

The new Renault Sandero - a Stepway in the right direction

 By [Ané Theron](#)

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2017 is Renault's best year to date, so far. Its pillar models are doing far better than expected, with the one-airbag, no-ABS Renault KWID in such demand that the French automaker can't keep up.

For February, the comely Renault Sandero was in 7th position overall in the local top ten best-selling passenger vehicle list, less than nine days before the SA launch of the face-lifted Sandero even took place. Renault's February sales figure of 681 Sanderos reigned supreme over the Datsun Go, as well as the other entry-level contenders such as the Ford Figo and VW Polo Vivo.

I attended the local launch near the Cradle of Humankind last week, and was reminded as to why this little runabout is packing such a punch in the popularity stakes. The new one will undoubtedly be punching even harder. Here's why:



1. It's a more dapper-looking Frenchman

The outgoing Sandero was sufficiently attractive, but the new Sandero makes more of an urban style statement. All models benefit from a reshaped nose, grille, and headlamps with C-shaped daytime running lamps. Other changes are hard to spot, but the fog lamp housings look different, and at the rear, the tail lamps gain the C-shape as well.

I find the grille design of the entry-level Sandero Expression (R159,900) more attractive than that of the Stepway.



The interior has been upgraded and enhanced, with different trims and a redesigned front fascia. The practical placement of window controls in the doors (instead of on the front console) is also new. The interior is no Audi A1, but for what you're paying you really shouldn't complain. Leather seats are a 10K option in the Stepway Dynamique.



2. You can be counting pennies and still afford an SUV

The Stepway always offered a raised ride height and other outdoorsy details, and since the SUV-lifestyle is all the rage right now, the flagship Sandero Stepway Dynamique cross-hatch is now joined with another Stepway-variant: the more affordable Sandero Stepway Expression, priced at R174,900.

The Sandero Dynamique hatchback will be falling away completely – Renault found that people would rather buy an entry-level SUV than a more luxuriously-specced Sandero hatch. In the Stepway Dynamique (R189,900), you can adjust the height of the driver's seat for maximum visibility up ahead.



3. It's loaded with technology unheard of in this price range

The new Stepway Dynamique is kitted out with Renault's MediaNav 7-inch touchscreen system, featuring integrated navigation. Other creature comforts such as cruise control, rear-park assist and electrically operated door mirrors are thrown in as well. Even the humble Sandero Expression (R159,900) gets a 2-DIN integrated radio CD MP3 with a USB port, Bluetooth telephony and music streaming, fingertip controls, front power windows, and a gearshift indicator as well as Eco Mode.



4. Its fuel economy is exemplary

Agreed, the turbocharged 900cc engine is not going to give you a jolt in the backside when you pull away from stop streets, but it's perfectly sufficient for town as well as open-road driving. Hitting the winding roads of the Magaliesberg proved to be a fun exercise. However, going around a slow corner in first gear is sometimes needed when you think second would have sufficed. You quickly get used to the turbo lag in first and second gear, and you adapt your driving style accordingly. We only spent 180km inside the 66kW Sandero, but it was a relatively vivacious 180km, while our fuel economy returned a fantastic figure of 5.6 litres per 100km.

5. It's suited to our poorly-maintained roads

The Sandero is loved by rental companies, who prefer their cars to be robust and capable of handling a fair bit of everyday punishment. The 16-inch FLEX wheels that the Stepway-variants are shod with, are especially designed to withstand those

pesky potholes.



6. It's the safest car in its class

If you needed one reason to convince someone to go for the Sandero Expression rather than the bestselling, more expensive Polo Vivo, the safety features are it.

In this class, not even ABS is a given, but every Sandero is equipped with ABS as well as EBD and Brake Assist, Hill Start Assist, and (drum roll please!) ESP (Electronic Stability Program) with ASR (Anti-Skid Regulation).

Sandero and Stepway Expression-variants get two airbags, and the Stepway Dynamique gets four. Younger, inexperienced drivers need safer cars, and Renault realises this – let's hope this way of thinking is continued into the next KWID.



7. Aftersales service, warranty and service plan

Once again very competitive, beating the VW Polo Vivo, Ford Figo and Toyota Etios with its warranty of five years/150,000km and its two-year/30,000km service plan. Its parts basket is also the lowest of the bunch mentioned above.

Parts availability is no longer an issue since the Nissan/Renault alliance. According to the Kinsey report, the Sandero is also one of the cheapest cars to maintain, service and repair.

ABOUT ANÉ THERON

Ané Theron started her career in motoring journalism at Rapport, and moved over to City Press after a few years, before settling into a full time career at AutoTrader SA. She's at her happiest driving along twisty coastal roads, or crawling across rugged terrain in a beefy 4x4, or driving through the desolate Karoo. And taking photos along the way, of course.

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