



Daewoo Tacuma



NO MAJOR MOTOR MAKER CAN afford to be without a compact MPV these days, and Daewoo is no exception. Cue the Tacuma. It's name, incidentally, means "joyful lifestyle" in Afrikaans (don't ask!)

Looking remarkably similar to the Nissan Almera Tino, apart from its scary "Hannibal Lecter" grille, the newcomer is powered by either a 1.8 or a two-litre petrol engine, with a 1.9 diesel to follow this autumn.

Like its five-seater rivals, Tacuma has three seats across the back. The centre one slides to give more elbow room and its backrest folds forward to form a table. All three seats can be folded up and removed or simply tumbled forward to more than double the volume of load space which, in conventional "boot" form, is a useful size and shape with only a shallow rear sill.

Passengers slide gracefully to and from the seats and, once installed, are treated to a relaxed backrest angle and ample room for heads and knees. Foot space is a bit tight, though. There are numerous drinks holders, cubby holes and underseat and underfloor storage areas, as well as aircraft-style tables on the front seatbacks. There's even the option of a compact roof-mounted Sony PlayStation to keep youngsters amused. On the 2.0CDX, the front passenger's seat conveniently swivels through 180 degrees to face the rear passengers.

The driver is provided with height adjustments to the seat cushion (via handwheels) and steering wheel,

together with a practical facia design with clear instruments and convenient minor controls. Rear three-quarter vision is marred, however, by the upswept bodywork and prominent (though removable) rear head restraints.

We drove only the 2.0CDX, which is a brisk and pleasantly quiet motorway cruiser (tyre and wind noise are low, too), but it becomes distinctly vocal when you rev it hard for lively progress. It's also spoilt by uncouth throttle snatch and irritating rev hang-up when you lift off the accelerator.

Although the ride feels comfortably settled on smooth roads, it becomes somewhat ruffled on broken tarmac. There's noticeable body tilt when cornering briskly, too, and neither the steering nor the handling is as sharp and responsive as the best of the opposition's.

VERDICT

There's a half decent MPV lurking within the Tacuma that simply needs careful fettling to bring out. What it lacks dynamically, however, it makes up for with an arm-long list of standard equipment, an unrivalled after-sales support package and a price tag that's thousands of pounds cheaper than the competition's. Some would say you can't argue with that.

AT A GLANCE

considering size, price and rivals

Controls/displays	★★★★○
Handling/steering	★★○○○
Comfort	★★★★○
Space/practicality	★★○○○

BRIEF SPECIFICATION 2.0CDX

engine 1998cc, 4 cylinder, double overhead camshafts, 16 valves. 119bhp/130 lb ft. Multi-point petrol injection, 60-litre fuel tank
transmission 5-speed manual (4-speed automatic optional)
suspension front: MacPherson coil spring/damper struts. Rear: torsion bar and compound links
steering hydraulic power assisted
brakes discs front, drums rear. ABS and EBD standard
wheels/tyres alloy with 195/60R15H tyres. Full-size spare
0-62mph* man: 10.8sec auto: 12.4sec
max speed* man: 112mph auto: 104mph
official combined mpg man: 31.4 auto: 26.2
**maker's figure*

LIKES AND GRIPES

a lot of motor for the money
 two depowered front airbags
 usefully compact turning circles
 tilt-adjustable head restraints

small, fiddly radio controls
 centre rear lap belt only
 elbow hits armrest when gearchanging
 weak gas struts – tailgate droops

THE TACUMA RANGE

body 5-door compact MPV
trim levels 1.8SE, 2.0CDX
engines petrol: 4cyl 1.8/97bhp, 2.0/119bhp
 diesel: 1.9 available autumn 2000
drive front-wheel drive, 5-speed manual gearbox (4-speed automatic option on 2.0CDX)
notable features ABS, air conditioning, numerous storage areas, electric/heated mirrors, alarm and immobiliser, Daewoo's customer support package.
 CDX: alloy wheels, swivelling front passenger's seat. Options: satnav, Sony PlayStation