

2017 Force Gurkha Xpedition First Drive Review

What is it?



Why will I buy the Gurkha Xpedition

If I wanted a no nonsense, no frills, reliable workhorse, I'd settle for the Xpedition.

Why will I avoid the Gurkha Xpedition

Simply because I can't have a no frills SUV as a family car; it needs more creature comfort.



Meet another version of the new for 2017 Force Gurkha. This one is the more practical one. So, it has four doors and seating for eight people and a driver. It gets the same revamped 2.6-litre diesel with 85 horsepower and the conventional shifting 5-speed gearbox from the more lifestyle oriented Gurkha Xplorer (you can read that review [HERE](#)). And, it has the same design updates too.

This one is called the Xpedition. And in terms of visual upgrades – compared to the older Gurkha – it gets new metal bumpers front and back, a new grille, new fog lamps and tail lights. The fender mounted turn indicators, the snorkel and the slab-sided looks continue

unchanged. And it must be said, the new Gurkha even in this longer length and wheelbase form does look better than the older SUV.



How is it on the inside?



Unlike the Xplorer, the Xpedition is meant for the road and be a full-fledged family car. In that regard, it's pretty basic. Sure, you get power steering and an aircon, and a tiny glovebox. But, otherwise there's no real creature comfort to talk about. No power windows, no internal adjustment for the ORVMs, no rear wash and wipe and not a single cup or bottle holder either.

Instead, its list of features include slim door pockets; a simple instrument cluster with just a speedo, a trip meter, and gauges for temperature and fuel level; and a pretty insignificant stowage option in front of the gear lever. But then again, you can't really sell a car without these, now can you?



As for the seats, the bucket options upfront don't offer much support, the ones in the middle are flat and a bit too upright, and the two benches in the boot are, well, benches. Space, however, isn't half bad. The Xpedition can't compete with the never ending Trax range (Toofan and Cruiser), but two up front, two in the middle and two right at the back – one per bench – is comfortably doable.



And if you are wondering about quality and ergonomics and all that sissy car stuff, well, the Xpedition just couldn't care less. It's a no frills car and it doesn't try to hide it either. Having said that, a basic interior is fine on an SUV like the Xplorer, but for something targeted at families, the level of hygiene content is higher. The good thing is, even though the plastic all round might look and feel cheap, it's not rough edged or sharp to give you paper-cuts.

How does it drive?



As we mentioned earlier, the engine has been revamped for the new Gurkha. It is still the same Mercedes unit that Force has been using for ages. But now it is BS-IV compliant. It also seems quieter on the move.

Given the weight of the Xpedition (it's over 2.5 tonnes!) and the engine output of just 85bhp and 230Nm of torque, it's only natural that the Gurkha feels lazy and slow. The vague steering and gear shifts – not to mention the effort required to work them – makes driving the Xpedition within city confines a chore. It also doesn't like cruising at three-digit speeds on the highway feeling a bit wayward and unsure. Braking again with a front-only disc setup – is average at best. The brake feel is soggy and the bite arrives a hint later than needed.



However, once it is out on poor roads, pot holes, or no roads at all, the Gurkha Xpedition begins to charm you. The ride over poor surfaces is fantastic (barring the constant steering shudder). It feels unflappable, almost unbreakable and as tough as nails going through ruts, flattening rocks or wading rivers. And because it is only rear wheel drive, it can slide around on muddy, slushy and gravelly play areas too. So, it isn't completely devoid of the fun factor.



But, the Xpedition's primary role is to be a personal car for buyers in tier 2 and 3 towns. So, it is supposed to be both a workhorse and offer pride of ownership. And it does the job in the former case, if you don't ask brisk overtakes or drag races of it. It has proven mechanicals too, and it is sturdy. As for pride of ownership, it beats the Trax for sure, but it is still open to debate.

Should I buy one?

Unlike the Xplorer, the Xpedition isn't your lifestyle Gurkha. It is here to take on the Mahindra Bolero and to offer personal car buyers a less utilitarian, but more appealing option, to its own sibling, the Trax.



So, if you are looking for a practical people mover to be employed on your farm or your ancestral village home, go for it. But, as an everyday driver, especially in our overcrowded cities, you can do better.

Where does it fit in?



The Gurkha Xpedition retails for around Rs 7.5 lakh ex-showroom. And its only real competition is the Mahindra Bolero. The top of the line Bolero costs a little under Rs 8 lakh ex-showroom, but comes with more features. There are others like the Tata Sumo, but they haven't been able to keep up with the Mahindra in terms of sales numbers. So, it's really a binary choice.

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