

Land Rover Freelander

Featured model: Station Wagon 2.0 Td4 ES



IN THE OLD DAYS IT WAS ALL SO straightforward. There were on-road only (estate) cars and four-wheel drive off-roaders, for those who really needed to leave the tarmac. Then the picture became more confused. First, it became smart to be seen in a 4x4 and second (because many of these weren't very comfortable), hybrids began to appear.

Nicknamed "soft-roaders", these sports utility vehicles (SUVs) have proved just the thing in the Kings Road or on the school run, and Freelander is one of them. However, with such earnest, go-anywhere forebears, this youngster can still mud-plug in earnest, as our previous report (R9769) makes plain.

If it lacked in any serious respect, it was engine power – something that has now been remedied with the arrival of a BMW diesel engine (similar to that used in the 320D) and a top-of-the-range V6 petrol automatic, courtesy of the Rover 75.

Our diesel test car was the new leather-clad ES which (apart from a trip computer and automatic climate control) lacked little of modern motoring life's executive requirements. It certainly rides, handles and stops on-road, better than some MPVs, which is quite an achievement for a vehicle with go-anywhere potential. And that's before you explore its off-road capability.

Although the seating is too lofty for some people to attain with ease, they like it, once installed – though cornering briskly means they have to hang on to something.

This loftiness is both comfortable and reassuring to many drivers and everyone certainly benefits from the view.

However, it's worth remembering that similar benefits are provided (and an even better ride enjoyed) in a Citroën Berlingo Multispace at half the price – a van conversion that looks remarkably similar in profile to Freelander.

The BMW diesel has been detuned for this (transverse) installation and although acceleration is modest, it remains smooth right down to 1250rpm and is quiet all the way to 70mph.

The automatic alternative is unique in this class and proves quiet and effortless, with a slick sequential manual override facility, plus clever auto shifting that can "read" the conditions and driving style – even off road. It's an impressive box of tricks, but expect a 5mpg loss in economy.

VERDICT

If your motoring really does include off-road duties, the Freelander is an admirable choice, because it's competent, comfortable and civilised on or off the beaten track. Yet the fact remains that any 4x4 that isn't ever used for its intended purpose is like buying a barbecue and eating indoors. You can enjoy more performance, lower running costs, more luggage space and practicality – and pay a lot less to start with. But you won't have that badge (or the spare wheel) on the tailgate

AT A GLANCE

considering size, price and off-roader rivals

Overtaking ability	★★★★○○
Space/practicality	★★★★○○
Controls/displays	★★★★★○
Safety	★★★★○○
Handling/steering	★★★★★○
Comfort	★★★★★○
Fuel economy	★★★★○○

SPECIFICATION

engine 1951cc, 4-cylinder, diesel; 112bhp at 4000rpm, 192 lb ft at 1750rpm; belt-driven twin overhead camshafts, 16 valves
transmission 5-speed manual, permanent four-wheel drive with viscous coupling; 24.3 mph/1000rpm in 5th, 19.7 in 4th
suspension front: independent damper/struts, integral coil springs
 Rear: independent damper/struts, integral coil springs, trapezoidal link
steering hydraulic power assistance; 3.2 turns lock-to-lock; 11.85m diameter turning circle between kerbs
brakes ventilated discs front, drums rear, with standard anti-skid control (ABS) and hill descent control
wheels/tyres 6in alloy with 215/65R16 tyres (5½in with 195/80R15 on S and GS versions); full-size spare

LIKES ...

lined and elasticated oddments areas
 illuminated ignition keyhole
 detailed, well-written handbook
 electric self-folding door mirrors

and GRIPES

poor designed/placed door armrests
 no simultaneous screen/facia airflow
 heated rear window tell-tale obscure
 poor door sill protection

THE FREELANDER RANGE

type and size recreational/SUV – 3 and 5 door Hardback, 3 door Softback
trim levels S, GS, ES
engines petrol: 4 cylinder/1.8 litre/117bhp, V6/2.5/177; diesel: 4/2.0/112
drive 4-wheel drive, 5-speed manual; (5-speed automatic option available on Td4, standard on V6)

OVERTAKING ABILITY				★★★★○	
<i>Better low-speed lugging ability than previous diesel and really smooth and mechanically refined. Pleasant (single) gearchange with automatic option</i>					
acceleration in seconds	through gears*	④ th gear		⑤ th gear	
20-40mph	4.6	9.6		NA	
30-50mph	5.4	7.5		10.9	
40-60mph	6.7	7.8		10.2	
50-70mph	9.3	9.4		11.4	
30-70mph	14.7	16.9		22.3	
max speed in each gear (*using 4300rpm for best acceleration)					
gear	①*	②*	③*	④*	⑤
speed (mph)	20	38	60	84½	101

SPACE AND PRACTICALITY ★★★★○			
<i>High cushions but good legroom all round. Load length modest behind back seat and taildoor awkward at times – so wind-down glass is a good thing</i>			
<i>in centimetres (5-door s/wagon)</i>			
outside	inside	(† with sunroof)	
length	439	front - legroom	85-104
width - inc mirrors	207	- headroom	93†
- mirrors folded	181	rear - typical leg/	107/
height (with roof bars)	183	kneeroom	75
load sill height	1/64	- headroom	93
(inside/outside)		- hiproom	130/144
steering		load space (all seats in use)	
turns lock-to-lock	3.2	(litres/cu ft)	360/12.7
turning circle (metres)	11.85	load length	63-122
easy to park/garage?		full length to fascia	No
	★★★★○	load width	99-138
		load height (to shelf/	51/
		to top of aperture)	94

CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS ★★★★○	
<i>Sensible layout of major controls, and driving stance easier on the spine. Some minor switches and warning lamps hard to see, though. Clear 30/50/70mph speedometer markings</i>	
	

HOW THE FREELANDER Td4 COMPARES		engine cyl/cap/power (no/cc/bhp)	revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	fuel economy (mpg)	brakes – best stop from 50mph (m/kg)	maximum legroom - front (cm)	typical leg/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	steering turns/ circle (m)	overall length (cm)
LAND ROVER FREELANDER		4/1951/112	2880	14.7	22.3/16.9	38	26½/30	104	107/75	3.2/11.85	439
Honda CR-V (petrol)		4/1973/126	3440	11.2	29.4/17.5	27	29½/16	107	110/74	3.2/11.1	452
Toyota RAV4 (petrol) †		4/1998/129	3320	10.0	23.3/18.0	31	26/17*	105	91/70	2.8/11.3	412
Renault Scenic RX4 (petrol)		4/1998/140	3260	12.8	28.9/20.3	28½	NA	106	102/76	3.5/10.6	444
BMW 320D Touring		4/1951/136	2400	9.5	22.8/14.7	49½	24/17	112	98/74	3.3/10.6	447
Citroën M'space 1.6 16v (petrol)		4/1587/110	3240	11.5	32.7/23.3	37½	31/27*	107	99/77	3.2/11.3	411
† 1995 model		* no ABS									

SAFETY		★★★★○								
<i>Heavy push needed for best stop, but otherwise powerful, consistent brakes; handbrake gives a powerful stop, too, and OK on a 1 in 3 gradient</i>										
braking		dry road stopping distance <i>from 50mph (with standard ABS)</i>								
pedal feel	★★★★○									
in emergency	★★★★○									
handbrake	★★★★○									
		<table><tr><th>pedal load</th><th>distance</th></tr><tr><td>10kg</td><td>44½m</td></tr><tr><td>30kg</td><td>26½m <i>best stop</i></td></tr><tr><td>+4kg ie 34kg</td><td>27m</td></tr></table>	pedal load	distance	10kg	44½m	30kg	26½m <i>best stop</i>	+4kg ie 34kg	27m
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EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS
Freelander not yet tested

SECURITY FEATURES	
central locking ✓	alarm ✓
remote control ✓	immobiliser ✓
auto window closure ✗	luggage security ★★★★○
deadlocks ✓	
✓ standard	0 factory option ✗ not available

HANDLING AND STEERING ★★★★○	
<i>Rack and pinion steering precision remarkably free of slop (on road) and kickback (off road). Trim cornering and stable line</i>	
	
COMFORT ★★★★○	
<i>Soft, almost under-damped ride at times, but very impressive off-road. Improved heater gives good flow to rear and cooler at face level</i>	

FUEL ECONOMY		★★★★○	
<i>OK as an off-roader, but not a patch on BMW 320D (Estate) with same engine – slower, too. Intelligent gauge/low-level lamp ensures good range</i>			
AA test results (mpg)		official figures (mpg)	
worst (hard/urban)	28	urban	31.0
best (gentle/rural)	43	extra urban	42.2
overall mpg on test	38	combined	37.2
realistic tank capacity	58 litres	CO ₂ emissions	205g/km
typical range	485 miles	car tax band	D