Isuzu D-Max Arctic Trucks AT35 double-cab pick-up – Road Test

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Pick up a Double-Cab Pick-Up at a UK Isuzu dealership… …Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency) tried the D-Max Arctic Trucks AT35 for size.

With so many passenger vehicles looking almost identical, it’s refreshing to review the

impressive looking Isuzu D-Max Arctic Trucks AT35 Double-Cab.

Put simply with its Arctic Trucks ‘butch’ styling and ‘lifestyle’ equipment, there is very little else on or off road quite like it. What’s more it is not just frills without purpose as it comes with a performance pedigree and workhorse or family transport practicalities.

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Isuzu, one of Japan’s oldest vehicle makers founded in 1916, came to the UK in 1987 with the Trooper SUV and then introduced the first pick-up the following year, the TF. The D-Max launched in 2012 and has been refreshed mid-term in 2017 before the all-new D-Max appeared in 2021 with further enhancements made since then.

To build on its popularity with working country people and the booming leisure sector, Isuzu have added the head-turning AT35 halo model with flared bodywork to accommodate the huge tyres, roll-bars and additional lights. It can be supplied by any of 13 Isuzu AT35 authorised UK dealers including one in Scotland and two each in Northern Ireland and Wales.

Specially engineered with taller and uprated suspension the Arctic Trucks AT35 takes its name from the massive Goodrich all-terrain tyres fitted to enhance off-road ability in any situation, with Bilstein suspension – and the existing V-Cross Adventure model is its starting point, so it’s highly equipped.

Cleverly using a choice of manual or automatic transmissions, our auto version with the six ratios really lets the driver make the most of the surprisingly modest power output from a hard-working four-cylinder diesel engine.


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You can also select a hill descent control and even lock up the differentials for any serious off-road work and while it's not the quickest on or off road it will get you there. The AT35's standard ladder chassis imparts tremendous strength and gives the big pickup good cross country ability with big wheel articulation for rough ground.

Steering and brakes were good with strong feedback but the turning circle was also large when parking although assistance was plentiful. It also comes with a traditional handbrake and not an electric button and it held it very well on a steep test slope. Secondary controls were well marked and placed close to hands, clearly displayed and of a sensible size.



Instruments directly in front of the driver were big, simple and clear as well and tacho and speedometer were split by a selectable info panel covering a variety of settings.



They were matched to a much larger infotainment display atop the centre of the fascia and it clearly displayed chosen media and navigation but was a bit slow responding and not too easy to connect a mobile phone. The navigation also needed updating on our test car.

Straightforward controls for heating and ventilation were big and the system worked well to warm the interior and keep all windows clear, supported by front wash/ wipers but only a heated rear screen without wiper. There were four powered windows and twin powered door mirrors with heating elements.

A reach and rake adjustable steering column had wide adjustment too.

Oddments space was reasonable throughout but not as good as you might expect for a five-

seat vehicle, although the hook on the back of the front passenger seat is very unusual. Door bins, seat-back pockets and console bin and trays were large.

The loadbed is covered in a hardwearing liner and accessed through a drop-down tailboard and roller cover. Loading and unloading generally required climbing up into it which required some dexterity and agility but it was long and wide.

It was also a stretch to get into the cabin, front or back but there were sidesteps and grab handles to assist, and once inside the room was very good in all directions and the simple seats were surprisingly comfortable with adequate adjustment for the driver and passenger.A reach and rake adjustable steering column had wide adjustment too.

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Ride quality was firm but not hard and only the very worst terrain and potholes meant you could be thrown about as it generally shrugged off the bumps.

Sometimes it would skip around an uneven corner but usually it stayed planted on the road and was entirely predictable. It can cope with water almost a half-metre deep and the purposeful all-terrain tyres have a very deep block tread to shrug off mud and grip soft surfaces.



VERDICT

With both raw and refined ability there are few pickups to match the Isuzu D-Max AT35 and even some more expensive SUVs would struggle to better its sophistication.

Some buyers might look for a large family vehicle with greater performance and better fuel economy that the AT35 is lacking, but there are few hard-core statement vehicles that can match its off-road abilities and they are best enjoyed slowly.

For: Roomy & surprisingly comfortable, large loadbed and high carrying capacity with big towing capability, reasonable economy, very good major controls, strong build quality and long warranty, impressive off-road performance, relatively low company car tax.

Against: Modest acceleration, intrusive engine noise, some road rumbles, big to park, high fuel consumption.

FAST FACTS

Model: Isuzu D-Max AT35 Auto Double-Cab

Price: £49,499 CVOTR

Mechanical: 164 PS 2.0 litre 4 cyl turbo-diesel, 6 speed Auto, 4WD

Max Speed: 112 mph

0 – 62 mph: 13 sec

Combined MPG: 30

Insurance Group: 41

C02 emissions: 241 g/km

Tax costs: LCV rate VED £290, LCV BIK per annum £792 at 20%/ £1,584 for 40% tax payers

Warranty: 5 years/ 125,000 miles

Size: L 5.27 m (17.29 ft), W 2.05 m (6.73 ft), H 1.88 m (6.17 ft)

Payload & towing capacity: 1 tonne / 3.5 tonnes

Kerbweight: 2,205 kg (4,861 lb)