3,0 Tdi (R536 000) and the top of the range automatic 3,2-litre petrol (R517 500).

Engine: 2,0-litre 4-cyl turbo diesel – 125 kW/170 hp;

2,0-litre, 4-cyl petrol, 155 kW/211 hp;

3,0-litre, 6-cyl turbo diesel 176 kW/240 hp;

3,2-litre, 6 cyl petrol 199 kW/270 hp

Torque: 350/350/500/330 Nm

0–100 km/h: 9,5/7,2/6,5/6,9 sec

Top speed: 204/222/225/234 km/h

Consumption/100 km: 8 litres (average consumption on 1 600 km trip)/8,5/7,5/9,3 litres (according to Audi)

Fuel tank: 75 litres

Range: 938/882/1 000/800 km

Approach angle: 25°

Departure angle: 25°

Ground clearance: 200 mm

Wading depth: 500 mm

Weight: 1730/1740/1865/1795 kg

For a similar amount of money (R409 000 to R536 000), you could buy:

VW Tiguan 2,0 TSI 4Motion Tiptronic Sport&Style R389 800

Lexus RX 350 R544 700

Nissan X-Trail 2,5 SE 4x4 R342 200

Volvo XC60 D5 AWD Geartronic R481 100

BMW X3 3,0 d Steptronic R519 000



of its life on tarred-road surfaces, most of them in inner cities. What about Audi's performance promise? Even in the entry-level 2,0-litre turbodiesel, paired with the six-speed manual gearbox, the Q5 felt more like a sports car than an SUV.

There was no body roll whatsoever. Even in heavy rain and on wet surfaces, the roadholding was magnificent. The only thing you wish for after a while is a bit more power, which comes with the 3,0-litre turbodiesel, paired with the automatic seven-speed S tronic gearbox, adding another 70 hp to the 2,0-litre's 170. If you haven't driven the 3,0-litre, the 2,0-litre is okay, but after experiencing the bigger diesel, it's very hard to go back. However, performance comes at a price: one litre and two cylinders more add R126 500 extra to the R409 500 of the standard 2,0-litre diesel.

And standard it is. If you go for some of the enticing options Audi offers, the price for your baby quickly goes through the roof. Let me give an example. I really love the vehicle, but I'm not such a great diesel fan.

As I like power, I would go for the 3,2-litre petrol version with 270 hp (R517 500) in black-metallic paint (R3 250). I like to listen to good music, so I would opt for the Bang & Olufsen sound system with 14 high-performance speakers (R6 700) and a DVD changer in the glove compartment (R4 600).

To stay in contact, I would need a cellphone plug-in point in the front-centre armrest with Bluetooth (R6 700). As a man, I hate to ask for directions, so I'd order the fantastic new-generation, 3D-look navigation system (R21 300).

Luckily, the Xenon headlights and LED daytime running lights are standard on this model, so I'd have to add only adaptive lighting (R5 200) and high-beam assistant, which automatically switches between high and low beam when cars are approaching (R1 560).

For safety and security, I would like to have the lane-change assistant (R10 200), park distance control front and rear with camera (R4 300), rear side airbags (R4 100) and tyre-pressure monitor (R960).

To hell and back: the dirt-road into Gamkaskloof posed no problem for the attractive Q5. The impressive single-frame Audi grille dominates the vehicle's front end.

Safe and secure, I'd want to look good and experience a slightly more sporty drive. So I'd add the following to my list: 20-inch, 7-twin-spoke alloy wheels (R18 440), adaptive damping (R12 480), Audi drive select (R3 360), dynamic steering (R11 280) and, for the heck of it, the S line sports package (R6 360).

The fine Nappa leather design package would set me back another cool R10 000.

For a final touch, the detachable tow bar (R7 900) is a must, as is the magnificent panorama glass sun roof (R16 800) and the tinted windows (R4 560).

I try to imagine myself in the veldskoene of the guy driving the Nissan X-Trail, overloaded with my extended family wrapped in khaki getting on my nerves, on my way to Die Hel, when all of a sudden, this black Q5 (R517 500, plus optional extras of R160 050 = R677 550) with the above-mentioned daytime running lights appears in my rearview mirror. Would I let him pass? ■

□ footnotes overleaf



Next month: We rediscover two old-time favourites and see how Land Rover's Discovery 3 and Range Rover, both introduced in 2005, are coping with their more recent 4x4 competition.

footnotes

Where we stayed

\$ to \$\$ Gamkaskloof/Die Hel has 10 camping sites at the entrance to the valley which share the ablution facilities (showers with cold water) and cost R140 to R160 a site (max six people). Or you can sleep in one of the eight restored historic houses, which sleep up to eight people and cost between R150 and R190 a person a night sharing. Book through CapeNature's reservation office tel 021-659-3500, capenature-thandi@gmail.com, web www.cape-nature.co.za.

\$\$\$ The Retreat at Groenfontein is a beautifully restored, traditional

farmhouse in a peaceful valley near Calitzdorp. Three-course candlelit dinners are served on the stoep and there's a great 20-minute walk to some natural rock pools. DB&B rates start from R450 a person sharing. Tel/fax 044-213-3880, e-mail info@groenfontein.com, web www.groenfontein.com.

\$\$\$\$ De Bergkant Lodge and Cottages is a tastefully restored, historic parsonage in Prince Albert with a huge swimming pool.

B&B rates start from R800 a person sharing. Tel 023-541-1088, e-mail bergkant@africa.com, web www.debergkant.co.za. ■

Wheels etc



RAV it up for less

All five models in the RAV4 range have experienced some interior and exterior styling changes, including headlamps, radiator grille, front fog-lamps and rear combination lamp cluster. Turn indicators have been added to the side mirrors.

Inside, the centre cluster that houses the sound system, ventilation and air-conditioning controls has been revised, as has the instrument panel. A Bluetooth interface has been added to the VX specification.

But the big news is the price reduction for the petrol-engine GX and VX models and an enhanced optimal-drive engine for the diesel engine GX and VX models. The latest RAV4 2,0 Petrol GX is R287 700, a reduction of R23 000 on the model it replaces. The RAV4 2,0 Petrol VX is R345 200, a saving of R5 800, while the automatic transmission version of the petrol VX is priced at R356 200, making a saving of R6 100.

Web www.toyota.co.za.

Slumdog MPV from India

You don't have to be a slumdog millionaire to afford the newest MPV offering from Mahindra. The XYLO was created with customers from all its target countries in mind, including South Africa. Project team members travelled extensively and conducted over 1 100 customer interviews to better understand their needs. The Mahindra XYLO 2,5 CRD costs the same as the usual extras on an Audi Q5: R159 900.

Web www.mahindra.co.za.



Leigh Stefanski

Meet Ulysses, fit for an Odyssey

With all these flashy new beasts hitting the road, we thought we'd introduce readers to how we get around at *Getaway*. We test a number of vehicles and do assignments in a whole lot more. But, for some reason, when we've undertaken really big adventures, the wheels under us generally seem to be a Land Rover Defender. So it's appropriate, somehow, that our permanent runaround at the moment is a Defender 110, a beast with all its Landy quirks that doesn't go too fast but gets us almost anywhere. We've called it Ulysses and, if you've read Homer's *Odyssey*, you'll know why.



