




**\$29,880 –
\$35,530**
DEALER

9.6L 110kW
254g 5Stars

2018 LDV T60 Luxe 4x4 automatic review: Owner loaner

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Australia's love affair with utes shows no signs of slowing, presenting a prime opportunity for new entrants like the LDV T60 to slot in. While the Chinese brand is far from a household name right now, it could be just one convincing product away from success. Could the T60 be the one?



- Impressive value
- As big and bold as any competitor
- Quality, well-specced interior
- Long warranty



- Down on power and torque
- Under the class-average payload
- Unknown reliability
- Ride/handling not resolved

As I climb into the cabin of the LDV T60 Luxe, a sense of déjà vu washes over me. I'm surrounded by elements familiar from a variety of other vehicles, implemented in a slightly different way.

I'll come to learn that feeling of familiarity just about sums up the entire LDV T60 experience after spending a week with it. For Aussie buyers attuned to generations of Japanese-designed and (more recently) Thai-built dual cabs, that can only be a good thing.

LDV isn't one of those, though. The Chinese company – a part of the greater SAIC Motor group and marketed under the Maxus name in its home market – traces

its roots back to companies like Rover and Leyland in a long string of ownership that fell under full Chinese ownership in 2011.

While the LDV brand may not be a high-profile one in Australia just yet, that could change. A pair of vans introduced the brand to Australia, but it's the T60 ute that could be LDV's ticket to success.

Unlike previous Chinese challengers to the ute segment, like Great Wall, LDV has created a unique visual identity rather than remixing parts from utes we already know, and given the T60 a set of dimensions more akin to those of well-known utes like the Toyota HiLux.



It's also been given a value price that should be cause for concern to traditional dual-cab vendors. The T60 Luxe you see here, packed with standard equipment and equipped with a six-speed auto, asks a modest \$36,831 drive-away, while ABN holders can take advantage of \$34,990 drive-away pricing.

At around \$15-\$20K less than high-spec utes from traditional segment players like the Navara, Colorado and Ranger that's a significant saving, so what do you get for the money? Quite a bit actually.

Standard features of the T60 Luxe include climate-control air-con, leather seat trim, electrically adjustable heated front seats, proximity key with push-button start, a rear diff lock, polished sports bar in the tub, and heated power-folding exterior mirrors. That's just what the Luxe version includes over the more work-focussed Pro model.

Across the range, all dual-cab T60 models feature a segment-

leading 10.0-inch touchscreen infotainment system, six-speaker audio, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity, Bluetooth, cruise control, side steps, auto LED headlights, rain-sensing wipers and a tub liner.

The T60 also carries a five-star ANCAP safety rating (under 2017 testing criteria) and includes standard safety kit like six airbags with full-length curtain bags, front seatbelt pretensioners, two ISOFIX and top-tether mounting points, rear-view camera and park sensors, electronic stability and traction control with roll movement intervention, tyre pressure monitoring, blind-spot detection, and driver fatigue monitoring.

That's an impressive list that puts a lot of other more expensive utes to shame, though there is no forward collision warning or autonomous emergency braking, which at present is far from unusual in the segment.

Long equipment lists are one way of getting buyer attention, but

Aussie ute fans also tend to like a bit of grunt. LDV doesn't lead the pack here, though, with a 2.8-litre four-cylinder diesel engine rated at 110kW of power at 3400rpm and 360Nm or torque from 1600 to 2800rpm.

LDV plays its cards close to its chest with this engine, but it's a version of the same VM Motori diesel as you'll find in the Holden Colorado – not exactly the same mind you, with plenty of detail differences, but part of the same engine family nonetheless.

For perspective, a Colorado auto produces 147kW/500Nm, a Nissan Navara is available with up to 140kW/450Nm, and a Toyota HiLux auto manages 130kW/450Nm.

On the other hand, 'discount' utes like the JMC Vigus provide 101kW/370Nm, the Great Wall Steed manages 110kW/310Nm, and the Mahindra Pik-Up claims 103kW/330Nm, though all feature slightly smaller engines and are somewhat limited by being available only with manual transmissions.

Officially, the auto T60 is rated at 9.6L/100km for mixed-cycle fuel consumption. On test we recorded a matching figure, although driving was more highway skewed, but a sub-10L/100km figure is still a decent result.

The T60 Luxe also falls behind some competitors in capability terms too, with an 815kg payload and 3000kg towing capacity. LDV equips the Luxe with a lower payload compared to the Pro version, which ups capacity by 180kg (150kg for manual models) thanks to heavy-duty rear springs.

Against the usual suspects, a Toyota HiLux SR5 can carry 1005kg in the rear and tow up to 3500kg, a Holden Colorado LTZ manages a 1086kg payload and maximum 3500kg tow rating, while a Mitsubishi Triton Exceed is a closer match at 945kg on board and 3100kg towing. Matched for spec rather than price in this instance – payload may vary depending on trim level.

Interestingly, the T60's front double-wishbone suspension is interchangeable with that of the Holden Colorado, but before you make claims of copycat syndrome, it's worth pointing out that SAIC is

part of a joint-venture agreement with GM along with small cross-ownership agreements.

The upside comes in terms of aftermarket support. If you want to beef up your T60 with a lift kit or similar, there's no shortage of ready-made options.

The first six months of 2018 saw 1287 T60 4x4s delivered, which still places it at the back of the 4x4 ute segment in Australia. By comparison, Australia's favourite 4x4, the Ford Ranger, sold more than three times as many units for the month of June alone.

Now, it's worth noting here that our loaned T60 owner car isn't fresh out of the box, having ticked over 13,000km while we had it. That's for the best, though: real distance by a real driver instead of the usual pampered press car treatment. Realism in the first degree.

What's it like then? Certainly the interior presentation is impressive. Fit and finish appear to be better than the standard achieved by some better-known brands, and certainly closer to passenger car standards than the usual commercial vehicle fare.

Look around and you'll find Volkswagen Group bits and pieces, switchgear here, door pulls there (again as the result of a joint venture SAIC runs with VW in China) and you'll also find a similar level of build standards. No creaks, no loose parts, and nice finishes on the majority of touchpoints.

Seats are big and comfortable up front, and the 10.0-inch touchscreen is absolutely massive – it's a little more like using a low-price Android tablet with its simple graphical interface than a traditional in-car system, but it's easy to use and ties in all-important smartphone mirroring for Apple and Android phones.

You don't get inbuilt navigation, which could be a setback for some rural buyers who'd rather not rely on mobile reception for mapping (though depending on your preferred mobile platform and carrier that may not always be an issue).

The driver gets a tilt-adjustable wheel, but as with so many utes in the segment, the T60 misses out on reach adjustment. It's also hard to ignore the steering wheel offset slightly to the right.





For those in the rear there's plenty of space, with a near-flat floor through the middle. The seat base is a little lower than usual, though, and short backrests limit comfort for taller occupants. On the other hand, the T60 includes rear face-level air vents that many utes lack.

Little details push the T60 closer to SUV territory. Okay, there might be hard plastics on most surfaces, but there's no cheap, scratchy feel to them, it's decently put together. Red stitching on the seats isn't something you'd find on most utes either, and generous front and rear door pockets are handy for everything from big bottles down to tape measures and quote books.

There's even a set of Optitron-style instruments – completely faceless when the car is switched off, with increments that come into view once the car is running. It's all a little '90s era Lexus-y, the downside being that as the sun falls across the gauges, they become hard to read. There is a digital speedo, however, which is absolutely essential in states with zero-tolerance stances on speeding.

On the road, LDV is a little off the pace of leaders in the segment, though only by a half-step or so.

Fire up the engine and it settles into a clattery idle, rocking on its mounts and vibing through the cabin a little more than full-price utes.

Pop the six-speed auto into drive and lean on the accelerator, and the throttle take-up has the kind of drowsy feel that might be familiar to owners of older turbo-diesel engines, but isn't a match for the most current crop.

Despite that, once it's rolling the T60 drives so much like a traditional dual-cab that there are no signs this is LDV's first attempt at a ute in this class.

In fact, the gear shifts in particular are amongst the smoothest of almost any diesel ute, it's just that the pause in power between gears lingers a moment or two longer than usual, and the transmission programming is quite dull, making the T60 feel unresponsive and lethargic at times.

There are multiple modes, with the transmission eco setting making negligible noticeable difference, but the power setting holds lower gears longer and keeps revs up, which is likely to be particularly useful for anyone that tows or carries a full load often.

Steering isn't as slow as your average dual-cab either, making it quick and easy to turn from lock to lock – a boon for urban drivers. The T60 isn't entirely nimble, though, with feel-free power steering masking what the front wheels are up to.

Suspension is (as the Luxe model's 'comfort' rear springs suggest) on the soft side, even without a load on board. The rear axle also has a tendency to skip over corrugated surfaces.

The suspension compresses willingly, but is slow to rebound and it's possible for the front and rear to fall out of step on choppy surfaces. At 215mm ground clearance isn't huge, but should be more than enough for medium-duty off-roading. For instance, there's up to 20mm more clearance under a D-Max or BT-50, but 10mm less beneath a Triton.

An electronically actuated 4x4 system allows 4H to be selected at speeds up to 80km/h, but selecting low-range was a little more hit and miss, engaging quickly sometimes but occasionally taking its time. That's hardly a deal-breaker, though.

Another hit and miss feature was the blind-spot monitoring, which

only seemed to indicate vehicles alongside occasionally. Like any driver-assist system, it should never be relied on, but it would be nice if it were more consistent in its operation.

On longer highway runs, the T60 is as stable on the road as just about any other ute currently offered in Australia, with a comfortable ride on 245/65 R17 Dunlop Grandtrek AT20 tyres. Road noise isn't excessive, but in the right conditions wind noise does make itself known.

While it can't deliver the same kind of outright grunt as other utes in its segment, it's worth noting that short of an Amarok V6, or maybe the five-cylinder Ranger and BT-50, not many dual-cabs have a 'big power' feel regardless of how torquey they may be.

In fact, while it may not lead its segment in any particular area, the T60 manages to mix its scope of handling and capability against much more expensive vehicles, while making other cut-price dual-cabs feel thoroughly underdone.

LDV offers warranty and roadside assist for five years or 130,000km, and offers a loan car program in

instances where a car is kept off the road longer than 48 hours. Against the current trend of capped-price service programs, though, LDV doesn't have any formal program in place for its 12-month/15,000km service requirements.

Interestingly, (but not uncommon), owner Brian also told us that the dealer who sold him his T60 suggested that unless he serviced the car with them, his warranty may be void. Not true, as the ACCC has gone to lengths to communicate, and as brands like Holden have learned the hard way.

That said, Brian concedes that given how low the cost of his T60 was when compared to a mainstream ute, that sort of dealer experience becomes a part of the overall transaction cost.

After a week behind the wheel, it's hard not to see value in the T60. There are questions surrounding long-term reliability and resale on any newcomer ute, but one that takes a huge step closer to the capabilities of favourites like the HiLux and Ranger, while shading them for standard features at a much lower price, is only good news for Aussie consumers.

The T60 isn't yet on level pegging with competitors like the Navara, Triton and Colorado, but both on the road and off it's much closer than expected. It may be a steep learning curve for brands like LDV in Australia, but sharp pricing and a long equipment list are sure to win the T60 Luxe plenty of fans locally.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Australian distributor for the LDV brand, Ateco, would not make a vehicle available to CarAdvice for testing. Luckily, CarAdvice reader and 2018 LDV T60 owner Brian was more than happy to loan us his ~12,000km ute for a week. (We swapped him into our Navara, watch out for his feedback in a coming Cars We Own story).

