

# All because of Arnie



The third-generation Hummer H3 is now being produced in South Africa. Dieter Losskarn took one of these militaristic SUVs through its paces over a couple of days of hard driving and got quite attached to the beast.

The traffic sign is exactly what I'm looking for. No entry. Obviously a bridge has been washed away and is now being rebuilt. But my Hummer and I aren't going to let that stand in our way. After all, my H3's granddaddy, the legendary H1, didn't blink at obstacles like this in the Desert Storm war over in the Middle East.

The vehicle crawls through thick mud left from the new concrete bridge construction. This looks more like Caterpillar country, too muddy to get out and check the track over the next hill. Big mistake. The Hum-

mer slides down the other side, eagerly awaited by a massive pool of deep, brown, sticky mud. With an awful sucking noise, the front wheels disappear. Even in low gear and with diff-locks engaged, the mud-covered tyres turn helplessly. Ouch!

Luckily, I'm close to Montagu and my cell phone is still working. I reach a guy in a Land Rover who knows about the construction site. An hour later, we fix a rusty steel chain to the back of the Landy and one of the sturdy recovery hooks at the front of the Hummer. With a loud, sucking noise, the Hummer is released from its misery. Thanks, Landy.

Getting stuck is exactly what the United States military didn't want to experience anymore. As early as the 1970s, their Jeeps and lighter trucks had become inadequate for military missions in difficult terrain and they were in desperate need of an improved vehicle. The military demanded almost unachievable specifications and, in 1988, AM General came up with the M998 or High Mobility

*"I didn't stick around to find out, 'cos things got a little tricky when he offered me his sister's hand in marriage."*



**LEFT:** Sunsets from Picard's beach are always spectacular. **RIGHT:** Measuring and tagging nesting hawks-bill turtles is just one of the rangers' regular tasks. **FAR RIGHT:** The visitors' block at Picard is used mainly by visiting scientists and researchers. **PREVIOUS SPREAD:** Turquoise waters lap the shores at Picard research.



Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV). The US military was impressed and ordered 55/000 of them. Since HMMWV was a bit too difficult to pronounce, soldiers began to refer to their vehicles as Humvees and the name stuck.

What made the Hummers famous was the 1991 military operation, Desert Storm, in the Middle East. Soldiers driving the Humvees were frequently seen on television and the public was intrigued. The first civilian Humvee entered the market that same year and was soon immensely popular.

Legend has it that while in Oregon shooting the movie, Kindergarten Cop, Arnold Schwarzenegger saw a convoy of army Humvees and decided he wanted one. The seemingly indestructible car reminded him of his most famous screen character, the invincible Terminator.

The vehicles were exclusively for military use, but the story goes that Schwarzenegger pulled a few political strings with his friend, George Bush

senior, and convinced the company to develop a civilian version, called the Hummer. The first one was delivered to the actor in July 1992. It held on to the military specifications that had made the Humvee famous, but creature comforts like leather seats and air-con were added along the way. Now that he's governor of California, Arnie has bowed to voter pressure and drives a specially built hydrogen-fuelled Hummer.

In 1999, AM General sold the rights to the Hummer brand to General Motors (GM), but continued building the H1 and military Humvees in their plants. In 2004, the interior of the H1 received a complete makeover. Premium leather seating, Berber carpet and new colour themes brought the H1 more into line with contemporary luxury 4x4s.

Shortly before production of the H1 stopped at the end of 2006, GM built the best one ever. The so-called H1 Alpha had a stronger engine, bet-



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ter fuel consumption and performance. But it was too expensive (around US\$140 000) and still too thirsty (over 30 litres/100km) to stick around for long.

Three years earlier, in 2003, the Hummer H2 – a smaller, but still hefty Hummer version – entered the market. It wasn't a H1, for sure, but still had room for five passengers. For some reason it became the choice for gangsta rappers and featured in countless hip-hop videos.

Now the designers at GM have done an amazing job in retaining the original Hummer H1 and subsequent H2 genes in their third-generation Hummer, the H3. It looks much bigger than it actually is and it handles like a smaller sedan, with a surprisingly small turning circle. Right- and left-hand drive Hummer H3 models are being produced in Port Elizabeth, which brings the price way down, starting at around R370 000, i.e. the price of a small SUV .

Despite 223 hp and 305 Nm torque on the road, the 3,7 litre Vortec engine feels a bit weak for the vehicle's 2,2 tons, but evidently GM is developing a diesel engine for the South African market. It was also recently announced that the H3 Alpha, with a 5,4 litre, Vortec V8 and around 300 hp, will be released in the US next year.

But as soon as you cruise along a country road or take the H3 off-road, the five-cylinder petrol Vortec develops sufficient power. The gears are quite short, so you end up in fifth rather quickly. ESP and permanent four-wheel drive make the



car handle almost like a sedan on curvy roads.

Its military looks suggest a rough ride, but the Hummer is comfortable, especially in its Adventure version with plush leather seats. The front and rear diff-lock can be engaged by a switch and the low-range reduction works the same way. In low range first, no obstacle seems to be too difficult or too steep for the H3. Inside there is plenty of space, for both front and rear-seat passengers. A fat steering wheel and gear shift add to the chunky Hummer feel. And boy, is it eye-catching!

After having experienced the baby Hummer for a week and about 2/200 kilometres, every other SUV appears rather boring. I must admit that, despite my concern about the beast's impact on the environment, I have fallen in love with it. The hardest part was giving it back. I still haven't told them about getting stuck.

### The low down

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**Price:** Starts from R374 000 for the H3 Manual, up to R44 750 for the H3 Luxury Automatic  
**Engine:** Vortec 5 cylinder, 3,7 litre unleaded 95  
**0-100 km/h:** 10,5 seconds  
**Top speed:** 158 km/h  
**Consumption:** 16,2 litres/100 km  
**Fuel tank:** 87 litres (be careful where you park: the tank-cap is unlockable)  
**Tank range:** 525 km  
**Ground clearance:** 216 mm (quite good, but nothing compared to its grand-daddy's 406 mm)  
**Approach angle:** 37.5 degrees  
**Departure angle:** 34.6 degrees  
**Towing capacity:** 2041 kg  
**For more information:** [www.hummer.co.za](http://www.hummer.co.za)

#### For the same amount of money (R374 000), you could buy:

Jeep Cherokee Limited 3,7 litre Auto  
**R 334 900**  
 Jeep Commander Laredo 4,7 litre, V8 Auto  
**R 399 900**  
 Jeep Grand Cherokee 4,7 litre, V8 Laredo Auto  
**R 389 900**

**Next month in Wheels:**  
 We take the new four-door Jeep Wrangler Sahara Unlimited on a 6600 km-trip to Namibia.

## Accessories



### Tyre pressure gauge

The first accessory any off-roader should invest in. A pressure gauge is your best friend when it comes to getting your tyres right for 4x4 terrain: 150 kPa for rocks, 100 kPa for soft sand, 350 kPa at the back and 300 kPa in the front for the open road when heavily loaded. It differs from vehicle to vehicle, of course, but without the Schrader heavy-duty 4x4 gauge (R340), you're only going to learn your vehicle's ideals when you're already stuck in the sand, or have already slashed your tyres on the rocks.

### Quick and smart navigation

The Nokia 6110 Navigator has a fully integrated GPS with instant access to maps and routing, with turn-by-turn voice-guided navigation – all easily accessible with the one-touch navigator key. The application plots the quickest route and illustrates it on a map to show your location. If you've taken a wrong turn, it will automatically calculate a new route. Other features include two cameras, 3G multimedia, music player, radio, e-mail and, if you still can't find your way, it's got normal cellphone capabilities so you can phone a friend. R4000 to R4500, Nokia or selected retailers (see [www.nokia.com](http://www.nokia.com)).

### Sand tracks

There are only two types of 4x4ers: those who have been stuck and those who are going to get stuck – and most belong to both clubs. It happens to everyone, even the instructors. What separates the clowns from the captains is the way they get out... Ease Out sand tracks from Back on Track (Rxxx) are canvas bags that you fill with sand and place under your wheels for traction to help you drive out of a mess. They pack small and can also be used as a ground sheet, car and camp shower mats.



The tyre pressure gauge and Sand Tracks are available at Safari Centre stores country wide. To find your closest store, contact 0861-saf-4x4, or visit [www.safaricentre.co.za](http://www.safaricentre.co.za)

## Stuck



A local Parks Board vehicle in the Congo had pulled over to remove a tree obstructing the road, but in the process got stuck in the gooiest mud imaginable. They were out of radio signal, so spent the night in the jungle. Needless to say, they were very pleased to see us approaching from the opposite side the next morning. "I then made the same mistake and got stuck on the opposite side of the tree. It eventually took three hours of winching work to remove the tree and have both vehicles on solid ground again. The Congo is not for sissies. David Visagie, Durban

If you have photographs of a 4x4 getting stuck, e-mail them to [wheels@getaway.co.za](mailto:wheels@getaway.co.za) or post them to Getaway Wheels, PO Box 180, Howard Place, 7450 Cape Town. You could win a Nissan Secure Tech Survival Kit worth R1#000, comprising an Off-Road Tactix manual and DVD, as well as a recovery bag with pull strap, shackles and a pair of gloves.

