

Budget Kwid priced to please

 By [Henrie Geyser](#)

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Like an astute fly-half, Renault spotted a gap in the entry-level car market and took the opening with its new teeny, funky-looking SUV-styled Kwid, priced from just R119,900.



There are two models to choose from, Expression and Dynamique, both powered by the same 1.0-litre, 3-cylinder engine, that churns out 50kW at 5,500 rpm and 91Nm at 4 250rpm and is linked to a five-speed manual gearbox.

Cool-looking dude

Unlike most of the little tykes at this end of the market the Kwid is actually quite a cool-looking dude thanks to its high-riding stance, black cladded, flared wheel arches, bold front grill emblazoned with Renault's diamond-shaped logo, its sharply creased bonnet and high waistline lines, all neatly rounded off with a body-coloured tailgate spoiler and black rubber trim on the rear bumper – a package designed to create an illusion that it has the same toughness and reliability normally associated with a genuine SUV.

Although clearly designed for the role of the budget-beater in Renault's local product line-up, the interior is not too shabby, although the quality is a tad bargain-basement. However, it is spacious and comfortable enough and well kitted out with goodies such as a MediaNav® navigation/multi-media system complete with large 7" (18cm) touchscreen display, radio and Bluetooth connectivity housed in its piano black centre console with chrome surround (only in the range-topping Dynamique).

The front seats are height-adjustable and the electronically assisted power steering, one-touch indicator, push-button front windows and the powerful air-conditioning with heater goes some way to enhance the drive. The car also brags with best-in-class boot space of 300 litres.



Fading appeal

Sadly, all the car's good points fade when you take its low safety features in consideration – only one airbag for the driver, no ABS brakes and an extremely low one star safety rating. Trying to fit a well-rated child seat in the rear is also not going to be easy, if not impossible.

At the media introduction I drove the new Kwid Expression on the undulating highways and byways north of King Shaka airport and on the road its initial kerbside appeal dimmed fairly quickly. While I quite liked the living quarters, particularly the high-riding driver's seat, it soon became obvious that the cabin is not well insulated, especially intrusive when pushing along at highway pace.

The gear changes can also be scratchy when trying to keep up the revs with quick cog-swapping. Probably because of the car's weight-saving structure it also feels decidedly unsettled, especially in cross-winds. The steering lacks feel and its vagueness is particularly noticeable in the corners where the wallowing, designed-for-the-city suspension and thin Marie biscuit tyres make matters worse.

The Kwid feels decidedly lazy and this will be even worse in the energy-sapping Highveld. Even at sea level we were kept quite busy with the gear lever trying to maintain impetus and coax a bit more go out of the fairly unenthusiastic coffee mill engine. Because of this it would also have made more sense to have a rev counter instead of the huge digital speedometer situated directly in front of the driver.

Renault claims fuel consumption of 4.71 litres/100 km for the Kwid although I reckon this will not be an easily attainable figure because of the high revs required to keep the power up. We were only two aboard and the car felt sluggish so I can only imagine what it will feel like in highway traffic with four largish 'Seffrikens' in the cabin.



Unsophisticated ride

The ride is unsophisticated enough on smooth surfaces, but on worn and patchy side-roads away from the highway the Kwid hops, skips and jumps to the point of irritation.

The quality of the body materials is also of some concern. The car sounds tinny, particularly when you shut the doors or boot-lid quite firmly, and the faux alloy plastic wheel trim also further distracts. As for the name Kwid (no doubt with strong links to India, where it is glued and screwed together) not even Renault's local suits could say where it originated.

Anybody shopping around at this end of the market would be well-advised to do some careful comparisons because there are at least three other entry-level cars with better safety features, including ABS brakes. Although the Kwid falls short in a number departments this will probably not be too much of a deterrent at the first new car segment of the market where price is nearly always the main purchase consideration.

In the Kwid's favour, it does come with a price-inclusive 5-year/150,000km mechanical warranty as well optional service plans. The models and prices are:

Kwid Expression 1.0-litre SCe - R 119,900

Kwid Dynamique 1.0-litre SCe - R 129,900

ABOUT HENRIE GEYSER

Henrie Geyser joined the online publishing industry through iafrica.com where he worked for five years as news editor and editor. He now freelances for a variety of print and online publications, on the subjects of cars, food, and travel, among others; and is a member of the South African Guild of Motoring Journalists. henrieg@africa.com

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