

11 Smart and easy

Renault gives the Duster some new cosmetics and an AMT gearbox too. So, is it more appealing?





Renault Duster facelift

What is it? Now with an automatic gearbox and refreshed interiors and exteriors. **Price** Rs 12.87 lakh (ex-showroom, Delhi) **On sale** Now

THE DUSTER WAS Renault's first Indian superstar, with the SUV setting sales charts on fire. However, in this country of SUV lovers, the segment has grown in leaps and bounds, and several rivals have come in to give it stiff competition. So, the French carmaker has now given the capable Duster a facelift and also added a new automated manual transmission. Let's take a look at what's fresh.

On the outside, there's new detailing for the headlights and the grille. Then there are new chunky scuff plates front and rear, along with fatter roof rails that add to the SUV look.

Inside, there's plenty that's different; the centre console gets glossy black plastic and the AC vents get chrome rings around them. Set in richer fabrics now, the front seats also get armrests for added comfort. Also, the range-topping versions now get automatic climate control. And the functionality of the touchscreen infotainment system is enhanced with voice recognition (but only for paired Apple phones). A rear-view camera has been added as well. Overall quality has also improved but it still



Chrome-ringed vents and glossy black plastic console refresh dash.

doesn't match up to rivals like the Hyundai Creta. Some annoying bits remain the same; the driver's seat height still cannot be set easily while you are seated in it. But the mirror adjustment switches have been moved to the door (it was placed under the handbrake) and the side mirrors can now be folded electronically.

Renault continues to use a 102.6bhp 1.6-litre petrol engine, and a 1.5-litre diesel motor that puts out 83.8bhp

and 108.5bhp. What's new is the AMT gearbox on the front-wheel-drive 108.5bhp car. Mild throttle inputs see predictable gearshifts from the Easy-R six-speed gearbox. And although shifts are not seamless, compared with other AMT gearboxes, this one easily feels among the best. It does not jolt you on its way to the next cog, being rather gentle. In manual mode, this gearbox provides the same confidence expected of a manual car while

driving down a twisty road. The hill-start assist function is also useful, especially when stuck in traffic on an incline. Most importantly, the AMT gearbox doesn't adversely affect the car's fuel efficiency.

Handling manners are predictable and the Duster continues to provide a surefooted feel. The AWD version comes with independent suspension at the rear, which feels a bit more supple; but this version does not get an AMT gearbox.

Renault has priced the fully loaded RxZ version with the AMT 'box at Rs 12.87 lakh and the one with AWD at Rs 13.57 lakh. With the refreshed Duster, the French carmaker has addressed some of the weaknesses of the older SUV and additionally, also provided more appeal and ease of use. This makes the already popular SUV an even better buy.

RAYMAND BUHARIWALLA



S-cut LED tail-light neatly detailed.



Manual shift mode on AMT gearbox.

BUYER'S FILE

Engine size	1.5 (D)
Price	Rs 11.66-12.87 lakh*
Power	108.5bhp at 4000rpm
Torque	24.9kgm at 1750rpm
Gearbox	6-speed AMT
0-100kph	14.01sec

*EX-SHOWROOM, DELHI