

Daewoo Leganza

Featuring 2.0CDX saloon



BUT FOR THE DISTINCTIVE NEW corporate grille and “bug-eye” headlamps adorning its snout, it could be a Toyota, a Nissan or some sort of Hyundai. In fact, this elegant looking saloon is Daewoo’s latest upper-medium contender. It’s the largest and most sophisticated of a trio of all-new models replacing the South Korean company’s Cavalier-based Espero and Astra-derived Nexia models, and is ready to slug it out with stalwarts like the Mondeo, Peugeot 406 and Vectra on a much more equal footing. However, the two-litre, four-door saloon (styled by Giugiaro of ItalDesign) stands some 19cm longer than its Ford and Vauxhall rivals, so it’s more like a Honda Accord or the new Passat in overall length.

Looking significantly more stylish than the outgoing Espero, the Leganza is not only extremely well equipped, it represents a significant stride forward on its stop-gap predecessor. Two versions are offered, SX and CDX, both powered by a two-litre 16-valve engine (co-developed with GM Holden of Australia), connected to the front wheels via a five-speed manual gearbox or, optionally, a four-speed automatic.

Standard equipment on both versions includes power steering, anti-lock brakes, twin airbags, air conditioning, a keyless entry alarm and an electric sunroof, while the CDX adds traction and climate controls, upgraded seat coverings, alloy wheels and front foglamps, plus a sprinkling of wood and chrome detailing around the cabin.

The twin-cam power unit produces a vigorous 132bhp, along with 136 lb ft of torque at a lofty

4600rpm. So there’s no shortage of get-up-and-go, but while it’s commendably content to trickle along at low speeds, it prefers plenty of revs to fully exploit the lively pace on offer. Flat out, we orbited the test track at a comfortably brisk 126mph, while the 30–70mph through-the-gears sprint was reeled off with similar swiftness in under 10 seconds.

Despite slightly low overall gearing, the Leganza cruises in a quiet, civilised manner, while its shortish stride aids easy-going, brisker-than-average progress in the higher ratios. This is no bad thing, perhaps, as the somewhat notchy gearchange (with awkward reverse gear selection, as well) discourages too much cog-swapping. The clutch is fine, though – light, easy and smooth, like the rest of the controls. Opening the tap unleashes purposeful, if not the sweetest sounding, orchestrations from up front, but for most of the time, the Leganza is well muted, with only our test car’s slightly over-eager throttle action (punctuating smooth progress in stop-start traffic), striking an off-beat note.

With a height-adjustable seat for the driver, tilt- (though not reach-) adjustable steering, lumbar support adjusters for both front occupants and a sizeable left footrest, there’s little to criticise about the driving position. On top of this, the bold, clear dials and switches, a helpfully offset handbrake and the Leganza’s roomy ambience are all fumble-free and friendly. Daewoo has also managed to introduce some curvy, flowing elegance to the cabin. It’s not quite in the Audi or BMW league, we have to say, but it’s a significant advance on the Espero’s rather homespun interior looks. Our test car’s pale grey leather seating

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PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds

mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS		1.7	3.6	6.3	9.4
IN 5TH GEAR		5.4	10.8	16.2	22.6
IN 4TH GEAR		4.0	7.6	11.8	16.1

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES		11.6/8.0		10.8/7.8	
			10.8/7.6		11.8/8.5

Maximum speeds

REVS PER MINUTE	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	1	3	5
		5950*		6480	5815	32	77	126
						53	110	
								mph

*for best acceleration

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade: unleaded Premium, 95 octane

Type of use – with air conditioning off *	mpg
In the city – heavy traffic	18
In the country – quiet driving	39
Typical mpg overall	30

Realistic tank capacity/range 59 litres/390 miles

(based on fuel gauge/warning lamp and filling station experience – not nominal tank capacity)

*with air conditioning switched on, consumption will increase by 2–4% in winter and 4–8% in summer

FOR THE TECHNICAL

ENGINE

Type front-mounted, transverse four cylinder in line, with iron block and alloy head; five main bearings

Size 86.0 x 86.0mm = 1998cc

Power 132bhp at 5400rpm

Torque 136 lb ft at 4600rpm

Valves twin (belt-driven) overhead camshafts actuating four valves per cylinder via hydraulic tappets

Fuel/ignition sequential multi-point petrol injection integrated with programmed distributorless ignition. 65-litre fuel tank, with low-level warning lamp

TRANSMISSION

Type five-speed manual, front-wheel drive

Mph per 1000rpm 21.6 in 5th, 17.0 in 4th

Rpm at 70mph 3240 in top gear

CHASSIS

Suspension front: independent by MacPherson damper/struts, coil springs, lower wishbones and anti-roll bar. Rear: independent by coil spring/damper struts, dual links and anti-roll bar. Telescopic dampers front and rear

Steering rack and pinion with hydraulic power assistance (speed-sensitive on CDX); 3.2 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 11.4m between kerbs, with 17.6m circle for one turn of the wheel

Wheels 6J steel (alloy on CDX) with 205/65R15 tyres (Bridgestone Potenza RE-88 on test car); full sized spare

Brakes ventilated discs front, solid discs rear with vacuum servo and electronic ABS (standard on all models)

SAFETY AND SECURITY FEATURES

Assessed on their effectiveness and convenience (the more black blobs the better)

Seatbelts

front ●●●○○ rear ●●○○○

Head restraints

front ●●●○○ rear ●●○○○

Interior

safety padding ●●●○○

driver's airbag? ☒

other airbags? (1) ☒

side impact protection ●●●○○

Door locking

central locking? ☒

remote control? ☒

auto window closure? ☒

deadlocks? ☒

Luggage

secure from interior/hidden

from view ●●○○○

Alarm

engine immobilised? ☒

Fuel anti-spillage

●●●○○

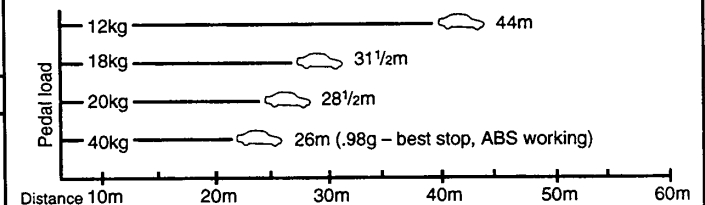
☒ standard on test car ☐ factory fitted option ☒ not available

BRAKES

Pedal feel ●●○○○ Behaviour in an emergency ●●○○○ Handbrake ●●○○○

Dry road stopping distance from 50mph (with ABS)

(A good-to-average best stop with ABS is about 26m at 15-20kg pedal load)

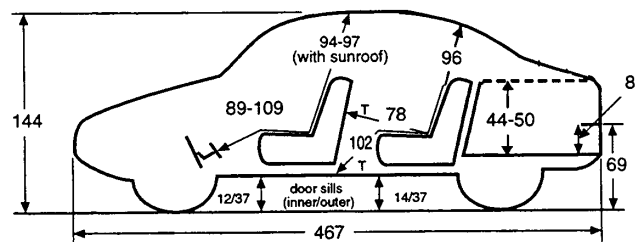


Fade test: pedal load required for a moderate (34m/.75g) stop: 15kg at start of test, 16kg at end of test. (Ideal brakes show no change)

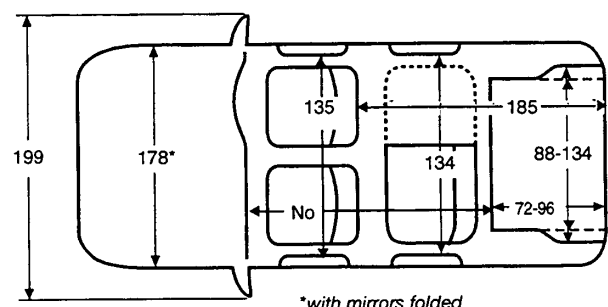
MEASUREMENTS

Centimetres

Four-door



T: typical back seat space behind medium-sized front occupants



*with mirrors folded

and driver's "electric chair" option (£500), added to the cabin's neat, executive aura.

Lotus-tuned to optimise appeal for European tastes, the Leganza's suspension provides a soft, cosseting, though at times floaty, passage over most surfaces, marred only by a degree of ever-present fidgetiness and bouts of occasionally prominent tyre noise over coarse tarmac. The car corners with all the surefooted poise and grip you would expect, given its generous tyre size, although even the CDX's speed-sensitive power-assistance (which the cheaper SX lacks) feels a shade lifeless and uninformative through the wheel. Impressed with its quiet, civilised road manners though we are, the Leganza doesn't cover the ground with quite the unruffled ease and decorum of a Peugeot 406 or Mondeo.

The all-disc, ABS-equipped brake set-up provides powerful, reassuring stops in normal use, with impressive near-1.0g retardation *in extremis*. As a minor criticism, though, the brakes' initial "bite" and pedal feel don't quite match the very best in this class.

Fuel economy is also a shade below par, but given the Leganza's roomy proportions and the brisk pace it offers, our 30mpg average is a far from unrespectable result. Around 40mpg is easily attainable if you drive with a little restraint, while the good-sized 65-litre fuel tank permits nearly 400 miles between refills. Persuading the last few litres on board can prove an irritatingly time-consuming occupation, though.

Although it stretches the tape measure some 10-20cm longer than many rivals, the Leganza doesn't fully capitalise on this advantage. There's generous space and creature comforts in the front, but even though none of the key dimensions behind is really lacking, a relatively short wheelbase makes things a touch cosier than they might be. And while the backrest is nicely angled, the low cushion, "knees-up" sitting position and slightly claustrophobic sensation (caused by the upswept, ovoid rear side windows) can leave rear passengers feeling a trifle shortchanged. There's footwell heating (or cooling), though, and a large fold-down centre armrest, but height-adjustable seatbelt mounts and head restraints are notable absentees, and more safety-minded families will be unimpressed by the centre seat's simple lap strap.

The 400-litre (14.1 cu ft) boot looks pretty big, but in reality it's on the small side, given the car's

otherwise generous proportions. Significant intrusion from the rear suspension turrets is the main cause. Asymmetrically split backrests drop down on to the fixed rear cushion, boosting cargo-carrying potential significantly, but the extended platform isn't completely flat and the rear bulkhead opening is somewhat restricted. It's a useful facility to have on a saloon, nevertheless. There's also a fairly prominent sill to heave the luggage over, and care is needed to avoid scuffing the painted plastic bumper.

Not only is the Leganza (in either of its forms) extremely well equipped, it comes across as well sorted and well built, too. We prefer the SX's simpler rotary heater controls to the CDX's fiddly, more distracting climate control set-up – a complaint we would also level at the small button-festooned radio/cassette unit. On purchase price alone, getting a very competent, Mondeo-sized car for the price of an Escort – or almost a well-specified supermini, these days! – takes some beating, but the Leganza makes even more compelling viewing, once Daewoo's comprehensive umbrella of after-sales service is also taken into account. Servicing outlets may be quite thin on the ground, but courtesy collection and return is provided, and the three-year/60,000-mile warranty, three years' servicing – even three years' AA cover – won't cost you a penny. With a group 11 rating for the SX and 12 for the CDX, insurance will seem quite expensive in comparison.

VERDICT

The Leganza may be half a notch down on class-leading contenders in terms of ride comfort, mechanical refinement and sheer dynamic dexterity, but it's amazing just how far this Korean maker's products have advanced in a short space of time. The Leganza won't, in all honesty, run rings round established family-sized rivals like the Mondeo, Peugeot 406 or Vectra out on the open road, but it's far from disgraced in such company. With the Leganza's undeniably keen (albeit non-negotiable) purchase price and unrivalled post-purchase peace of mind also factored into the equation, it's got them well and truly licked in the showroom, while the executive-looking interior and full equipment tally merely pile further icing on the cake.

HOW THE LEGANZA COMPARES

	Engine cap/power (cc/bhp)	Revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel economy (mpg)	Brakes best stop (m/kg)	Maximum legroom – front (cm)	Typical leg/kneeroom – rear (cm)	Steering (p) turns/circle (m)	Overall length (cm)
DAEWOO LEGANZA 2.0CDX (4-dr)	1998/132	3240	9.4	22.6/16.1	30	26/40*	109	102/78	3.2/11.4	467
Ford Mondeo 2.0 16v LX (5-dr)†	1989/136	3625	9.5	22.8/15.1	30	27/16*	110	102/76	3.0/10.4	456
Mazda 626 2.0GX (5-dr)	1991/115	2720	8.9	28.2/19.2	32	28/24*	107	103/70	3.1/10.8	457
Mitsubishi Galant 2.0GLS (4-dr)	1997/134	3095	8.8	23.0/16.5	35	27/16*	109	102/78	3.0/11.1	463
Peugeot 406 2.0 16v LX (4-dr)	1998/135	3210	10.5	27.2/17.6	32½	25½/36*	111	99/74	3.2/11.0	456
Vauxhall Vectra 1.8 16v LS (4-dr)	1796/115	2940	11.1	28.6/20.8	38½	24/28*	111	101/75	3.0/10.9	448
Volvo S40 2.0 (4-dr)	1948/140	3150	10.0	26.7/18.1	33	25/23*	113	99/75	2.9/10.5	448
† performance/economy figures for Estate						* with ABS			(p) all power-assisted	