



THE SUV GUIDE

Choosing the perfect one for your adventures

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R A HAQ

Traditionally, SUVs (Sport Utility Vehicles) are tall-roofed, high-riding, rugged, and utilitarian off-road vehicles designed to navigate tough terrains. SUVs were introduced in Bangladesh through Japan's reconditioned car market, with nameplates like 'Pajero' and 'Prado' becoming synonymous with the SUV concept. Many perceive these cars as status symbols rather than rugged off-road machines, but, with the rise of crossovers and SUV-like vehicles, it's easy to lose sight of what truly sets an SUV apart. In this guide, we'll help you navigate the essential qualities to consider when buying an SUV.

FRAME, NOT PLATFORM

When it comes to vehicle construction, there are two common methods. Unibody construction integrates the load-bearing frame into the bodywork, resulting in a lighter and stronger structure. On the other hand, SUVs predominantly employ the body-on-

frame design, featuring a separate passenger body and load-bearing frame. This design grants SUVs a higher ride height and exceptional load-carrying capabilities, making them perfect for off-road adventures. However, it's worth noting that frame-based SUVs may offer less crash protection and have a higher risk of rollover due to their higher centre of gravity.

SOFT, NOT STIFF

In addition to the increased ride height, SUVs often feature suspension setups capable of a wide range of motion. Double wishbone and multi-link suspensions with dampers are common in cars such as the Haval H9, typically sitting on thick-walled tires with deep treads for better traction over dirt and rocks. However, unless the suspension features an active management system, the extra suspension movement tends to translate poorly on paved roads, resulting in a 'floaty' driving experience. Such systems can only be found in top-tier SUVs like the BMW X7.

4WD, NOT AWD

While the terms 4WD and AWD are often used interchangeably, they have distinct functions. 4WD systems excel in off-road driving, equipped with low-range crawl gears and traction-enhancing differential locks. However, the added weight and complexity of these components can impact fuel consumption. On the other hand, AWD systems enhance traction on general road surfaces, improving grip and reducing wheelspin. AWD setups prioritise handling and typically limit power distribution to specific wheels, making them less capable off-road.

THE ALL-IMPORTANT LEG SPACE

One of the most noticeable features of SUVs is their size. With three rows of seating, most SUVs can accommodate up to seven passengers and two of these rows can be folded down to create a substantial cargo space. However, it's important to check the leg space in the third row, as some automakers may

sacrifice comfort for additional seating capacity.

LUXURY AND TECHNOLOGY

As SUVs gained popularity among the upper class, automakers began incorporating luxury features into these once-utilitarian vehicles. Leather or leather alternative upholstery offers both luxury and practicality, resisting dirt and mud. Modern SUVs also come equipped with advanced technologies, including off-road driving aids like smart inclinometers and depth sensors, and everyday features like blind spot sensors, parking assistance systems, and 360-degree cameras.

CONSIDERATIONS

While SUVs excel in their intended role, their drawbacks should also be considered. These vehicles are larger, consume more fuel, and come with a higher price tag. The sheer size and complexity of SUVs can be a daily and long-term challenge, especially if you don't plan on utilising their off-road

capabilities to the fullest. Luckily, modern crossovers offer features such as upright proportions, elevated seating positions, and ample cabin and cargo space without compromising fuel efficiency and safety.

If you require passenger and cargo capacity, models like the 'Dynamic' Mitsubishi Xpander is a good option. The Suzuki XL6 provides seating for seven on top of versatile cargo configurations.

Budget-friendly options like the Chery Tiggo 8 Pro and DFSK Glory deliver the size, luxury, and road presence at a fraction of the cost of traditional SUVs.

If you need an off-road excursion, the Mitsubishi Outlander, equipped with four-wheel drive and a 3-row configuration, offers moderate off-road capabilities suitable for most adventures, unless your daily commute involves rock climbing. Finally, if you just want the bold look and the ride height of an SUV, there is also the Mitsubishi Eclipse Cross.

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