

Jeep Gladiator Rubicon review: Is it worth the high price tag?

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Last year Jeep unleashed its Gladiator Rubicon double cab bakkie in South Africa. At the time when it launched, it was the most powerful bakkie in the country. It still retains the title of the most expensive pickup truck in the local market with a price tag of R1,259, 900, which interestingly costs more than the newly launched Volkswagen Amarok and Ford Raptor. I tested the Gladiator over seven days and I enjoyed my time with it. But is it worth buying? Let's find out more.







Design

The Jeep Gladiator looks like an elongated version of the Jeep Wrangler. Picture a Wrangler with an extended rear and a load bin, and this is pretty much the exterior of the Gladiator. Does it look awesome? Heck yes if you are looking to make a bold statement with your vehicle.

On the left-hand side at the front is a Rubicon sticker in black with red outlining. Like the Wrangler, it unsurprisingly has Jeep's seven-slot grille. It also has LED headlamps and fog lamps. These features sum up the front design. On top is a black roof that nicely separates itself from the colour of the bakkie.

At the back of the Gladiator, you can expect Jeep lettering, a black bumper, and a rear camera that sits right below the word "Jeep".

The overall design sounds simple, but looking at it in the flesh, or rather in the metal, is a lot more fun as it's large and dare I say a bit unconventional. It's not everyone's cup of tea, but I had heads turning wherever I drove it, which means that the Gladiator is a flashy vehicle that screams I'm expensive.

Interior

Inside the Gladiator you can expect solid build quality all around. The driver's seat is comfortable and it is positioned in a way that enables good visibility for the driver. All that is needed to be accessed by the driver is within arm's reach as well, such as the infotainment system and an array of buttons.

The dashboard is in red with good material quality. There are leather seats with red stitching to match the dashboard. The cabin is spacious and it can easily accommodate four people with its headroom and legroom.

What's it like to drive

The Gladiator is powerful. Its engine and gearbox are capable of making it move nimbly despite its kerb weight. I found the Gladiator to be capable over different terrains. The steering of the Gladiator is also surprisingly light, which makes it precise and easy to turn.

Safety and security features

Available features include Blind-spot Monitoring, Rear Cross Path detection, standard ParkView rear backup camera with dynamic grid lines, Adaptive Cruise Control and electronic stability control (ESC) with electronic roll mitigation.

Fourth-generation Uconnect system

The Jeep Gladiator features Uconnect 8.4NAV, delivering communication, entertainment and navigation features drivers and passengers desire, including a full-colour LED instrument cluster.

The Uconnect system includes easy-to-use features, enhanced processing power, faster startup times and touchscreens that display high-resolution graphics.

Gladiator Rubicon receives a Trail Rated badge, which includes features such as:

- Rock-Trac 4x4 system with a “4LO” ratio of 4:1 and Tru-Lok locking differentials standard on Rubicon models
- Skid plates and front and rear tow hooks
- Rear steel heavy-duty off-road rear bumper and available front steel winch-ready bumper with removable end caps
- Approach angle of 43.6 degrees, break-over angle of 20.3 degrees, departure angle of 26 degrees and ground clearance of 249mm (to the rear Diff)
- Up to 800mm of water fording

Some facts about the Jeep Gladiator Rubicon:

- The Gladiator is only available in the Rubicon derivative in South Africa.
- Powering the Gladiator is the 3.6l V6 Pentastar petrol engine.
- The engine is mated to an eight-speed automatic transmission.
- The engine delivers 209kW and 347Nm of torque.
- Its towing capacity is 2,721kg and its payload capacity is 693kg.
- It's claimed to consume 12.4l of fuel per 100km, but I experienced roughly 14l.

Maintenance plan: Three years/100,000km

Warranty Plan: Five years/100,000km

ABOUT IMRAN SALIE

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