

# Tata on Safari

Despite the volumes of bad press being generated by activist groups, mainly in the USA, the Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV) market continues to grow – finding favour in the South African context where user choosers swap the sedan for an SUV. Tata is now becoming a player. **Colin Windell** takes a look.

The SUV market in South Africa has seen a phenomenal growth of 88% in the past two years to more than 30 000 vehicles sold a year. Gauteng alone constitutes almost half of all SUV sales in the country which could

be the reason why it is so hard to find parking in Sandton!

When deciding to launch the Safari, Tata took a close look at the categories of SUV buyers and found it was made up of four distinct types – firstly, the

predominantly male buyer who 'means business' and is in the market to purchase a SUV for the primary purpose of work related activities and therefore looks for durability, off-road handling and reliability.

Secondly, the 'SUV fun-driver' who is classified as a sport loving out-door person who balances work and play and in doing so is looking for an SUV that meets these 'balanced' requirements.

Thirdly, the brand conscious, executive that looks for a SUV that can not only meet branding needs, but is also suited to the 'semi-rough' holiday that involves towing a caravan and travelling on dirt roads.

Lastly, there is the image conscious SUV buyer who will never venture off-road or put their SUV through the 'dirt-ability' test and the only 4-wheel driving is done on pavements.

The fun-driving SUV buyer and brand conscious category buyers – both significant 'fleet' buyers – are the target for the Tata Safari, which has been designed and will feature all the specifications to meet their driving demands.

Two versions of the Safari will be

available, a high-spec 4x2 and a higher-spec 4x4, both standard 7-seaters.

Both versions have full leather interior, power-steering, dual air bags, anti-lock braking, electrically operated windows, power mirrors, air-conditioning, alloy wheels, side-steps and an attractive dual-tone exterior.

The higher-spec 4x4 comes with the extra feature of a DVD entertainment system for passenger entertainment! Powered by a 103 kW 2,2-litre turbo-charged diesel engine (direct injection common rail), it offers 320 Nm of torque from 1 750 r/min through to 2 700 r/min.

Built for performance on the most challenging terrain, the higher-spec 4x4 makes an impression with its off-road handling ability. With a grade ability of 49%, GVW of 2 670 kg, 5-speed gearbox with synchromesh on all gears, 65 litre fuel tank, limited slip differential and electrical super select 4WD, the Safari is well prepared to take on any off-road adventure!

Tata's SUV has a full house of safety features and also complies with the Euro 3 emission standards. Its 'safety cell' is made up of side impact bars, front crumple zone, collapsible steering, energy absorbing front and rear bumpers, child locks on the rear doors and window winding lock for the rear windows. There

is a door open audio warning, reflectors on the doors, central locking and a 3-point inertia reel type for both front and rear seat belts.

The interior styling of the Safari features a soft feel dashboard and injection moulded door trims, carpet and roof lining. For comfort on the long trips, there is lumbar support and height adjustment on the driver seat as well as the front and rear arm rests.

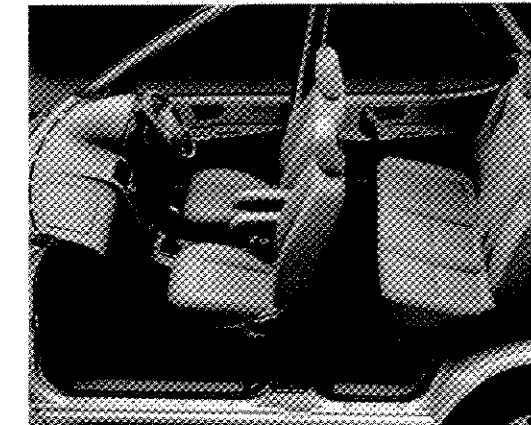
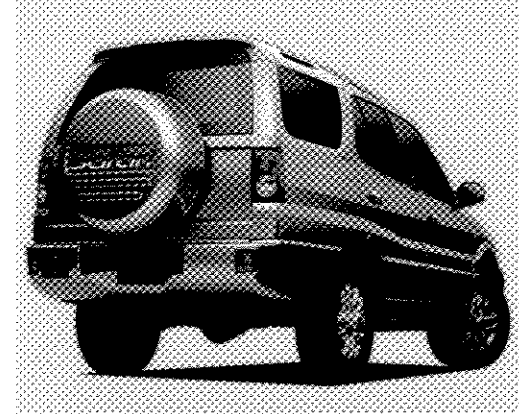
The Safari comes prepared with cup holders for refreshments as well as a utility box to hold the odds and ends. Other notable features are the reading lights, vanity mirrors, analogue clock and the front variable windscreen wipers, rear wipers and heating/demisting features.

If it is luggage space that is needed, the rear double-folding seats facilitate an open loading area of 1 000 mm wide and 800 mm long.

Both the 4x2 and 4x4 versions include a service plan, roadside assistance and manufacturer's warranty.

In the pipeline for later release is a lower entry level 4x2 model with a cloth interior, steel wheels, electrically operated windows, power mirrors, air-conditioning and power-steering.

Tata intends to maintain its position on offering affordable motoring and has carried this philosophy through to the SUV market. The indicative pricing (which



is not yet finalised) is early R200 000s for the 4x2 and mid R200 000 for the 4x4 luxury model.

# Tata on the move



Despite the fierce competition and growing selection in the vehicle market, Tata passenger and light commercial, through its distributing agent, Accordian Investments, has in just two years claimed 2,4% of the market with more than 27 000 vehicles sold to date and an expected additional 13 000 to be sold by the end of 2007.

The first shipment (in September 2004) to reach our shores from India arrived with a mere 75 vehicles on board. Due to the popularity and phenomenal growth of the brand, the shipments have increased to a 1 200 vehicles to keep up with the growing volume of sales!

The first recorded sale was in January 2005 and within six months this escalated to 1 000 sales for the month of June 2005. The Tata brand continued to grow at a steady pace and by December 2006