




# READY. SET. MUD!

*The new Xtreme model of the Gurkha has been custom built for one of the most demanding clients in the world – the Indian Army!*

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See the Force Gurkha Xtreme in action on our YouTube channel. |  **autoX**



**T**here's something inherently special about purpose-built automobiles – not only do they exude a sense of uniqueness but they also flaunt their intentions in terms of design. Unfortunately, in India, we haven't really seen a significant number of purpose-built machines from our homegrown carmakers. But, then, you can't ignore the fact that the Indian automobile industry is a relatively young industry – our homegrown automakers just haven't had enough time. But that's not to say that there haven't been any attempts. One such attempt was the DC Avanti sports car. But only a handful of examples of the Avanti have been made. So it's Force Motors, with the Gurkha, that can truly lay claim to the title of the first real purpose-built Indian automobile.

Named after the fearsome Nepalese fighters, the Gurkha was developed by Force Motors as a vehicle with off-roading abilities unlike any other vehicle on sale in India. When it first made its debut, only a handful of units were produced. At the time, it was referred to by the company as the Black Beauty. It was in 2014 that full-scale production of the Force Gurkha began.

Over the years, Force has produced different iterations of the Gurkha, such as the Xplorer and Xpedition, which are available in both three- and five-door models. And now, in keeping with its nomenclature of using 'X' as the first letter of the name – Force Motors has introduced the new flagship model of the Gurkha called the Xtreme. As the name suggests, the Gurkha Xtreme is indeed the most extreme version of the Gurkha to have hit Force's showrooms. Don't be fooled by the fact that it looks similar to its siblings. Sure, it has the same body shell as the other models, but in terms of the mechanical bits, the Gurkha Xtreme is a remarkably different machine. After all, its custom built for the Indian army.

#### The business end

The Indian army operates in all kinds of terrain – flat plains, coastal areas, dry hot deserts, humid rain forests and, of course,

the towering heights of the mighty Himalayas, with temperatures as low as minus 40-degrees. So, when Force Motors tendered for a trail vehicle for the extreme needs of the Indian army, they had to completely rework the Gurkha to ensure that it can deliver. As a result, the Gurkha Xtreme gets a new ECU, engine, gearbox, transfer case, axles, as well as a new suspension setup. Essentially, the Xtreme version of the Gurkha is an all-new vehicle.

The engine is a 2.1-litre, four-cylinder, common-rail turbo diesel unit sourced from Mercedes-Benz. The five-speed gearbox has been borrowed from Mercedes too, while the transfer case is a Borg Warner unit, while the front and rear axles are Dana 44s. The new ECU is a Bosch unit and, as you will soon learn, an amazing one at that.

#### Imposing to look at

While the Xtreme comes with a 3-inch lift kit as standard, taking its height to an imposing 2,075mm, the vehicle that you see here has an accessory pack that makes it even taller with that roof rack in place. Other components that the accessory kit – which costs ₹1.5 lakh – brings to the party include a front windshield guard, a jerry can holder and ladder at the back, a rear bumper guard, alloy wheels and a set of off-road tyres. These elements, combined with that flared plastic cladding around the lower section, a snorkel and its spring over axle setup, allow the Gurkha Xtreme to stand tall on the road. It even towers over the likes of the Toyota Fortuner!

#### Utilitarian interior

The interior of the Xtreme is identical to that of the Xplorer and Xpedition, sharing their distinctly spartan layout – something that's not surprising, given the application of the vehicle. So, when you get inside, be prepared for a decidedly industrial setting. Aside from the fixed steering wheel, the ergonomics seem to be okay, with all the levers and controls within easy reach. The only exception is the front

#### PROS

- Phenomenal off-road capabilities
- Heavy duty hardware

#### CONS

- Utilitarian
- High NVH on road

#### X-FACTOR

The most hardcore production 4x4 on sale in India.



differential lock lever, which is placed quite far away from the driver on the left side of the gear lever.

Twist the key, and the Mercedes-Benz engine comes to life in a very refined and composed manner. The clutch pedal has a lot of travel and is on the heavier side. But once you get going, irrespective of how you drive the Xtreme, the engine always remains refined and composed. With peak



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torque of 321Nm coming in from as low as 1,600rpm, the Xtreme has good low-end grunt at all times.

#### In its element

We took the Xtreme to an off-road track to put it through its paces. Let's begin with the steering. Well, it doesn't exactly ooze feedback, especially with those mud terrain tyres fitted, but you must remember that this is a purpose-built vehicle after all – you need to get used to it. And once you do get accustomed to it, the Xtreme will never leave you second guessing its intentions from behind the wheel. For most obstacles on the track, I didn't even have to put the four-wheel drive in low range. 4WD high gives you enough grunt to go over even inclines and over axle benders. And it's here that its remarkable ECU comes into play. Even though it's a hardcore mechanical

vehicle, the ECU gives the Xtreme features such as hill descent control by retaining 1,000rpm at all times and limiting power to wheels. It does the same while going uphill too. Put the vehicle in 4WD, slot into first gear and take your feet off all pedals, and the Xtreme will simply hold 1,000 rpm while climbing up or going down an incline. All you have to do is steer – very impressive indeed!

Turning up the torque multiplication and engaging 4WD low allows you to easily drive into deep ruts and drive out of them without breaking a sweat. The super smooth Mercedes-Benz OM611 engine has oodles of grunt. The new long travel coil spring suspension is mounted over the Dana 44 rigid axles, which allows the Gurkha to have far greater suspension travel than any other standard 4x4 in India. This essentially means that the Gurkha can drive into deeper ruts or climb over higher obstacles.







**Take your feet off the pedals, and the Xtreme will simply hold 1,000rpm while climbing up or going down an incline. All you have to do is steer. Very impressive indeed!**



The 44° approach angle, 40° departure angle and an unbeatable 30° breakover angle, along with 210mm ground clearance, mean that you can attack far more challenging obstacles than any other off-roader on the market. Of course, the underbody protection and 550mm wading depth helps as well.

Now, factor in the Xtreme's admirable 44° approach angle, 40° departure angle and an unbeatable 30° breakover angle – thanks to its short wheelbase – along with its 210mm ground clearance, and you have a car that can attack far more challenging obstacles than any other off-roader on the market. Of course, the underbody protection and 550mm wading depth help its cause as well.

All this ensures that the Xtreme is never out of its depths on even the most extreme off-road terrain. Honestly, the off-road track in Gurgaon didn't have challenging enough obstacles to push the Xtreme to its extreme – pun intended! We didn't even have to lock the front and rear differentials.

Yup, the final ace up the Xtreme's sleeve are its locking differentials. Should you ever get stuck – and you will when you start pushing the boundaries of off-roading – all you have to do is pull on the differential lock

lever depending on the wheels that are stuck. This will ensure that both wheels are locked together with the axle, making them turn in tandem at the same speed and giving the vehicle more power to get itself unstuck.

And if locking one differential doesn't get you unstuck, locking the other one will ensure that all four wheels get a monstrous amount of torque and turn at the same speed to get the Xtreme going again. Now you must remember that locking the differentials will not let the inside and outside wheels turn at different speeds, as they do while negotiating a turn. So, you must disengage the differential locks the moment you get unstuck.

The Gurkha Xtreme, then, has all the hardcore hardware it needs for the most challenging terrain. However, it's not the most dynamically capable vehicle out there. Its

spring over axle setup results in a fair amount of body roll, and the driver doesn't get much feedback from the wheels. But that's just the nature of a spring over axle setup.

In short, all these features lend the Xtreme commendable off-road credentials, but the Gurkha Xtreme isn't a vehicle that you will enjoy for cross country touring. And those off-road tyres don't help with steering feedback either.

**Built for a purpose**  
The Force Gurkha Xtreme is

**Force Gurkha Xtreme**

**Engine:** 2,149cc  
4-Cylinder / 16-Valves  
Turbocharged

**Fuel:** Diesel

**Transmission:**  
5-Speed Manual  
Four-Wheel Drive

**Power:** 138bhp  
@ 3,800rpm

**Torque:** 321Nm  
@ 1,600 – 2,400rpm

**Price:** ₹12.99 lakh  
(ex-showroom)