

FIRST DRIVE

PICK-UP LINE

Need a change in lifestyle? Bored of that saloon? The new Tata Xenon is a pick-up aimed at car buyers.

QUICK FACTS
Price Rs 8.5 lakh
(On-road, Mumbai, est)
On sale Now

EXCLUSIVE

FIRST VERDICT

More a lifestyle statement than pure utility
★★★★★

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHASHI KANWAR

BACK IN THE late 1980s, Tata Motors' tough-as-old-boots Tatamobile was one of rural India's workhorses, conquering dirt tracks from Bombay to Bihar. Then in 2005, Tata tried turning the old workhorse into a racehorse with the 90bhp TL. It wasn't much of a racehorse.

Tata now hopes to rekindle some of the old Tatamobile's go-anywhere

appeal with this Xenon, a lifestyle off-roader targeted at the weekend warrior adventure crowd.

It is a long way from its humble origins as the Tatamobile. It's got muscular flanks, a 140bhp, 2.2-litre DiCOR engine from the Tata Safari, and an image that wants nothing to do with the *doohwallas*.

Designed by the UK-based Concept Group (the same firm that penned the Sumo Grande), the Xenon does a good job of stepping out of the TL's gumbots and into a

pair of Armanis. It looks similar to the Grande from the front and those bulging wheel arches give it a lot of presence. At the rear, the Bulgano gets an embossed TATA logo. Tata would do well to give it meatier-looking tyres though. The 205 rubber looks too weedy.

Based on a thoroughly modified TL chassis, the Xenon is whopper – it's longer than the Audi Q7 and wider than a BMW X5. This is the extended cab version, so it gets four doors and a load bay that is designed

to carry 500kg, but 'officially' only 220 kilograms.

The Xenon is no car posing in SUV-clothes, this is the real deal – a body-on-ladder frame chassis, a five axle at the rear, load-lugging leaf springs and a proper set of low-range gear ratios – fit the traditional pick-up, the way Americans know it. Climb into the cabin, and anyone who is familiar with a Tata SUV will feel right at home here. The hard, cheap-feel plastics used are the same grey shade and the switchgear →

Tata Xenon | First Drive

'Hit a rock and it's the rock that will need sympathy.'



↳ Xenons for the Xenon; 140bhp engine from Safari makes it a peppy performer; lots of optional accessories in catalogue; alloy wheels are standard.