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## Mighty Atlas: The all-new Range Rover launches in Morocco

27 October 2012 | Steve Wakefield

*Travelling in near silence at 120km/h, the rev-counter barely breaking the 1500rpm mark, I looked across at my driving companion. "The indicator's tick is a little loud," I opined. "Perhaps," he replied, "but there must be something else wrong with it, surely...?"*

Tranquillity resumed in the cabin as we considered the matter further. Can the all-new Range Rover really be THAT good?

I have to say, having driven it at motorway speeds, in devil-may-care Moroccan town and country traffic, down impossibly steep dunes, up rock beds, across streams and even three-wheeling it through a ravine, that it met every task placed before it with aplomb. It is without doubt the world's best all-round vehicle. Could we even be in "best car in the world" territory? We could, we could – and here's why.

We covered the salient technical points of the aluminium-bodied car [elsewhere on Classic Driver](#). It's lighter (by over 400kg, say four adults), more aerodynamic, uses less fuel, is faster and more spacious inside. A fantastic achievement by the British company's engineers, ably responding to the instructions of a typical customer: "Don't change it, just make it better".

Step up into the beautifully appointed cabin, take hold of the wheel, thumb the starter, twist the selector into Drive and press the accelerator. Everything, from the now slightly slimmer wheel (and superb electric power steering), to the way it steps smartly off the mark, shows that in creating the fourth-generation Range Rover the company has done just that. And much more.



The Range Rover has always occupied a special place in the market. “On its own,” so the company proudly states. And so were we for much of the Moroccan launch test route, halfway through the Atlas Mountains or up to our axles in soft sand.

Many of you will know just how good a Range Rover is off road. Some of you might not, and there could even be a few who would doubt the wisdom of driving a £100k (yes, ‘on its own’ has other meanings, too) luxury car up a goat track. Fear not, the next time the urge to count sheep in some of the most inaccessible places in the world comes upon you, take a new Range Rover for the trip, it’s built for anything.

After an hour or so of a twisting and turning journey on a slippery road composed of red earth and bare rock, things start to turn surreal. Is this normality? Did we ever drive on metalled roads? We are chatting away without a care in the world, only a few inches from the edge of a precipice, yet as calm as if we’d just finished a round of golf. Remarkable, and well deserving the sweet mint tea and Moroccan pastries that met our V6 diesel Range Rover at the summit of the two-hour climb.

(And please note that much of the route for the two-day event was completed with the Terrain Response system in auto, the system analysing conditions underfoot and automatically choosing the most appropriate setting.)



While the supercharged petrol V8 is the fastest in the catalogue – able to run at 155mph when fitted with optional 22in wheels – the diesels will be the biggest sellers. Current owners will be familiar with the oil-burning V8. In its latest form it produces 339HP, enough to reach 62mph in 6.9 seconds (5.4 for the s/c petrol V8). Only a whisker behind, however, comes the new V6 diesel, made possible both by further improvements to the engine, and the new, drastically lighter chassis.

For all but those with deep, Savile Row pockets, this is the model to buy. Yes, it's a little tardier off the mark and at low revs but, higher up, when the second turbo kicks in, it's only a whisker slower from 50 to 70mph. True, also, it lacks the eight-cylinder petrol and diesel cars' Dynamic Response system that does away with traditional anti-roll bars, and this does result in a slightly less composed ride as well as compromising ultimate off-roading, as the axles have less travel.

It does, though, make the drive to the bank manager that much smoother, saving £6800 over the equivalent diesel V8. More than enough to include the full-size Panorama roof in your order (a £1500 option, but standard on the Autobiography editions). We loved this, and drove much of the way up the mountain with it fully open – you have to have it.



What else? There's definitely more room in the back, and the optional Executive Class rear seating would be the way to go for chauffeured cars. The soft-close doors and powered lower and upper tailgates are par for the course in a market which we firmly believe includes the Bentley Continental Flying Spur and the Rolls-Royce Ghost.

Yes, it does have capabilities (as with 200mph supercars) that owners are never likely to use.

But, like the bedrooms in the Hotel Palais Namaskar, Marrakech, with each suite having its own swimming pool, it's nice to know they are there if you need them.



Reassuringly expensive? There's an element of that in the pricing, 'tis true, but when one examines the £200k or so required for Rolls-Royce Ghost ownership, it's tempting to think, "Hmm, £98,395 for a supercharged V8 Autobiography isn't bad at all". And the car itself is even better than that - it's quite superb.

Photos: Land Rover

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