



Daewoo Nubira



What's new?

Styling revisions, subtle interior improvements and mechanical refinements take Nubira into the new millennium.

IT'S ONLY BEEN A COUPLE OF YEARS SINCE the Nubira's launch, but Daewoo is obviously keen to keep its mid-range saloon and estate models fresh, and not let them slip farther behind well-established but costlier rivals.

Engineers and designers at the company's Technical Centre in Worthing have given it an obvious facelift, as well as technical tweaks under the skin. The front of the car has been lengthened by 18mm to improve crumple zone protection (well that's what it says here) and has been redesigned with a new, flatter chrome grille and upward-sweeping projection-style headlamps. At the rear, the saloon has been given a more angular look, with bigger tail lamps and a reshaped boot lid that's now held open by gas struts.

Inside, recontouring of the trim means that a little more space has been liberated – at least in the claimed extra

shoulder width (3cm) and front and rear hiproom (5cm and 3cm respectively) – but you'll be hard put to notice the 4mm (sic) of additional rear legroom. Even so, there's good kneeroom and foot space, generous width and a nicely angled backrest. Only decent thigh support is lacking because you sit rather low. As a result, the CDX model's centre armrest is all the more welcome, as it provides more lateral support.

The only changes under the bonnet are to the engine mountings (for greater refinement – they reduce noise and vibration) and the engine management system, which is said to make the new-bira five per cent more fuel efficient than the old one.

The 133bhp two-litre we drove – mainly in city traffic – had a respectable turn of speed (Daewoo claims 0-62mph in 9sec) but, despite that new engine management system, still suffered from nasty driveline “shunt” as the accelerator was released and applied – a long-standing gripe. It also sounded rather growly beyond 3000rpm, although it's a quiet, easy-going engine when driven moderately.

The 105bhp 1.6 is no sluggard when you rev it, but below 3000rpm it's decidedly doleful and on gradients, you often need to snick down from fifth to third for snappy overtaking. More's the pity, therefore, that the

gearchange isn't quite as smooth and slick as we would like, although the light clutch is fine.

Thanks to retuned springs and dampers, the ride is subtly improved to give easy, untroubled progress on smooth surfaces. Some fidgeting remains on broken B-roads, but the suspension manages to soak up the most common sort of surface imperfections rather well. It's no Mondeo, but it's getting there.

Handling remains nimble and surefooted, and straight line feel has been improved by a revised steering set-up. This reduces the level of power assistance as speed is increased, so it's light when parking and weights up on the open road.

It's unfortunate that the brake pedal is rather lifeless, because the system itself works well and is further improved by a new, four-channel ABS system featuring EBD, which distributes the braking effort to the wheel or wheels with the greatest grip.

The Nubira driver now has a much better deal thanks to different seats with longer cushions and improved shaping, as well as front and rear cushion-height adjustment. Steering wheel height-only adjustment is unusually generous, as well. There's also a new one-piece facia, incorporating a redesigned instrument cluster featuring a big, bold speedometer and a smaller tachometer containing a green "econozone". Minor switchgear has been relocated for greater convenience, although initially it's easy to confuse the facia lighting and beam resetting controls.

Heating ducts have been introduced for the rear compartment, and indeed the more-stylish cabin is a nicer place for everyone now, with higher quality plastics

and trim, reduced vibration and harshness, and greater hush brought about by improved sound-damping measures.

Both SE and CDX versions continue to be extremely well equipped, with items such as air conditioning, twin airbags, remote-control central locking, electric front windows and door mirrors, plus an alarm and immobiliser on all versions. New items of standard equipment include chrome interior door handles, a radio aerial incorporated in the saloon's back window, a trio of three-point rear seatbelts on the saloon, and a metallic facia finish on the CDX.

As usual with all Daewoo models, the Nubira is backed by three-year/60,000-mile free servicing and comprehensive warranty, plus three years' AA roadside recovery, as part of an impressive customer support package.

VERDICT

We'll let you make up your own mind about the revised styling, but a lot of small but significant changes have made the new Nubira a considerably more comfortable and refined car. It also has a much more appealing interior that continues to boast an impressive tally of equipment.

While it remains some way off the pace set by established rivals in terms of engine refinement and ride comfort, it's catching up fast. Indeed, it's far from disgraced in such company and, of course, puts virtually all of them to shame in the provision of after-sales peace of mind.

FACTS AND FIGURES

| | 1.6 | 2.0 |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Body style | | four-door saloon and estate |
| Trim level | SE | CDX |
| Engine | 4 cylinder, 1598cc, double OHC, 16 valves 105bhp at 5800rpm | 4 cylinder, 1998cc, double OHC, 16 valves 132bhp at 5400rpm |
| Transmission | five-speed manual, front-wheel drive (four-speed automatic optional on 2.0) 20.5mph per 1000rpm | 21.5mph per 1000rpm |
| Suspension - front | independent by MacPherson coil spring/damper struts and an anti-roll bar | |
| - rear | independent by coil spring damper struts, multi links and an anti-roll bar | |
| Steering | rack and pinion with hydraulic power assistance | |
| Wheels | 5.5Jx14 steel with 185/65R14 tyres | 6.0Jx15 steel with 195/55R15 tyres |
| Brakes | ventilated discs front, drums rear | ventilated discs front/solid discs rear |
| | ABS standard | ABS standard |
| Height x width | saloon 449 x 170cm; estate 455 x 170cm | |