

# Renault Laguna

**Featured model: 3.0 V6 Sport Tourer Initiale**



**W**E'VE THOUGHT HIGHLY OF the new Laguna in hatchback form, but wondered how it fared as an estate car – sorry, Sport Tourer. Has it got what it takes to take what it's got? We sampled the top V6 automatic to find out.

It might look like a "lifestyle" estate à la Alfa 156 Sportwagon, but it's not. Despite its name and that elegantly extended tail, the Sport Tourer is a practical cargo carrier with more space at the business end than even Ford's latest Mondeo estate.

Good depth under the roller-blind cover helps, together with only modest wheelarch intrusion. Loading couldn't be easier, and long objects can be fed through a separately opening tailgate window. Folding down the 60/40 divided back seats, to form an extended platform, is no problem, either – you don't even have to remove the three head restraints first. It's rather nicely carpeted, as well, though it lacks the impeccable finish of the Rover or Volvo's V70.

However, although the shapely back seats are comfortable, limited foot space under the front seats restricts legroom and results in insufficient thigh support for tall people. They also have their heads brushed by the roof lining.

The powerful three-litre engine gives the Sport Tourer sporting performance – and a thirst to match. The standard automatic transmission takes its toll of mpg, too, of course, but at least it makes unobtrusive shifts and is nicely throttle sensitive in D. It's reluctance to change up when you lift off the accelerator after a spell of brisk

driving (the "auto-adaptive" brain senses there's an enthusiast at the wheel) is irritating, though. We often switched to the promptly acting manual sequential mode that leaves you feeling more in charge.

Ultra low-profile tyres give tremendous cornering grip (aided by traction control), but add firmness, though not discomfort, to the well-composed ride. A little more feel to the rather low-geared steering wouldn't come amiss, however.

A wide range of adjustments give a tailor-made driving position. All round vision is excellent, with lots of glass, rear "proximity sensors" and electrically folding mirrors proving a boon when parking. These, like the keyless (card and push-button) starting, tyre pressure monitoring, trip computer and satellite navigation system, form part of the electronic wizardry within the Initiale's leather-trimmed, climate-controlled cabin. Indeed, surprise and delight features abound and the Laguna's safety features are beyond reproach.

## VERDICT

**Undeniably appealing though this V6 Initiale Sport Tourer is, it's an indulgence that will cost private buyers dear to run and hit them hard at trade-in time. The less exotically powered models may lack the kit and kudos of this flagship Laguna, but they perform well, offer similar style, space and practicality, and still come generously equipped.**

## AT A GLANCE

*considering size, price and rivals*

|                           |       |
|---------------------------|-------|
| <b>Overtaking ability</b> | ★★★★○ |
| <b>Space/practicality</b> | ★★★★○ |
| <b>Controls/displays</b>  | ★★★★○ |
| <b>Safety</b>             | ★★★★★ |
| <b>Handling/steering</b>  | ★★★★○ |
| <b>Comfort</b>            | ★★★★○ |
| <b>Fuel economy</b>       | ★★★★○ |

## SPECIFICATION

**engine** 2946cc, V6-cylinder, petrol; 210bhp at 6000rpm, 210 lb ft at 3750rpm; belt-driven double overhead camshafts, 24 valves

**transmission** 5-speed stepped automatic with manual sequential shift; front-wheel drive; 32.2mph/1000rpm in 5th, 24.7 in 4th. Electronic stability programme (ESP) and traction control (ASR)

**suspension** front: coil spring/damper struts, lower wishbones, anti-roll bar. Rear: coil-sprung torsion beam, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar

**steering** engine-speed sensitive hydraulic power assistance; 3.3 turns lock-to-lock; 10.9m diameter turning circle between kerbs (17.4m for one turn of the wheel)

**brakes** ventilated discs front, solid discs rear, with anti-lock, brake assist and brake force distribution controls

**wheels/tyres** 7½in alloy with 225/45R17V tyres (Continental ContiSport Contact on test car); full-size (steel) spare

## LIKES ...

"ding"-resistant (plastic) front wings  
sun blinds in rear door casings  
night vision with the xenon headlamps lined oddments spaces (fewer rattles)

## and GRIPES

visors won't stay down and forwards prominent rear door sills  
no rear backrest security locks  
test car's faulty tyre pressure sensor

## THE LAGUNA RANGE

**size and type** upper-medium (mid-priced) hatchback and estate (Sport Tourer)

**trim levels** Authentique, Expression, Dynamique, Privilege, Initiale

**engines** petrol: 4 cylinder/1.6 litre/110bhp, 4/1.8/123, 4/2.0di/140, V6/3.0/210; diesel: 4/1.9/120, (4/2.2/145 later)

**drive** front-wheel drive, manual 5-speed (petrol) and 6-speed (diesel); 4-speed automatic optional on 1.8, 5-speed auto standard on 3.0 V6

OVERTAKING ABILITY

★★★★○

Lacks a straight-six's creaminess, but revs smoothly and heartily to give swift performance. Masterful on a motorway. Smooth-shifting auto 'box has irritations – sequential DIY shifts give better control

| acceleration in seconds                                       | In D (to 5950rpm) |    | In sequential (to 6250rpm) |      |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----|----------------------------|------|----|
| 20-40mph                                                      | 2.9               |    | 2.8                        |      |    |
| 30-50mph                                                      | 3.7               |    | 3.6                        |      |    |
| 40-60mph                                                      | 4.4               |    | 4.2                        |      |    |
| 50-70mph                                                      | 5.1               |    | 5.1                        |      |    |
| 30-70mph                                                      | 8.8               |    | 8.7                        |      |    |
| max speed in each gear (*using 6250rpm for best acceleration) |                   |    |                            |      |    |
| gear                                                          | ①*                | ②* | ③*                         | ④    | ⑤  |
| speed (mph)                                                   | 43                | 67 | 104                        | 143† | NA |

† maker's figure

† maker's figure

| SPACE AND PRACTICALITY <span>★★★○○</span>                                                                                                                                                                    |  |                                      |                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Rear passenger space disappointing in all but width. Cargo space beyond "lazy" tailgate fine, though. Back seats fold easily to give almost flat, carpeted load deck and more volume than a Volvo V70</i> |  |                                      |                    |
| in centimetres (5-door estate)                                                                                                                                                                               |  | inside                               | († with sunroof)   |
| <b>outside</b>                                                                                                                                                                                               |  | front                                | - legroom 84-110   |
| length                                                                                                                                                                                                       |  |                                      | - headroom 90-95†  |
| width - inc mirrors                                                                                                                                                                                          |  | rear                                 | - typical leg/ 99/ |
| - mirrors folded                                                                                                                                                                                             |  |                                      | kneeroom 70        |
| height (inc roof bars)                                                                                                                                                                                       |  |                                      | - headroom 89      |
| load sill height                                                                                                                                                                                             |  |                                      | - hiproom 129      |
| (inside/outside)                                                                                                                                                                                             |  | <b>load space (all seats in use)</b> |                    |
| <b>steering</b>                                                                                                                                                                                              |  | (litres/cu ft)                       | 540/19.1           |
| turns lock-to-lock                                                                                                                                                                                           |  | load length                          | 101-170            |
| turning circle (metres)                                                                                                                                                                                      |  | full length to fascia                | No                 |
| easy to park/garage?                                                                                                                                                                                         |  | load width                           | 100-133            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                              |  | load height (to shelf/               | 47/                |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                              |  | to top of aperture)                  | 75                 |

★★★★○

| CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS <span>★★★○○</span>                                                                                                                                                                      |  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Facia well laid out, but climate buttons low. Steering reach and rake plus electric seat adjustments cater for all sizes. Excellent vision. Wheel controls for hi-fi, cruise and limiter are admirable</i> |  |
|                                                                                                                             |  |

| HOW THE SPORT TOURER 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) |
| <b>RENAULT S'TOURER V6 (auto)</b>      | <b>V6/2946/210</b>               | <b>2180</b>         | <b>8.8</b>                   | <b>auto</b>                     | <b>25</b>          | <b>25/16</b>                          | <b>110</b>                   | <b>99/70</b>                      | <b>3.3/10.9</b>            | <b>470</b>          |
| <b>Audi A6 2.4 Avant (man)</b>         | V6/2393/165                      | 3100                | 8.8                          | 21.6/15.2                       | 30½                | 23/19                                 | 109                          | 100/74                            | 2.8/11.1                   | 480                 |
| <b>Ford Mondeo 2.5 V6 est (man)†</b>   | V6/2495/168                      | 2680                | 8.5 <sup>(e)</sup>           | 22/16 <sup>(e)</sup>            | 28                 | 25/19                                 | 111                          | 108/84                            | 2.8/11.3                   | 480                 |
| <b>M'bishi Galant 3.0 V6 est (man)</b> | V6/2498/161                      | 2880                | 7.5                          | 20.9/14.0                       | 31                 | 27½/20                                | 109                          | 102/78                            | 3.0/11.2                   | 468                 |
| <b>Peugeot 406 3.0 V6 est (auto)</b>   | V6/2946/194                      | 2640                | 8.6                          | auto                            | 26                 | 26/20                                 | 109                          | 98/72                             | 3.1/11.4                   | 474                 |
| <b>Volvo V70 2.4 (170) (man)</b>       | 5/2435/170                       | 2900                | 8.9                          | 24.3/17.5                       | 31                 | 22½/23                                | 116                          | 101/77                            | 3.0/11.7                   | 471                 |

† figures for saloon version

(e) estimated

\* all with ABS

| SAFETY <span>★★★★★</span>                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Nobody tries harder here than Renault – 5 star NCAP result proves it. Active and passive safety features abound. Powerful brakes over-assisted, though – tricky to "feather". Rear seatbacks lack locks</i> |                                                                             |
| <b>braking (figures for 1.8 hatchback)</b>                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>dry road stopping distance</b><br>from 50mph (with ABS and brake assist) |
| pedal feel <span>★★○○○</span>                                                                                                                                                                                  | pedal load                                                                  |
| in emergency <span>★★★★○</span>                                                                                                                                                                                | unhurried 10kg                                                              |
| handbrake <span>★★★★○</span>                                                                                                                                                                                   | sudden 12kg                                                                 |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                | +4kg ie 16kg                                                                |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                | distance                                                                    |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 31m                                                                         |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>25m best stop</b>                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 25m ABS on                                                                  |

| EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS (1.8 hatchback tested 2001) |                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| front impact 94%                                         | side impact 100%                     |
| overall 97% <span>★★★★★</span>                           | pedestrian rating <span>★★○○○</span> |

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

| HANDLING AND STEERING <span>★★★○○</span>                                                                                                                                                                                     |  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| <i>V6 puts its considerable power down cleanly without wheelspin (thanks to traction control), torque steer or "tramlining" on the wide tyres. Grippy and taut, happy-to-be-hurried chassis, but the steering lacks feel</i> |  |
|                                                                                                                                           |  |

| COMFORT <span>★★★○○</span>                                                                                                                                                                                             |  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Good ride with firm overtones due to those ContiSports. Comfortable seats in well-appointed, climate-controlled cabin with large sunroof. Deceptively fast cruiser: "Everything else seems slow", was one quote</i> |  |

| FUEL ECONOMY <span>★★★○○</span>                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Seventy-litre tank, thank goodness. Alarming thirst when you exploit those 210 horses, but 27-ish mpg possible on a motorway cruise. Trip computer proves near accurate. Highest tax band. Group 14 insurance</i> |                                   |
| <b>AA test results (mpg)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>official figures (mpg)</b>     |
| worst (hard/urban) 16                                                                                                                                                                                                | urban 18.7                        |
| best (gentle/rural) 30                                                                                                                                                                                               | extra urban 37.6                  |
| <b>overall mpg on test 25</b>                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>combined 27.4</b>              |
| realistic tank capacity 64 litres                                                                                                                                                                                    | CO <sub>2</sub> emissions 247g/km |
| typical range 350 miles                                                                                                                                                                                              | car tax band D                    |