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Muck and Class



**SUZUKI'S JIMNY TAKES ON THE
PORSCHÉ CAYENNE OFF-ROAD**

ROUGH JUSTICE

Andrew Frankel compares the £70,000 Porsche Cayenne with the £10,000 Suzuki Jimny at Land Rover's gruelling off-road centre and is surprised by what he finds

PHOTOGRAPHY STAN PAPIOR





know what you're thinking. You could pitch Manchester United against your local's B-side and not find a greater mismatch. But Porsche's £68,970 Cayenne Turbo versus Suzuki's £9980 Jimny? The most expensive off-roader in the country versus the cheapest. What on earth could be learned from that encounter?

If you kept the agenda strictly to an off-road brief, quite a lot, I suspect. And let me say now, before anyone misunderstands the motives of bringing this oddest of couples together, that I know as well as anyone that few will ever take their Cayenne off road. Likewise, no one with Jimny money is going to spend much time poring over the Porsche's options list. Nevertheless, Porsche has made much of the Cayenne's off-road ability and constructed a punishing off-road course at its launch to prove it. Clearly it's important to Porsche that the Cayenne be seen as a bona fide off-roader, so should it not, at least, be able to match the cross-country standards of the cheapest off-roader of all?

Also, while those who buy a 4.5-litre V8 450bhp Cayenne Turbo may never use its off-road ability, that is not to say they are ambivalent to its existence; it's like top speed – few Ferrari or Lamborghini buyers ever get near their cars' outright potential, but to a man and woman, they want to know it's there.

As for the little 1.3-litre, 79bhp Suzuki, we were equally interested in discovering whether its back-to-basics approach – no locking diffs or electronic stability systems here – could get it even onto the same score sheet as the techno-wizardry that governs the Porsche's every move. Certainly its light weight and compact dimensions would seem to give it two distinct advantages over the Porsche right from the start.

To find out more, we decamped to Eastnor Castle, a 5000-acre site Land Rover has been using to test its off-roaders since development work began on the original Range Rover back in the late 1960s. We had Land Rover instructors to take us round and make sure we didn't do anything stupid, and a fully tricked-up Defender to show exactly what was possible. As for the Porsche and Suzuki, they were as supplied by their respective press offices and as they'd be driven by their owners – no underbody shields, high air intakes or dedicated off-road tyres.

Low ratios engaged, we headed into the forest. The first obstacle was designed to test axle articulation – the car's ability to keep its tyres in contact with the ground over extreme undulations – and both failed in this regard by a huge margin, the Porsche waving a front wheel like an admonishing finger at those who chose to subject it to such undignified treatment. The Suzuki was only a little better, and when it had to tilt from one side to the other, during which the car would be tipping, precariously balanced on opposing front and rear wheels, its narrow track meant it felt a whole lot worse. The Porsche, despite weighing comfortably more than two Jimnys, used its greater width and softer springs to ease gently and securely from one side to the other. Next, we tried to drive the cars up



Little Jimny punched well above its weight in the mud; engine refinement and interior quality not important in this test



following ruts made deep by more than 30 years of Land Rovers that often led us through deep mud and deeper water; yet both cars rarely seemed short of grip or traction, despite their distinctly road-oriented tyres. Occasionally a light would flash on the Porsche dash to politely inform you its electronics were hard at work, but both cars splashed, clambered and waded through courses designed to test Land Rovers, and without significant problem. There were much harder routes we skipped for fear of damaging the cars, but if you ever doubted that a car like a Cayenne could take you places no normal road car could, doubt no more. The truth is the Porsche never looked like getting stuck, while any conventional car would have failed to negotiate the first object and, likely as not, cause itself considerable damage in the process.

◆ a steep slope, made loose and dusty by many weeks without rain. Both managed it, but while the Suzuki crested the top with no greater effort apparent than had it been on tarmac, you could hear and see the Porsche, with its centre differential locked, thinking very hard about how much torque to apportion to which axle and which tyres to individually brake. It made it, but only after some scrabbling and loss of momentum. On this evidence it would seem that all the electronics in the world are a poor substitute for a slim waistline.

We then hacked deeper into the forest,

Yet, if I could follow the course again, I'd take the Jimny without hesitation. Making a small car compact and light is nothing like so clever as designing traction systems such as those fitted to the

THE DADDY OF THEM ALL: THE LAND ROVER DEFENDER

"IF GETTING THERE is all that matters," says David Lane, one of Land Rover's chief instructors at Eastnor, "you'd still take the Defender."

You may think there is a sizeable element of "he would say that, wouldn't he" in such a remark, but the question he was answering referred only to the off-road abilities of LR's own products. Though the Range Rover's adjustable suspension means it actually has more ground clearance, the Defender's compact dimensions and ludicrous approach and departure angles mean it can still go places denied to the latest and greatest of the luxury off-roaders.

Just to demonstrate what a Defender can do, Lane takes it up the steep dusty slope that the Cayenne crested only with a run-up, and then with some difficulty. Halfway up he parks the Defender, chats for a while and then moves off as if he were driving out of Sainsbury's.

Of course, the test is not fair – the Defender is on pure off-road tyres – but there's no doubt in Lane's mind that, 56 years on, this Land Rover is still the supreme off-roader.

This does, however, present a sizeable problem – how do you follow its act? It's a problem compounded by the fact that the Defender's biggest customer – the British military – doesn't want it to change. But private customers are asking for something with the same off-road ability, but with rather more on-road civility. It's a difficult question, and one that may well be answered by two Defenders: the existing car (or one very like it) for die-hards and army types, and a new machine for those wanting a shade more sophistication.





Factfile

	PORSCHE CAYENNE TURBO	SUZUKI JIMNY JLX
How much?		
Price	£68,970	£9980
How fast?		
0-60mph	5.4sec	16.8sec
Top speed (claimed)	158mph	87mph
How thirsty?		
Urban	12.9mpg	30.1mpg
Extra urban	23.7mpg	44.1mpg
Combined	17.9mpg	37.7mpg
CO₂ emissions	378g/km	179g/km
How big?		
Weight	2355kg	1039kg
Engine		
Layout	8 cyls in vee, 4511cc	4 cyls in line, 1298cc
Max power	450bhp at 6000rpm	79bhp at 6200rpm
Max torque	457lb ft at 2250rpm	77lb ft at 4500rpm
Power to weight	191bhp per tonne	76bhp per tonne

Porsche, but ultimately not even their talents allied to more than five times the power of the Jimny can make up the ground lost by the Porsche's size and weight. Try racing a Jack Russell and a thoroughbred stallion around your living room and you'll see why.

So you were right all along, this encounter was unfair, but to the Porsche, not the Suzuki. The Jimny has more of the two essential ingredients of any off-roader – loose-surface traction and manoeuvrability – than the Porsche and, given their respective weights and shapes, it would be remarkable were it any other way. That the Porsche will even follow the Jimny across a course as tough as this is a testament to how hard Weissach's most famous sports car maker has tried to give the Cayenne the kind of credibility off-road that its other cars enjoy on the road. Criticising the Cayenne has become a fairly popular pastime among motoring types of late (myself included), but despite it being outshone by a £10k Jimny, I feel disinclined to have a go at its

off-road abilities. Truth is, it got closer to the little Suzuki than any of us had really expected.

As for the Jimny, even Land Rover's instructors were impressed by its mountain-goat agility. This is not just the cheapest off-roader on the market, for pure off-road ability it is also one of the best – a simple slice of authentic giant-killer, honestly conceived and impressively executed. You might not want to drive it much further than the pub on the road, but leave the tarmac behind and you'll need a rare breed of 4x4 to convincingly beat it. ●



Despite being shamed in several exercises, Cayenne is still accomplished off road; turbo V8 provides astonishing shove



AUTOCAR VERDICT

Luxury's no match for sheer agility when it comes to the rough stuff

Nimble as a mountain goat: when the going gets tough, Jimny'll fix it for you



For further information on the giant-killing Suzuki Jimny, or any vehicle in the Suzuki range, please call

01892 70 70 07

or visit Suzuki On-line

www.suzuki.co.uk

