

Toyota Land Cruiser 70 series



It is known as the "King of Africa" in 4X4 circles. The most durable, indestructible off-roader probably ever produced and this resulted in a massive fan club in South Africa, and all over the world. (even the Taliban love them!)

Although only the series 70 pick up / "bakkie" and 5 door SW is sold in South Africa, "grey imports" are also very popular with different body configurations.

In the UK the series 70 was only sold as a 3 door SWB model, but there are quite a few 5 door LWB SW versions that found their way into the UK as "grey imports"

from Japan. Although the later model's front end looked different from the SA spec pick up, it's essentially still the same vehicle, making most spare parts easily obtainable.

-The SWB (short wheel base) version is the most impressive Land Cruiser off-road, due to it's SWB setup that give it a great "ramp over" angle. It is available with various spec levels, as many of them are grey imports. The UK versions had a 2.4TD engine, same as used in the old Toyota Hilux. The power output from this engine is not enough to brag about, but it gets the job done. The 3.0TD and 3.4D 5cyl in the "jap specs" offered much more useful power. The 4.2 diesel is very scarce.

A LWB 2.4TD from Japan. These vehicles are sometimes badged as Prado's

-The 5 door LWB version was only available as a "grey import" in the UK, and they made use of the same engines. Most of them are with 7-seater configuration. The funny thing about the LWB is that it's been in production since the mid-eighties, but Toyota SA only woke up in 2007 and realized it should be a good seller in South Africa, and so far it has been – even though it's totally overpriced. (it uses the same non-turbo 4.2D engine found in the pick up)

The one advantage on buying a "jap import" is that 90% of them is equipped

with air-conditioning. Because Africa is swamped with grey imported Land Cruisers, you'll easily find parts for it in neighbouring countries of South Africa should you go for an overland trip, like visiting the Serengeti.

One thing to be on the lookout for is the diff-locks. Some had none, some had at the rear only, and a very, very few had back AND front diff-locks which made them unstoppable off-road. (the rotary switch is located on the lower part of the instrument panel, left of the steering column. The switch would indicate whether it's got one or two 'lockers.)



Prices start at £500 for a rusty / tired engine example. £1500-£2000 should get you a good condition 2.4TD while £2000+ should be enough to get you a 3.0TD. Don't spend more than £3000 unless the vehicle is really something special, e.g. very low mileage or have very expensive equipment fitted.

Things to look for

-Remember that these vehicles were designed to be off-road work horses that can do high mileage before something break. This resulted that many Land Cruisers had services skipped (does it have service history?) or had an abusive life. Check for underside damage (scrapes on the chassis would be fine, but bent items on the chassis can spell trouble)

-A whine from the engine can mean that the Turbo is worn. Also check for excessive smoke under hard acceleration.

-How's the gearbox? A soft whine would be acceptable, but a loud one can mean expensive bills in the near distant future.

-Does the 4WD actually work?

-Rust can be a problem if the vehicle wasn't washed regularly, so check everywhere including the under carriage. No matter how small the rust patches are, prepare for at least R15 000 to have the rust fixed in SA.



These Land Cruisers make great "challenge vehicles"

Possible modifications

-Bear in mind that most Land Cruiser owners drive their vehicles for a very long period before they get rid of it. This means that the vehicle can really be altered according to taste, as you'll most probably live with your Land Cruiser for many, many years.

You'll notice that very few Land Cruisers in SA are still stock standard, as their owners equip them according to the type of use.

-The first thing to fit would be proper off-road tyres, as many of them are still equipped with stupid "highway" tyres, which is quite useless in mud or rocky terrain.

-If the model you want doesn't have any diff-locks, you can have a Lockright Locker fit for about R5000 in SA. Alternatively you can buy an used axle with a diff-lock from a salvage yard or on ebay.co.uk and have the 'locker fitted in SA.

-If yours lack aircon, this can be modified into the vehicle for R4000-R6000 using used parts in SA.

-Should you want more power, a 3.0TD (KZTE Hilux engine) can be fitted for about R35 000. If fuel consumption is not an issue, how about a Lexus 4.7 V8 conversion for about R50 000. These costing figures can be reduced drastically however if you can buy some of the parts in the UK prior to the vehicle's exportation. See, the reason why these conversions are so expensive is the gearbox and

computer box (also known as the ECU) that need to be modified to “complete” the conversion. (the engine itself to be used in the conversion is a “jap imported” engine which cost less than R10 000 in SA)

Should you however be in the position to buy the ECU (together with the keys and other relevant control modules) and gearbox from say, a 3.0 TD Prado / Land Cruiser Colorado which shouldn't cost more than £500, you'll only pay another est. R16 000 for the engine and fitment in SA. (but for £500 you should be able to buy a complete drivable Lexus LS400 4.7 V8, and imagine all the nice things you can strip out of the Lexus and fit into the Land Cruiser – like the electric seats, aircon, ABS brakes and premium sound system!)



A highly modified Land Cruiser SWB