



HAVAL H9

TEST DRIVE

WHAT IS IT?
It's the one proper SUV from the same guys that bring in Great Wall pickups. It is also the biggest they have, comparing easily to the Toyota Land Cruiser Prado. The Toyota connection goes further as Engineering Vice President of Haval, Suguya Fukusato, used to be Chief Engineer at Toyota.

HOW DOES IT LOOK?
Did I already mention that this thing is huge? The Chinese company has developed its own

design elements based on contemporary cues. The H9 rides tall and provides an imposing presence with its flared haunches above each wheel. There is a hint of Mercedes GL along the crease that sweeps up to the rear. The front features the de facto scowling headlight appearance preferred by car buyers these days. Thankfully chrome is kept to a tolerable amount. It is already big and muscular in appearance and does not require further bling.

THE INSIDE
It is very well organised and heavily equipped. Plenty of leather, wood and subtle aluminium highlights create an elegant ambience. Ergonomics work well as you sit high but have all the features within easy reach. That and front seats offer heating and lumbar massage. Interior is well insulated from the outside although a little amount of engine noise comes in as you push it hard. That's okay, a 10-speaker, loud and rich Infinity

sound system will handle the rest.

UNDER THE HOOD

The engine is a turbocharged 2.0 litre delivering about 215 HP and 236 lb-ft of torque. Initially we were wondering if it was enough to power a vehicle weighing 2236 kg. The engine is a little lazy initially but quickly picks up pace. The power band rests a little higher in the rev range so you have to stomp to get decisive action. However, it quickly pushes into triple digit speeds with ease. The six-speed shifts smoothly without any clunks. The electronic all-terrain control system uses sensors to detect sand, mud or snow and adjust the torque distribution accordingly.

THE RIDE

This is where the big surprise comes in. The car is fitted with sophisticated double wishbone suspension up front and a multi-link setup at the rear. The ride is surprisingly compliant for an off-road ready SUV. I'm not a fan of the Toyota Land Cruisers in city traffic as the suspension is too stiff making you feel like puffed rice being shaken by an over enthusiastic 'jhaal-muri walla'. The Haval in comparison soaks up the bumps with relative ease. We took the annoying bumps right before Radisson at speed without suffering rattles from our teeth or any part of the car. We love the steering as it is very light with a rather tight turning radius allowing for quick U-turns. Off road, it soaks in the rough terrain. There's some roll as the 18 inch tyres thump into deep holes but it is all nicely composed and absorbed. This is a great car to ride in on terrible roads. The seats are supportive without being stiff. In the dusty, broken road we took it to, it felt like I was sitting in a lounge while hitting bumps at 60 km/h.

SPECS

Engine: 2.0 doubleVVT turbocharged 4-cylinder petrol, 215 HP and 236 lb-ft.
Transmission: 6-speed auto with paddle shift, 4WD.
Suspension: Double wishbone front and multi-link rear.
Safety and mobility: 8 airbags, ABS with EBD and Brake Assist, ESP, Traction Control, Roll Movement Intervention, Tyre Pressure Monitoring System, Hill Descent Control with Auto Hold and all-terrain control system.
Features: Multi-function heated/ventilated/massage power front seats, leather, Triple-zone automatic air conditioning with air purifier, multi-function steering wheel, power sunroof, 12V power outlets, daytime running lights with adaptive front lighting, Infinity audio, 8-inch infotainment system with USB, AUX, CD and DVD rear seat entertainment.

Price: TK 52-58 lakh depending on options.
Contact Ace Automobiles for further details.

VERDICT

It is comparable to a Prado in many ways while coming in at close to two-thirds the price. It is not a poser in any way but offers real world off-roading ability. Its major pros are powerful design, a very well built interior and wonderfully cushioned ride. The cons would be a little laziness in the way it moves. It's even been tested by the Bangladesh military up 'Dim Pahar' in Chittagong and it made its way up effortlessly. Thanks to its suspension, it makes for a comfortable off-roader as well as an on-road cruiser.

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PHOTOS: FARHAN AHMED



What does the rest of the team think?

I'm not very big on bulky SUVs. I consider them a waste of space and not really something that the world needs at present. However, it is undeniable that the Haval H9 is a very good example of how to do an SUV right. It has the right balance of comfort, practicality and off-road prowess and for the price, it'll shame many an established contender into resounding defeats. It pulls well, and is surprisingly agile both on and off road, despite its size. Quick maneuvers leave the H9 fairly well composed, while the high seating position give you a commanding view out of the cockpit. Quality of materials is high, but we'll have to wait and see how these hold up in terms of longevity. If I HAD to get an SUV, this would be a very strong contender as it does most things right with not a hint of brand value or pretentiousness that tinges many of its rivals.

Shaer Reaz, In-charge of Shift, Ruiner of Perfectly Good Golden Toyota Camrys and Basic Blue Honda Civics

CAR SPOTTING

Our Rooftop Sniper and official car spotter likes to play around with Photoshop. One of these isn't Photoshopped, the other two are nice.



PHOTOS: SHADMAN AL SAMEE

A LAMBORGHINI SUV. WELCOME TO 2018.

BUT WAIT, DIDN'T THEY MAKE ONE BEFORE?



YES THEY DID. BUT THE LM002 FROM 1986 IS AN EXTREMELY CAPABLE BEAST OFF-ROAD, NOT A DEMAND DRIVEN SOFTIE. ISN'T THE NEW URUS "SSUV" JUST A SPORTS CAR ON STILTS?



The new Lamborghini Urus has polarised people on social media since its unveiling – while most people weren't really bothered by the idea of a sport utility Lambo as a concept, a production version either set pulses racing or caused faces to scrunch up in distaste. Whatever your thoughts on this "SSUV", it's actually no softie – the eccentric Italian supercar marque was keen to display its apparent off-road prowess through press photos that show the Urus throwing up dirt and sand as it ploughs through slippery off-road terrain. With a 4.0 litre twin turbo V8 heart that develops 650 HP and 627 lb-ft of torque, the Urus certainly has the grunt to back up Lambo's claims of this being a "Super SUV".

Whether it has the grunt or not isn't really the point, however. The real question lies in what changed in the automotive landscape to move the competition over sports cars into the SUV category. With each new concept, every new pro-

duction ready model, it is becoming increasingly clear that the world actually has a place for SUVs made by traditional purveyors of the sports car – Bentley, Jaguar, Porsche, Maserati and now Lamborghini are adding to their ranks by funneling huge amounts of money into the development of SUVs and sporty crossovers. Why?

The roots of this change can be traced back to 2002, with the launch of Porsche's highly influential but uglier than sin Cayenne. That broad shouldered, awkward looking beast set the standard – the Cayenne Turbo is one of the first series production SUVs in the world to tout power figures as a unique selling point. Of course, actual enthusiasts avoided it like the plague, with most Cayennes snapped up by athletes and celebrities who neither took it off-road nor found the confidence to push it on-road.

What the Porsche Cayenne set off took

about a decade to take hold. While Porsche introduced the smaller, more agile Macan, other sports car manufacturers were just about ready to step out of their shells and experiment. There was demand for the sporty SUV too – it offers people surprising utility, even more surprising performance and the high driving position makes drivers feel like kings of the road. But when majority of the owners would never use even half the car's abilities, you really do have to question if it makes sense on the part of manufacturers to indulge the whimsical demands of potential buyers. The recent flurry of activity in the SUV segment signals the start of a power war, to be waged in a similar manner to the supercar and hypercar's exponential growth over the past decade.

The Lamborghini LM002 was made in extremely limited numbers because oil sheikhs in the Middle East wanted a four-

wheel drive Lambo they could take over sand dunes and drive over dirty peasants whenever they wanted. It existed as an icon of the 80s, a defiant symbol of Lamborghini's madness in the face of all logic and comprehension. The Urus, following the likes of the Porsche Cayenne, Bentley Bentayga, Maserati Levante and Alfa Romeo Stelvio, is no longer a torch-bearer of the wonderfully unique or ridiculous overkill. By merely existing in an SUV obsessed world, the Urus proves that Lamborghini has become common-place in its desire to sell mainstream cars to a mainstream public. The creator of the supercar has fallen far into the depths of consumerism, and the Urus, named after the large wild ancestors of domestic cattle, is their most shameful attempt at being mainstream yet.

SHAER REAZ