

Just to prove a utility vehicle can offer ATV rivalling abilities, this six-wheeler is running two up, with full weather protection thrown in for good measure. There is also room for a load in the cargo bay on the back too. A machine like this, with prices from around £7,300, offers a lot more for the money than a top of the range ATV.



All Terrain Vehicles - Worth another look?

James de Havilland weighs up the pros and cons of ATVs.

For a large number of golf courses, a utility vehicle with a petrol, diesel, electric or even LPG fuelled power unit remains the default personnel transport tool. ATVs now come in variants with platforms, diesel power or even as road legal 'quadricycles'. Is this enough to make them worth considering as an alternative?

Do a few simple sums. Take a box stock petrol working ATV in the popular 350-400cc size range. Opt for a two-wheel drive manual model such as a Honda Foreman 350, buy a trailer to go with it and the combination will weight in at under £5,000. For a similar amount of money, a petrol utility vehicle, such as the Kawasaki Mule 600, has room for two and comes with a 180kg capacity load platform as standard.

Spend a little more and well respected entry level utility models - specifically targeting the 'golf' market - offer even more. Take the E-Z-Go MPT1200G from Ransomes-Jacobsen. Again offering two seats and a healthy 363kg cargo bay capacity, this simple tool again makes an ATV seem costly.

A further twist is the fact that an ATV 'rider' should wear a helmet. Although course risk assessment may deem this unnecessary, the word 'helmet' and 'ATV' are considered by many to be linked.

At this stage, it is easy to see why ATVs have struggled to make much of an impact as working tools on golf courses. Add the fact that there has mostly been only the choice of petrol models - LPG conversions excepted - plus restricted choice when it comes to platform equipped units, and it is case closed for ATVs. You may as well stop reading now.

Before you do however, there are a few twists and turns that may make keeping an open mind worthwhile. First up are 'quadricycles'. In simple terms, these are ATVs homologated for road use. Fitted with road legal lighting, indicators and being allowed to carry a pillion passenger, these machines have taken Europe by storm. In France, the 'quadricycle' market is put at 40,000 units a year.



At the sober end of the utility ATV scale are machines like the Kawasaki LVF300. Available in both two and four wheel drive versions, this five speed manual model is the ideal type of working bike. Simple, easy to use and light enough to nip around on without causing damage, these models are priced from around £3,900 and will tow a decent 300kg

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In the UK, these machines are also starting to sell well. Seen as a safer alternative to a motorcycle, a 'quad' can be used as a ride to work machine by anyone with a car driving licence. What is more, this same machine can also be used off road, just like a 'normal' ATV.

A course separated from its driving range, for example, by a short road trip could find this type of machine a useful tool. Then again, a road legal Kubota RTV or similar would arguably be more useful, particularly in cab form with room for two and a flashing beacon to help other road users see it.

If the 'quadricycle' argument fails, how about diesel power? This is not a new idea, Polaris having produced its own in-house diesel in the late 1990s with the company's then UK importers, EP Barrus, offering its own D-Bat models before that. In six-wheeler form, with load bay at the rear, these latter machines did sell to a few courses.

For several years, independent ATV maker Diesel Quads has been producing a diesel ATV, the Diablo. Currently powered by a meaty Yanmar 850cc power unit, these CVT transmission models are produced in limited numbers in North Wales. They cannot be compared to a mainstream petrol ATV for refinement, but their simple build could well appeal.

It is also worth pointing out that it is possible to buy an ATV with a rear load platform. This type of machine is again, not new, with Yamaha starting the ball rolling with its now long deceased Pro-Hauler back in the 1980s.

Polaris also offered its aforementioned six-wheeler models up until a few years ago too, its role having since been taken over by the six-wheel Ranger utility. So if you want a load platform, current choice is limited to machines that can include Can-Am, formerly Bombardier, Outlander TX models.

Although ATVs continue to struggle to take on utility vehicles that does not mean they will not fit into some equipment buying patterns. As always, an open mind could well see an ATV providing useful service.



Massey Ferguson had yet to announce details of its diesel powered ATVs at the time of writing. As it stands, the company offer a range of what it brands AgTVs, these models having a SpeedRack system that enables attachments, including load platforms, to be added without the need for tools. A 400cc road legal CVT automatic MF400 is priced at £5,300 plus VAT

A nice sunny day, no need for a coat and a quick run across the dunes to check a problem on the ninth green. Do this job on an ATV, and you should wear a helmet. A definite minus in the eyes of many potential ATV buyers. But how many utility vehicles have as much pep as the pictured Yamaha Kodiak 450? This £5,800 machine will pull nearly half a ton and accelerate far faster than most will ever need ▼



▲ Entry level utility units include the E-Z-Go MPT1200G from Ransomes-Jacobsen. Simple, economical and well proven, this type of tool combines a light footprint with a versatile rear load area. An ATV will struggle to compete unless the terrain turns nasty or rutted tracks are in the job mix





Although it looks just like a conventional ATV, this 'quadricycle' from Taiwanese manufacturer Kymco, is fully homologated for road use and, on its third birthday, will need an MOT just like any other road vehicle. With a sticker price of £3,159 (exVAT) the pictured, MXU300RL is well priced for a 270cc machine, but as a working tool it is best viewed as a motorised pair of legs



A cargo box can be fitted to a number of ATV models, but don't expect massive capacity or dimensions. The Can-Am Outlander Max will only carry around 95kg, its high load height also working against it. But fit a trailer as well, and the package starts to make more sense. A 650 Outlander, which is a really powerful ATV with easily enough torque to handle a capacity load, will cost from £6,800



Agricultural users have long asked for a diesel powered ATV, this sector accounting for the bulk of utility bike sales. The Diesel Quads Diablo 850 answers this call, the machine having a dual range CVT automatic transmission and selectable 4WD as standard. It could well appeal to course managers looking for an economical alternative to a utility vehicle, with a price of around £6,500

Another road legal quad, this time showing the other extreme of the power scale. Powered by a fuel injected 760cc V-twin, the Polaris Sportsman 800EFI, weighs in at an eye watering £7315 before VAT. It will get to places that will leave many a utility vehicle stranded, but courses with this demand are few and far between