



# The great conversion DEBATE

Yes, the Land Cruiser double cab is finally available in SA, but is that necessarily a good thing? Do the double-cab Cruiser conversions offered by some South African companies not perhaps still offer better value for money? One *Leisure Wheels* reader found this to be the case.

**Text:** GG van Rooyen **Photography:** Jannie Herbst

**When John Aspinall** discovered that the Land Cruiser double cab was on its way to SA, he was over the moon. He couldn't wait to get his hands on one, so when it finally arrived at his local Toyota dealership, he immediately went to have a look at it. What he saw standing on the showroom floor,

however, did not live up to his expectations. What was wrong with the Cruiser? The biggest issue that John had with the vehicle was the space in the rear. It was simply too cramped in the back of the cabin, and he couldn't envision four adults travelling in the vehicle. The rear doors were also too small, in his opinion, making



After taking a close look at the new Land Cruiser double cab, John Aspinall decided against buying one. Instead, he bought a single cab model and had it converted by Meano & Sons.

it tough to get in and out.

But space in the back was not the only issue. John was disappointed to find that the double cab did not sport the alloy rims now fitted to new single cab Cruisers. Instead, the double cab version still had the old split-rim steel wheels and narrow tyres.



Above, left: This is the standard double cab Toyota Land Cruiser. The narrow wheels and limited rear cabin space did not impress John. Above, right: John Aspinall's converted Cruiser. He says it is far roomier in the rear, though a bit of space had to be sacrificed in the load area.



Above and right: The standard single cab Cruiser. As the pictures show, it comes with five alloy wheels and large tyres. The double cab, however, has the old-style split rims. Below: Meano & Sons specialise in converting single cab Cruisers into double cabs. Although they obviously alter the body of a vehicle significantly, they do not touch the mechanical components, so the mechanical warranty stays intact.



"Driving in thick sand on those tyres with pressures lowered to 0,8 bar is not a good idea, since sand works its way in between the tube and the rim, possibly resulting in a blow-out when you drive at speed with normal tyre pressures again," says John.

He looked at what it would cost to replace the standard tyres on the double cab, but found that it would be very expensive.

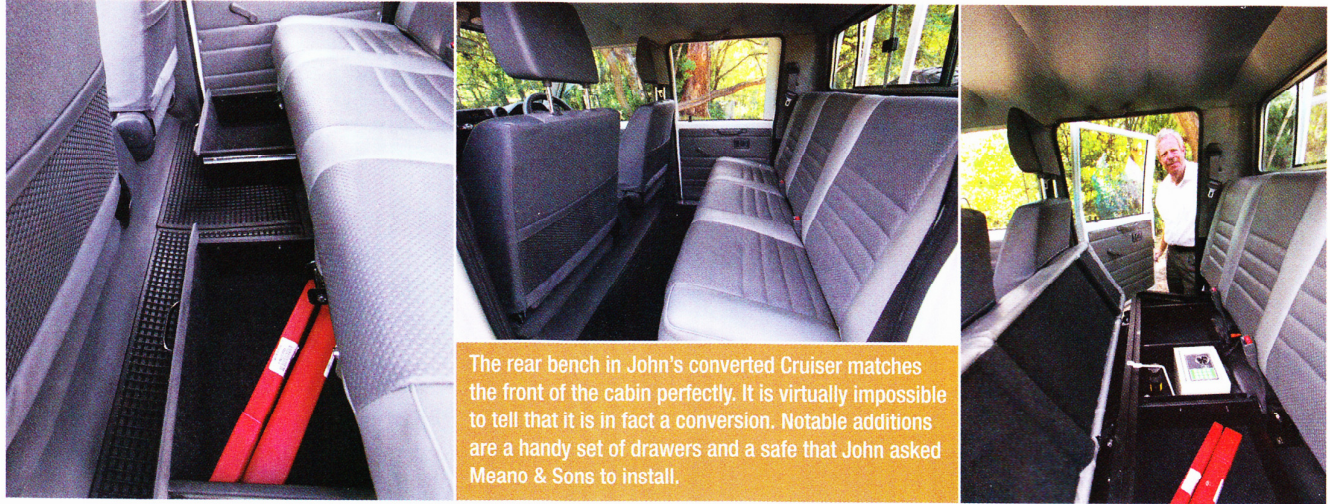
"A set of five new Land Cruiser 76-type mags with 265mm tubeless tyres would cost approximately R35 000."

Another issue was the fuel tank fitted to the double cab. Unlike the single cab, which has two 90-litre tanks, the double cab has only one 130-litre tank.

"I realised that I would need to fit an extra tank," says John. "Considering that the petrol Cruiser averages around 5,5 litres per 100km, 180-litre fuel capacity really is a must-have if you plan on doing serious overlanding. I'm not a fan of carrying loads of fuel-filled jerry cans on a trip, so the 130-litre tank was a problem for me."

# DOUBLE-CAB CONVERSION

## LAND CRUISER 79



The rear bench in John's converted Cruiser matches the front of the cabin perfectly. It is virtually impossible to tell that it is in fact a conversion. Notable additions are a handy set of drawers and a safe that John asked Meano & Sons to install.

### To convert, or not to convert

Leaving the Toyota showroom, John was disappointed. The double-cab Cruiser simply would not suit his needs. So what could he do? He had heard that the double-cab Cruiser conversions performed by Meano & Sons were excellent, so he decided to investigate.

He liked what he saw – the converted Cruisers definitely had more space in the rear. Moreover, since they had started out as single cabs, they sported shiny rims and two 90-litre fuel tanks.

John was tempted to buy a single cab and have it converted to a double cab by Meano & Sons, but he was a little hesitant.

“Handing over a brand new vehicle with less than 1000km on the odometer and giving someone permission to chop it up is not easy to do,” he says. Being the sort of fellow who never rushes into things, John decided to do his homework.

A new single cab would cost R388 740 and a new double cab model would cost R440 800. The conversion would cost R72 960, meaning that the total cost of a converted double cab would be R461 700 – substantially more than a standard double cab.

As mentioned earlier, though, John felt he would need to purchase five new tyres and rims at R35 000, as well as extended arches to fit over the wider tyres. This would push up the price of the standard double cab to R476 134.

Since he was planning on converting his new Cruiser into a proper overland vehicle, he also looked at what the aftermarket accessories for the two Cruisers would cost him. The converted single cab would require R100 248 worth of extras. The standard double cab would need R121 500 worth of extras, since it would need a couple of additional items, such as a second fuel tank.

All told, a fully kitted converted Cruiser would cost R564 398. A fully kitted standard double-cab

COST COMPARISON		
DESCRIPTION	LC SC 4.0L V6	LC DC 4.0L V6
	PETROL & MAN	PETROL & MAN
Model	2013	2013
Power	170 kW@ 5600rpm	170 kW@ 5600rpm
Torque	360 Nm@ 3800rpm	360 Nm@ 3800rpm
Electric Windows Front	Yes	Yes
Electric Windows Rear	No	Yes
	No	Yes
Aircon	Yes	Yes
ABS	Yes	Yes
Disc Brakes all round	Yes	Yes
Diff-Lock Front	Yes	Yes
Diff-Lock Rear	Yes	Yes
Magnesium Rims	Yes	No
Tubeless All Terrain Tyres	Yes	No
Standard Fuel Capacity	180 litres	130 litres
Onboard Satellite Navigation System (Prefer own GPS)	No	Yes
Radio CD Player	No	Yes
Basic Price (Including VAT)	418 000	464 000
Discount **	29 260	23 200
Discounted price (Including VAT)	388 740	440 800
DC Conversion (MEANO)	72 960	0
Sub Total (A):	461 700	440 800
ITEMS REQUIRED TO EQUAL THE TWO VEHICLES		
Radio CD /MP3 Player with External USB Port	2 450	0
Tubeless Tyres for DC (5x)	0	13 250
Trade-in on old Yokohama Hajaris	0	-4 750
The same 76 LC Rims already fitted to SC	0	23 350
Over Fenders / Stone guards for Front Wheels	0	1 742
Over Fenders / Stone guards for Rear Wheels (New design)	0	1 742
Sub Total (B):	2 450	35 334
<b>Total (A + B)</b>	<b>R464 150</b>	<b>R476 134</b>



The overall workmanship on the converted Cruiser is excellent. It looks as though the Cruiser has just rolled off the assembly line as a double cab. The only thing that John says he might have changed about the design is the rear wheel arches (top, left), which run from the load area to the rear of the cabin.

ADDITIONS AS USUAL	LC SC 4.0L V6	LC DC 4.0L V6
Additional Mag Rim (Second Spare Wheel)	4 670	4 670
Tubeless Tyre for Sixth Wheel	2 650	2 650
Wheel Spacers for Rear Wheels (Onca)	3 484	3 484
Safari Snorkel	5 440	5 440
ARB Front Bumper with Integrated Foglights	13 680	13 680
Winch (Tmax EW 12500lb)	9 430	9 430
Spotlights (Hella Comet 500)	549	549
Sump Plate 9mm Aluminium	2 850	2 850
Galvanised "Bin Liners" (Onca)	0	2 606
Rubberizing of Loading Bin and "Bin Liners"	3 800	2 850
Rear Bumper with Dual Spare Wheel Carriers	17 800	17 800
Steel Rock Sliders (Std with Conversion, Additional for STD DC)	0	6 171
Roof Rack over Cab (Front Runner)	5 340	5 340
Upgrading and Re-installing Dual Battery System (CTEK)	3 140	3 140
Extra Battery (Lead Crystal 100Ah)	3 145	3 145
Centre Console (Onca)	3 454	3 454
Roof Console (Outback)	3 450	3 450
Front Door Map Pockets from (Extreme Africa)	836	836
Steel Canopy (MEANO)	16 530	0
Aluminium Canopy (ALUCAB)	0	22 455
No Suspensie Upgrade for now	0	0
No Air Bag Suspension Supports for now (Firestone)	0	0
Additional Fuel Tank for Standard DC	0	7 500
Sub Total (C):	100 248	121 500
<b>OVERALL TOTAL (A + B + C):</b>	<b>R564 398</b>	<b>R597 634</b>

\*\* 7% Discount was only applicable to the SC PU. The huge demand for the new DC resulted in a 0% discount but with a lot of bargaining a 5% discount may have been negotiated.

Cruiser would cost R597 634. (See the full cost breakdown at the end of this article.)

### Taking the plunge

On paper, buying a single-cab Cruiser and converting it to a double cab made sense. But still, signing off on such an extreme conversion of a brand-new vehicle wasn't easy. In the end, though, John decided to do it.

"Since the conversion requires the body of the vehicle to be cut, the Toyota warranty on the body, paint and interior is lost. However, Meano & Sons provide a one-year warranty on their work. The Toyota warranty on the mechanical components also stays in place."

John handed over the keys to his Cruiser and waited. A few weeks later he received a call – his bakkie was ready.

So, is he happy with the vehicle? "I'm very happy," says John. "It suits my needs perfectly. In fact, it will be going on its first overland trip very soon."

Are there any things about the bakkie that he would change?

"Not really," says John. "Because the cabin on the converted Cruiser is roomier than the standard model's, I think the load area is slightly smaller, but this really isn't an issue. I would probably also have changed the rear wheel arches, but that is simply personal preference. The converted Cruiser is still, in my opinion, one of the best overland vehicles available. Moreover, it's fully homologated and SABS approved, so you know it's safe." **LW**

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

We'd like to hear from owners of both converted and standard double-cab Cruisers. Let us know what you love (and hate) about your vehicles.

>> Send an e-mail to [editorial@leisurewheels.com](mailto:editorial@leisurewheels.com)