

LAND ROVER D3

There are many different things that make a solid touring vehicle. For starters, you have to consider things like the engine, drivetrain, traction aids, storage space, versatility, suspension, reliability, comfort... The list goes on. The latest D3 impresses in every one of these categories and more, proving itself to be the best Five Terrain tourer on this test.

And don't think we went soft on this vehicle, just because we broke the last one Land Rover gave us! In true *4WD Action* style, we went twice as hard as we needed to see if any of the bugs holding the earlier model back had been ironed out. A water crossing killed the last one as sediment caused an electrical sensor to fail. With this in mind, we seriously wondered how the D3 was going to handle five of the toughest terrains we could throw at it and a few deep water crossings thrown in for good measure.

We weren't afraid to relegate this one to the back of the line if it fell short in any way, shape or form, but it never looked like letting us down. It came through without a splutter, even when we crossed an icy water crossing in the Snowy Mountains that was deep enough to soak the carpet. Err... sorry about that one Land Rover!

Hopping into this vehicle for the first time and trying to conquer every terrain would be virtually impossible, unless you have

attended a 10-week training course on how all of the different 4WD options work. It certainly isn't as straightforward as a Patrol, where even 'technologically inept' folks like me can engage low range with a stubby gearstick. You can just drive every terrain without worrying how the engine management system is going to react to my electronic 4WD mode selection.

In the D3 you have what looks like a '4WD for dummies' dial near your lever-activated handbrake, which is actually a very complex calibrated 4WD selector. It works with the engine management system to vary throttle sensitivity, gear selection and shift time – just to scrape the surface.

After mastering this control (which is not as simple as just turning the dial depending on what terrain you're in), it worked a treat in every terrain. The DSC (traction control) worked against you in the sand and mud – basically every time you wanted to change direction in loose terrain and keep power. It proved to be hopeless on these surfaces, but that was fixed by turning it off... Problem solved.

When scooting along in blacksoil country and loose gibber territory in the Outback, it really made you appreciate the DSC feature and it saved the vehicle a few times. It was so effective that even when you hit an unexpected patch of soft sand

