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Driven: refreshed Mahindra Xylo

Mahindra has quietly improved the suspension settings of the Xylo. We find out if it can roll with the punches

By Motoring World Desk | 5 January 2015



The Xylo, when launched, was the epitome of what a typical Indian customer wanted in a car: you could hardly get that much car for your money in the used market, and here was Mahindra, offering a brand new one! Such value! However, chinks in the armour soon appeared, and Mahindra fixed most of them with the refreshed Xylo. The interior was a nicer place to be, and the looks were more palatable as well. A lot of people still didn't like the way it rode and especially handled, though, so with the latest refresh, Mahindra has fixed just that.



In the interest of making the refreshed Xylo look, well, fresh, Mahindra has added a few touches to the exterior. The most prominent is the stickering on the side. It relieves the monotony of the large, smooth sheet metal that makes up the doors. At the rear there is a chrome strip that runs along the top of the recess that holds the number plate, to add premium-ness.

At the front the very tasteful slim chrome strip that runs along the top of the bumper, underscoring the grille and headlamps remains. However, opt for the top-spec H9 variant and Mahindra will give you a Xylo with a chrome strip that runs along the crease that makes up the clamshell bit of the bonnet, on either side of the logo. This element looks very out of place, and we hope Mahindra discontinues it. There is nothing else to differentiate the new Xylo from the previous one.



The last update to the Xylo involved a lot of interior improvements like better plastic quality and a different colour scheme, and Mahindra has taken this a little further as well. Opt for the top two variants, and you get a new instrument cluster with easy-to-read dials and many warning lights (my favourite being “Engine!”) but they also retain the centrally-mounted display that offers a surreal amount of information to the occupants of the car. There’s also a new colour for the faux wood - dark grey. There are small touches that impress, like the new, study door-handles that feel so much better.

There’s a little rubber strip in the recess for the occupant’s fingers that will be felt when the door is pulled shut that helps with the impression of a premium car as well. The top-spec H9 also gets voice-activated controls, something nothing else in the class offers. Lastly, the third row now has a 60:40 split. What this means is that the seat back has a split, but not the base. You can seat one or two people in the third row but you’ll have to then put the extra luggage on top of the folded seat back. This isn’t as practical as the Toyota Innova’s or Nissan Evalia’s 50:50 split, that gives you access to half the boot from the floor up.



- The driveline of the Xylo is untouched for the base variants. They are powered by the 2.5-litre turbodiesel that generates 94 bhp and 22.2 kgm. The H8 and H9 are powered by the 2.2-litre mHawk that generates 118 bhp and a very useful 28.6 kgm. It is a flexible engine that should be up to the task of hauling the loads that the Xylo will no doubt be tested by.



This is where Mahindra has made most of the refreshments this time around. There are new spring and damper rates, there are polyurethane bushes all around, and the rear now has an anti-roll bar as well. What all this mumbo-jumbo translates to is a sublime bad-road ride that is among the best in the country. On my short drive on the small-town roads around the Mahindra factory in Nashik, I barely slowed down for anything. Potholes, unfinished roads, no roads... they all were smothered with muted thuds from the suspension. I was impressed, very impressed. The Xylo's Achilles heel has always been its high-speed handling, though, so off I went onto the highway, and sat pretty at an indicated 120kph.

The new Xylo is surprisingly quiet at that speed, which helped because I had left my music behind. The Xylo isn't much affected by crosswinds, and the constant steering corrections at speeds above 100 kmph are now a thing of the past. The brakes have good bite but a little more progression would have been great. Steering feel is expectedly not very good, but that is something we're willing to forgive given that great ride. Mahindra has also seen fit to give the new Xylo some impressive shoes; in this case, all-terrain Duelers from Bridgestone.



By the time you read this, the excise duty cut will have been withdrawn by the government, making the Xylo more expensive. Still, at current prices not only does it cost nearly Rs 5 lakh less than the equivalent Toyota Innova, it also undercuts the Honda Mobilio by over Rs 40,000. That's great value for money, even before you factor in the great bad-road ability of the vehicle.