

Legendary Land Rover Defender lives on



By [Ilse van den Berg](#)

5 Nov 2020

We're sitting around the campfire and I look at the three generations of Holgates in front of us: Kingsley approaching the age of 75, his son and expedition leader Ross, and also his grandson - the youngest daredevil in the making - Tristan. This is a rare and special encounter if you consider how this breed of adventurer is fading.



Photo credit: Carl Fourie

We kicked off our journey at Durbanville Hills as we set off on our Defender Mzansi Expedition. Our route took us via Wellington over Bainskloof pass. Stopping for a quick leg stretch at one of the lookout points on the pass, a couple popped up at my window and the man started babbling about how impressed he was to see this convoy of large Landies moving so nimbly around the Bains Kloof bends. It's true though; the biggest transformation for this vehicle is experienced on a tar road like this where you can truly feel how engaging and agile it is.

We continued along the pass, headed towards Ceres and passed Prince Alfred Hamlet - where you can buy the most delicious Mama Mac rusks. We cruised over the Gydo Pass and through the Kouebokkeveld, hundreds upon hundreds of fruit orchards passing us by. After a quick stop at the coffee-cum-truck shop, Wonderlik in Die Dorp op Op-die-Berg, we finally hit the gravel road, heading into the majestic Cederberg Wilderness Area.



Photo credit: Carl Fourie

One thing I was convinced of at this point was that the new Defender is built for comfort. It raises the bar for both off-road ruggedness and on-road comfort. It can negotiate suburban streets and highways as effortlessly as it can traverse mountain passes. I also enjoyed the seemingly small luxuries on such a hot day, such as my water bottle being ice cold thanks to the centre console's handy cooling system.

With another two days ahead of us, I didn't make any other judgments on the car's capabilities just yet and eagerly listened to the Holgate Foundation team's stories. After all, they've been pushing the new Defender to its limits on their Mzansi Edge Expedition - a 70-day, 10,000km humanitarian journey to track the outline of South Africa, while distributing over 200,000 nutritional meals to needy families close to wildlife parks, as well as to rural communities.

Defenders have played integral roles in assisting the Kingsley Holgate Foundation to deliver aid to millions of people in need. Kingsley, aka the most travelled man in Africa, has in fact owned 15 of them since the early 1970s.



Kingsley Holgate - Photo credit: Carl Fourie

Firstly, aesthetics

Though its name only came to being in 1990, the Defender has been evolving since 1948. It was certainly the end of an era in the automotive industry when Land Rover finalised production of the iconic Defender in 2016, after being continuously built for 68 years.

Just how do you redefine such an icon? Land Rover believes you push harder, you dig deeper, and you go above and beyond to capture its very essence. Once you’ve done that, you reimagine it. Taking on the task of redesigning such an iconic vehicle was surely no small feat. The fact of the matter is, it’s impossible to please everyone.



Photo credit: Carl Fourie

The designers of the new Defender meticulously considered what the main features were that defined the iconic off-roader.

They concluded that alpine windows, rugged steel wheels, an eternally mounted spare, a side-hinged tailgate, and of course, a pale green hue - reminiscent of the very first Series 1 Rovers, when the colour choice was dictated by surplus aircraft paint - were the five core elements they simply couldn't omit.

Continuing our journey out of the Cederberg the next day, we tagged along with the Kingsley Holgate Foundation's Mzansi Edge Expedition. Driving in a convoy has its perks. For one, you don't easily get lost and you don't even have to follow a GPS. It also makes for great photos and brings many a smile to people's faces along the way.

Even more so if the convoy is made up of beautiful Defenders and includes Kingsley and Ross Holgate. We were privileged to have a part in delivering food and soap to two needy communities along the way, and at one of the schools, we were even treated to a quick Jerusalem show.



Photo credit: Ilse van den Berg

Capability

If you're not a particular fan of the new look, keep in mind that the Defender has always been more about performance than anything else, and I bet you're wondering whether the new Defender lives up to its family DNA.

Well, the Land Rover team did 1.2 million kilometres of on and off-road drives as well as 45,000 individual tests in areas where temperatures ranged from +50 to -40 degrees. Permanent all-wheel drive and a twin-speed automatic gearbox, centre differential and optional Active Locking Rear Differential ensure the iconic off-roader has the hardware required to tackle the harshest conditions in Africa. Off and on-road, the system intelligently controls torque distribution between the front and rear axle.



Photo credit: Carl Fourie

Then there's also Configurable Terrain Response which allows experienced off-roaders to fine-tune individual vehicle settings to perfectly suit the conditions, while newbie off-roaders can leave the system to detect the best settings automatically for the conditions, using the intelligent auto function.

The Defender has a ground clearance of up to 291mm and maximum suspension articulation of 500mm. The Defender 110's approach, break-over and departure angles are 38, 28 and 40 degrees respectively when set in off-road height. Air suspension provides an off-road ride height lift of 75mm and supreme ride comfort across all surfaces.



Photo credit: Carl Fourie

An additional 70mm of lift means the air system can raise the body by a maximum of 145mm when needed, while Elegant Arrival automatically lowers the body by 50mm to aid access. With a maximum suspension articulation of 500mm, the Defender can tackle 45-degree side slopes and inclines of 45 degrees with customary composure.

I gave the auto function and advanced ClearSight Ground View technology - which shows the area usually hidden by the bonnet and directly ahead of the front wheels on the Pivi Pro touchscreen- a go on our last day when we took the Land Rovers into the farmlands just outside Darling for some rock climbing. I am by no means an expert 4x4 driver, but I did manage to do this. I know it's maybe nothing to experienced off-roaders, but I was so proud.



Photo credit: Carl Fourie

Though it is as comfortable and spacious as can be, it would be sad to see the new Defender simply filling up city parking lots while it's meant to conquer dirt roads, rivers and mountains. The new Defender is sleek and luxurious, however, don't let looks fool you. It's tough and durable and was certainly built for those with a spirit of adventure.

ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out Passing Stories). She is also the editor of Go & Travel, a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work here and here. Contact Ilse through her website here.

- Between cows and cornfields in the Nissan Qashqai Midnight Edition - 24 Mar 2021
- Legendary Land Rover Defender lives on - 5 Nov 2020
- Why you need to keep your eye on the Peugeot 208 GT-Line - 25 Apr 2019
- 5 reasons why the Jimmy is a great 4x4 for a female - 12 Mar 2019
- Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn arrested over financial misconduct - 20 Nov 2018

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>