

# Rover 25

**Featured model: 1.4 (84bhp) E**



AT A GLANCE	
<i>considering size, price and rivals</i>	
<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	
<b>engine</b>	1396cc, 4-cylinder, petrol; 84bhp at 6000rpm, 81 lb ft at 4500rpm; belt-driven double overhead camshafts, 16 valves
<b>transmission</b>	5-speed manual, front-wheel drive; 20.9 mph/1000rpm in 5th, 16.9 in 4th
<b>suspension</b>	front: independent damper/struts with integral coil springs. Rear: torsion beam (dead) axle, coil springs
<b>steering</b>	hydraulic power assistance; 3.0 turns lock-to-lock; 10.3m diameter turning circle between kerbs (15.15m for one turn of the wheel)
<b>brakes</b>	solid discs front, drums rear, with anti-lock option on test car
<b>wheels/tyres</b>	5½in alloy with 185/55R15H tyres on test car (175/65R14 tyres with steel wheels standard); temporary spare

**T**HE 25 IS, OF COURSE, A refettled 200, which made its (surprise) first appearance at the 1995 Earls Court Motor Show.

Two years ago, renamed 25, the model was made mainstream price-competitive, but became more MG than Rover in its appeal, with much tauter suspension, sharper steering and engines that prefer to rev to deliver.

At the lower end of the range, these rules still apply and our test car's low-profile tyres with alloy wheels emphasised the point. The result is a Rover which seeks to lure youthful-driver enthusiasm rather than excel in the quieter attributes of comfort and refinement. Now that there's an MG counterpart that's even more boy-racer, this seems a bit daft.

Yet inside, at least, there's still an aura of dignity and good taste – this Rover's extra kerb length makes the 25 tomorrow's supermini-sized hatch. In the next year we shall see Ford, VW and others follow this trend; indeed Skoda has already done so. The 25's four-metre length gives just that bit more rear space for both passengers and luggage and it's nicely trimmed throughout as well.

The rear cushions are fixed, unfortunately – the split backrests tilt unevenly to rest against them. When fastened back with the load cover in place, they can only be released from inside the (separately lockable) boot, thereby adding to security.

The finish inside may be good, but the 25 is behind the times in terms of standard

equipment for the driver, as well as in occupant protection. The E's list price leaves ABS, a passenger airbag, rear head restraints and electric door mirrors on the options list, and there's no variable intermittent wipe, dial rheostat or low-level fuel lamp; even a "proper" spare wheel costs extra.

The heating and ventilation work rather well (except that the centre facia vents have poor directional aim), but opening the sunroof creates an unpleasant sweet smell of anti-rust wax; air conditioning in lieu seems a good idea at £250.

Owners of previous Rovers with the 1.4/75bhp K-Series engine will have mixed feelings. Of course, tailpipe emissions are influencing design these days, but this 16-valve version has less torque, higher up the rev range, too. Result: it's a gutless wonder (although ever so smooth) in low-speed lugging – uphill or overtaking; the old 1.4 Metro was significantly livelier both in and through the gears, despite having 9bhp less.

VERDICT
<b>The original 200's novelty appeal was squandered by misjudgement in marketing. It was never going to sell against the Golfs and Astras of the time, even though that was the sales pitch and price. The 25 remedied this, but by then the novelty had worn off. We're left with a hatchback that's now the right size and price to compete; if only it were better equipped and these lower-range versions offered a bit more comfort when they're on the move.</b>

LIKES ...
ideal rear wash/wipe arrangements 30/50/70 speedo marks and accurate odo always ambient vents with own control quality trim fit and finish throughout <b>and GRIPES</b> visors miss outer areas near pillar heater dial pointers illegible by day indicators don't always self-cancel ignition keyhole hard to locate

THE 25 RANGE
<b>size and type</b> mid-priced supermini hatchback
<b>trim levels</b> standard, E, L, S
<b>engines</b> petrol: 4 cylinder/1.1 litre/75bhp, 4/1.4/84 or 103, 4/1.6/109; diesel: 4/2.0 turbo/101
<b>drive</b> front-wheel drive, 5-speed manual; (CVT automatic available on 1.6 only)

OVERTAKING ABILITY <span style="float:right">★☆☆○○</span>					
<i>Poor low-speed pulling power means lots of revs and gear changes are needed for brisk overtaking. Gears and clutch can feel unwieldy</i>					
acceleration in seconds	through gears*	④ <sup>th</sup> gear	⑤ <sup>th</sup> gear		
20-40mph	3.7	11.2	15.5		
30-50mph	5.2	11.3	16.0		
40-60mph	5.9	12.1	17.4		
50-70mph	7.8	13.6	20.7		
<b>30-70mph</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>24.9</b>	<b>36.7</b>		
<b>max speed in each gear (*using 6500rpm for best acceleration)</b>					
gear	①*	②*	③*	④	⑤
<b>speed (mph)</b>	33	59	87	108	102

SPACE AND PRACTICALITY <span style="float:right">★☆☆○○</span>			
<i>As with Skoda Fabia, extra exterior size translates into more interior space. Rear nicely trimmed, but cushions fixed – less adaptable.</i>			
<i>in centimetres (3-door hatch)</i>		<b>inside</b> († with sunroof)	
<b>outside</b>		front - legroom	88-107
length	399	- headroom	90-95†
width - inc mirrors	194	rear - typical leg/	97/
- mirrors folded	169	kneeroom	70
height (no roof bars)	142	- headroom	88
load sill height	26/68	- hiproom	128
<i>(inside/outside)</i>		<b>load space</b> (all seats in use)	
<b>steering</b>		(litres/cu ft)	345/12.2
turns lock-to-lock	3.0	load lengthx	53-74
turning circle (metres)	10.3	full length to fascia	230
easy to park/garage?		load width	86-132
	★☆☆○○	load height (to shelf/	53/
		to top of aperture)	86

**CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS** ★☆☆○○  
*Despite adjusters, driving position too high for lanky, big feet/shoes catch under-facia, too. Clear displays and quality finish, but several control features missing*



HOW THE 25 1.4 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>ROVER 25 1.4E</b>	<b>4/1396/84</b>	<b>3360</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>36.7/24.9</b>	<b>39½</b>	<b>28/25</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>97/70</b>	<b>3.0/10.3</b>	<b>399</b>
<b>Peugeot 206 1.4</b>	4/1360/75	3330	12.7	30.3/20.2	43	25/13	108	94/66	3.3/10.1	384
<b>Skoda Fabia 1.4 8v</b>	4/1397/68	3310	15.3	31.8/21.5	40	24½/27	108	100/72	2.8/10.2	396
<b>Ford Fiesta 1.25</b>	4/1242/75	3640	12.4	28.1/18.5	42	28/16	108	92/66	2.8/10.1	383
<b>Daihatsu Sirion 1.3</b>	4/1298/102	3450	9.5	25.9/20.5	47	27½/13	105	93/65	3.6/9.3	368
<b>Vauxhall Corsa 1.2</b>	4/1199/75	3700	14.4	30.7/20.7	45	24/14	106	95/70	2.9/10.35	382
<b>1996 Rover 214i</b>	4/1396/75	3520	13.6	29.3/19.8	39½	28/16	107	94/65	3.4/10.4	397

\* all with ABS †all power assisted

SAFETY <span style="float:right">★☆☆○○</span>	
<i>Rather heavy pressure for ABS panic stop, though probably ideal if ABS option not fitted (makes it easier to avoid skidding). Sparse interior injury-avoidance features. Good boot security</i>	
<b>braking</b>	<b>dry road stopping distance</b> <i>from 50mph (with optional ABS)</i>
pedal feel <span style="float:right">★☆☆○○</span>	pedal load
in emergency <span style="float:right">★☆☆○○</span>	unhurried 10kg
handbrake <span style="float:right">★☆☆○○</span>	sudden 23kg
	+4kg ie 27kg
	distance
	38½m
	<b>28m best stop</b>
	28m

**EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS**  
 Rover 25 not yet tested

SECURITY FEATURES	
central locking <span style="float:right">✓</span>	alarm <span style="float:right">✓</span>
remote control <span style="float:right">✓</span>	immobiliser <span style="float:right">✓</span>
auto window closure <span style="float:right">✗</span>	luggage security <span style="float:right">★☆☆☆☆</span>
deadlocks <span style="float:right">✗</span>	
✓ standard	0 factory option ✗ not available

**HANDLING AND STEERING** ★☆☆○○  
*Optional alloys and wide tyres give more than enough grip, but steering feels rather weighty. Is this what the E buyer wants?*



**COMFORT** ★☆☆○○  
*This stiffer suspension does no favours for comfort-seekers – the ride is agitated. This 84bhp engine sounds very smooth and refined. Nice heat/vent arrangements, but air con costs extra.*

**FUEL ECONOMY** ★☆☆○○  
*Little improved on the 103bhp livelier version – disappointing. Pessimistic gauge and no warning lamp squander generous tank capacity. Key-locked filler cap can be awkward at times*

type of use (air conditioning off)	AA test (mpg)
urban (17mph average/heavy traffic)	27½
suburban (27mph average/6.4 miles from cold start)	34½
motorway (70mph cruising)	36½
cross-country (brisk driving/20 miles from cold start)	41
rural (gentle driving/20 miles from cold start)	47
<b>typical mpg overall</b>	<b>39½</b>
realistic tank capacity/range	40 litres/350 miles
official mpg (urban/extra urban/combined)	32.1/53.1/42.8
CO <sub>2</sub> emissions 162g/km	car tax band B