

WHAT CAR?

First drive

Isuzu D-Max V-Cross

It's big, looks imposing and this Isuzu pick-up doesn't need a commercial license. **Verdict** Combines fun and practicality well, but is a bit pricey. ★★★★★



What's it?

Pick-up trucks in India have always been perceived as workhorses. Now, Isuzu plans to change that with its lifestyle pick-up, the V-Cross. The idea is to deliver the refinement and comfort of an SUV and the practicality of a pick-up truck. So, you wouldn't be wrong in calling the V-Cross a cross between an SUV and a truck in the flesh. It stretches the tape in all directions and is nothing short of enormous, can carry five in comfort and the luggage capacity is all but unlimited. But can the V-Cross win over conventional SUV buyers?

What's it like inside?

Once you climb in to the tall cabin, the front seats are large and keep you comfortable. The steering doesn't slope away from you like in a truck.

You won't find it difficult to find a good driving position. The instrument cluster looks simple and is quite well laid out and solidly put together. The dials and air-con controls bear a resemblance to that of the Chevrolet Trailblazer. That's because the V-Cross and the Chevy share a lot of parts. There's a basic digital

display which provides fuel and trip information and also shows you if power is being sent to all four-wheels. Well, that's not the only source of entertainment, it also gets a good 7-inch touchscreen infotainment system. The rear-seat has ample legroom and headroom to keep tall passengers comfy too.

If only the cabin were a bit more upmarket and the rear bench not as upright. Rear parking sensors though, are absent. That apart, it's a perfectly functional cabin.

What's it like to drive?

A 2.5-litre diesel engine for a vehicle this large and heavy (1.9 tonnes) seems a little

It rides exceptionally well on our bad roads, handling is decent too.



It looks imposing and has tremendous road presence.



Dashboard design is simple, yet it's well laid-out.

Instrument cluster is easy to read and very informative too.

Quality of parts and fit-finish is quite good.



That's the largest boot on any car under Rs 13 lakh.



Rear-seat very comfy, but seat-back a bit upright.

inadequate. However, with the nice spread of power available throughout the engine rev range and smart gearing, it feels sprightly moving off the line. The gears are spaced like a commercial vehicle; so you can move from second gear without the engine struggling. Don't expect too much performance though; in our tests, the V-Cross managed to do 0-100kph in a leisurely 14.77 seconds. Refinement is quite remarkable though and the engine only tends to get boomy when you rev it past 3,000rpm. At this point, the engine also tends to lose steam. There's not much for the taking after 3,500rpm, a little more power would have been welcome. Off-road, however, there's no shortage of grunt as the low range-

equipped four-wheel-drive system will surprise you with how far it can go through challenging terrain. It can cross small rivers, go through slush and slippery terrain and do this with relative ease. In fact, it's almost as good off-road as something like a Fortuner.

Back on the road, the V-Cross takes to our bad roads with relative ease and soaks up bumps without much up and down movement. The suspension also works

quite silently and you hardly hear it. Apart from a little float felt and some roll, the ride is very good. If you drive it fast through the bends, it hardly veers off line and can even take corners faster than you would expect.

Should I buy it?

If you want one car to transport you from home to work and you want another for weekend adventures, the V-Cross could be the car

for you. It's pretty unique, performs decently, can go over even the worst of our roads and is extremely capable in real off-road situations as well. And the best part is that it gets a massive load carrying capacity that can be used to carry all manner of recreational kit or even practical stuff. If you've been looking for a fun SUV with a difference, this is it. And it's pretty good value too. **Selvin Jose**

BUYER'S FILE

Engine size	2.5 (D)
Price (est)	Rs 12.91 lakh*
Power	136hp at 3600rpm
Torque	320Nm at 1800-2800rpm
Gearbox	5-speed manual
0-100kph	14.77 sec
Tyres (f-r)	245/70 R16

RIVALS

Tata Xenon	Rs 11.29 lakh*
	★★★★○
Price	Gets a punchy motor, and it's quite capable off-road too, but now showing its age.

