

CLASSIC DRIVER

Land Rover Defender LXV: With some help from our little friend

Lead

With some high-profile photoshoots in the calendar, Classic Driver needed a gentlemen's workhorse to ferry equipment to and fro in style. The obvious choice was a Land Rover Defender, so what better chance to sample the limited edition LXV...?

Of course, you wouldn't usually describe a car which towers above most humans as diminutive, but in short-wheelbase '90' form, the Defender does feel like a life-sized boy's toy. The LXV special edition (of which 65 were built to commemorate the car's anniversary, now all sold out) injects a little class, with Santorini Black 'Sawtooth' alloys, full leather seats and the associated badging.

Loaded up with two 'Classic Drivers' and their required photographic equipment, M1 LXV was put to work across the UK - with its duties ranging from city-shuttling to mile-munching, and all points in between. Acclimatising to the Defender's unique driving experience takes some time; the ultra-slow steering (with feedback to the driver apparently communicated via telegram) and the stubby wheelbase's aversion to London's many speed bumps need to be accepted as characterful quirks, rather than actual flaws. (However, the co-pilot's opinion might deviate a little, after being left with a lapful of coffee and an inability to accurately touch-type on his iPad).



Though long-distance cruising was understandably some way down Land Rover's priority list seven decades ago, the modern iteration copes well. The near-vertical windscreen plays the role of giant fly-swatter at speed, while the refreshingly large mirrors make their complaints with the oncoming air audibly known - but at no point does it feel incapable of keeping up with faster convoys of motorway traffic.



You buy a Defender for one of two reasons: either its off-roading ability, or its image. The former was worthy of praise back when the Range Rover was merely an idea, but it's only in recent years that the Defender has truly become a style icon. During its voyages with the Classic Driver team, the LXV found itself among the ROFGO Gulf collection, outside Buckingham Palace, behind enemy lines at Aston's Gaydon HQ, and in some brief meetings with British brethren - namely an E-type Jag and a brand-new DB9. Not once did it look out of place, the private plate rounding off its timeless appearance. The Defender even brought a smile to the porter at Aston HQ: "I travelled to Morocco in one 20 years ago - amazing machines."



A 'changing of the guard' is imminent, but at the moment the Defender still offers the rare experience of buying a classic car brand-new from the showroom. It might not quite fulfil the multi-purpose brief demanded of modern cars, but the G-Wagon's ascension to a higher market segment means the Defender single-handedly defines the gentlemen's workhorse niche.

Photos: Jan Baedeker

Gallery











Source URL: <https://www.classicdriver.com/en/article/autos/land-rover-defender-lxv-little-help-my-friend>
© Classic Driver. All rights reserved.