



Land Rover Freelander II HSE TD4 so civilised, so capable

It will haul that horse box out of a boggy paddock, and importantly, has the civility to provide fine cruising at motorway speeds.

Do you fancy driving down a rock strewn gully, descending at least forty-five degrees and listing about the same number of degrees to one side? These are just the conditions most 4x4 owners would dread, but there I was, inland from Barcelona on Land Rover's famed Land Rover Experience exercise. In front of me was the very same Freelander II model I had previously been testing on suburban roads in the south of England!

I watched the off-road competence of what is the junior model in the burgeoning Land Rover range, from the limousine-class luxury of a flagship Range Rover. I had just previously appreciated the sheer off-road competence of Land Rover's workhorse, the sparsely furnished and equipped Defender.

Initially it was a white knuckle experience. However the sheer competence of any of the latest, updated Land Rovers soon induced calm confidence. These doyens of the rough stuff can cope with the worst that nature can deliver, whether it be 'moonscape' boulders or near waist high floods.

The original Freelander, a long standing top seller in the more agile Sports Utility Vehicle class, did a great job. It

provided an alternative sort of motoring for those drivers just wanting something that was easy and enjoyable to drive under any conditions, who had loads to haul or who resided in potentially challenging off-beat locations.

Now the second generation named Freelander II, has taken over and it is certainly a lot more car in all respects. It's bigger, more spacious, and benefits from a totally new design from the ground upwards. It's more generous in all respects and, I suspect, may well tempt a lot of buyers to downsize from bulkier, but often less space efficient, 4x4's.

Whilst I would suggest the Freelander II is one of the easiest of the compact 4x4s to live with in town, its ability on the rough stuff should make easy going for even newcomers to off road-driving.

Land Rover is to the 4x4, what Hoover is to the vacuum cleaner. My experience with Freelander II, and that awesome (but enjoyable) Land Rover Experience exercise in the Spanish desert conditions, convinces me that it is status quo ...just that the latest crop of Land Rovers continue on course to meet the competition head-on.

*On test with Ted Wilkinson of
The Guild of Motoring Writers*