

## Vauxhall Cavalier 1.7TD GL



**I**T LOOKS JUST LIKE ANY OF THE OTHER Cavaliers so favoured by fleet managers – the cars that are no stranger to the motorway overtaking lane in the hands of hard-charging reps. But this one is just that bit different. Under that familiar, smoothly rounded bonnet lies an unfamiliar engine – a 1.7-litre turbo-diesel.

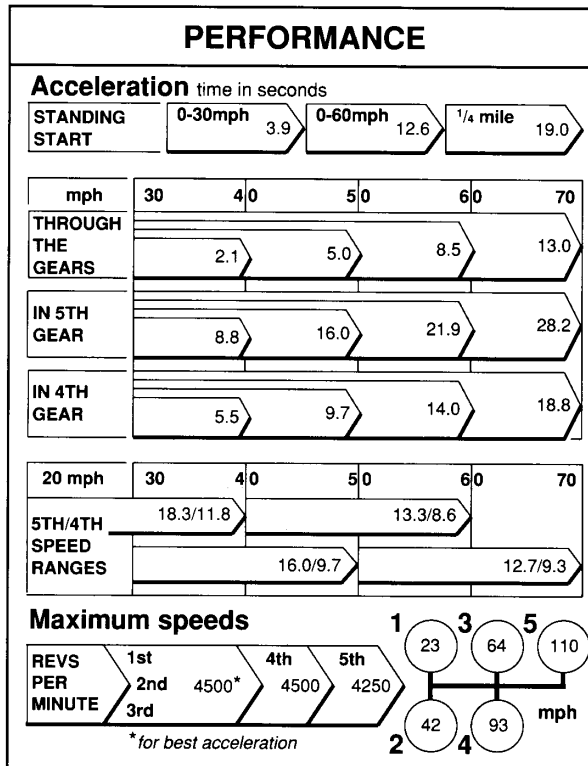
The first bit of good news about it is that, despite having a similar capacity, it has no connection with Vauxhall's other oil-burner, the normally aspirated diesel which produces a modest 57bhp and gives only lacklustre performance. No, this one is an enlarged, catalysed and intercooled version of the Japanese Isuzu 1.5-litre power unit that works so convincingly in the Nova turbo-diesel.

It develops 80bhp at 4400rpm, which means that it's a little down on power compared with most of its competitors, and it's a similar story with its 124 lb ft

of torque. Don't be misled, however, for not only will it out-accelerate most of the rivals we list in our chart, it also has a higher top speed than all of them bar the 1.9-litre Fiat Tempra and Renault 19. In fact, although the petrol-powered 1.8i Cavalier is a shade quicker through the gears than the Turbo-diesel, the latter turns the tables and shows its superiority in fourth and fifth gear acceleration.

The impressive thing about the TD is that it feels so eager and is free from turbo-lag. Initial performance is nothing special, but by 2500rpm (up to the 5000rpm cut-out) a smooth urgency of acceleration moves the car along in a swift and satisfying way. But apart from giving quick, safe overtaking, this engine is also remarkably versatile; not only is it affable at low revs (it will pull away smoothly from below 1000rpm), but it will also cruise remarkably easily at high motorway speeds. This may not be the ideal environment for a

derv-burner, but the Cavalier laps it up; indeed, where legal, it will cruise contentedly at an indicated 90 to 100mph for hours on end.



The 1.7TD isn't a complete paragon, however. It's obviously a diesel at tickover, and it's also a bit growly at about 70mph – otherwise it proves to be commendably subdued, although it's never quite as refined as the Peugeot 405 or Rover 418 turbo-diesels.

Coincidentally, however, the Cavalier's overall fuel consumption – at 46mpg – falls midway between the mpg figures of these two rivals, so putting it in the respectably economical class, by diesel standards. It doesn't quite produce the class-leading results that the Montego direct-injection 2.0 turbo-diesel manages, but it's streets ahead of the slow and thirsty Sierra 1.8TD. We never saw less than 37mpg and when driving moderately over mixed roads, achieved 50mpg. At our overall consumption, a tankful of fuel

gives an excellent range of 500 miles. Servicing entails an engine oil change ever 4500 miles, with service visits due at 9000-miles intervals.

Engine apart, this is very much the Cavalier as before, with an excellent driving position, easy controls (including power steering) and comfortable rear seating. GL trim means a generous level of equipment, including front seats with upper and lower lumbar support adjustments (the driver's seat adjustable for height), a tachometer, central locking, electric front windows, electrically adjustable and heated door mirrors, electric headlamp levelling and a stereo radio/cassette player with six speakers and an electric aerial.

| FUEL CONSUMPTION  |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| Fuel grade for tests: diesel                                |                     |
| <b>Normal range</b>   | <b>mpg</b>          |
| Hard driving, heavy traffic                                 | 37                  |
| Motorway – 70mph cruising                                   | 45                  |
| Brisk driving, mixed roads                                  | 50                  |
| <b>Typical mpg overall</b>                                  | <b>46</b>           |
| Realistic tank range*                                       | 51 litres/517 miles |
| *based on gauge/warning lamp and filling station experience |                     |

The power steering is nicely weighted and fluid in its movements, but the 1.7TD doesn't encourage the driver to indulge in sporty bend-swinging. Nevertheless, it's competent enough and sufficiently spirited to perform competently on winding roads. Similarly, the ride isn't the best in class; it lacks smooth compliance on neglected byways, but proves admirable on most main road surfaces.

## VERDICT

The 1.7TD's clever combination of lively performance and relaxed high-speed cruising with impressive mpg figures, gives a valuable boost to the Cavalier range. By providing the best of both worlds, it can only add to the well-deserved sales appeal of this thoroughly competent and likeable all-rounder. Several rivals undercut the GL on price, but if you're in the market for a turbo-diesel, this one deserves to be high on your short list.

| HOW IT COMPARES               | Engine cap/power (cc/bhp) | Max speed (mph) | 30-70mph through gears (sec) | 30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec) | Fuel economy (mpg) | Brakes best stop (%g/lb) | Maximum legroom – front (in) | Typical leg/kneeroom – rear (in) | Steering turns/circle (ft) | Overall length (in) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Vauxhall Cavalier 1.7TD GL    | 1686/80                   | 110             | 13.0                         | 28.2/18.8                       | 46                 | NA                       | 42½                          | 39½/28¼                          | 3.4/34 (p)                 | 174½                |
| Fiat Tempra 1.9TDs            | 1929/92                   | 111             | 12.9                         | 28.9/15.6                       | 43                 | 89/80*                   | 42                           | 40/30¼                           | 3.1/35 (p)                 | 171½                |
| Ford Sierra Sapphire 1.8TD LX | 1753/74                   | 100             | 16.5                         | 28.8/20.6                       | 40½                | 100/45*                  | 41½                          | 38½/30                           | 2.8/35 (p)                 | 176                 |
| Peugeot 405 1.8GRD            | 1769/91                   | 108             | 13.4                         | 26.6/17.5                       | 47                 | 93/40                    | 43                           | 40/32¼                           | 3.3/35½ (p)                | 173½                |
| Renault 19RT Turbo-diesel     | 1870/93                   | 113             | 12.2                         | 26.4/17.0                       | 49                 | 79/37                    | 41                           | 39/28½                           | 3.5/34½ (p)                | 167¾                |
| Rover Montego 2.0DSLX         | 1994/81                   | 98              | 14.9                         | 35.2/22.0                       | 50                 | 101/48                   | 42½                          | 41½/29                           | 3.5/36 (p)                 | 175¾                |
| Rover 418SLD                  | 1769/87                   | 104             | 14.7                         | 31.4/19.6                       | 45                 | 86/40                    | 42½                          | 39/28                            | 3.4/34 (p)                 | 172                 |
|                               |                           |                 |                              |                                 |                    |                          |                              |                                  | * with ABS                 | (p) power assisted  |



## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

### ENGINE

**Type and size** front-mounted, transverse 4 in line; water-cooled. 79.0mm bore x 86.0mm stroke = 1686cc. Iron block and aluminium alloy head; 5 main bearings

**Compression ratio** 22.0:1

**Valve gear** single belt-driven overhead camshaft actuating two valves per cylinder via bucket tappets with shim adjustment

**Fuel system** Zexel indirect mechanical injection diesel, with water-cooled turbocharger and intercooler. Two-way unregulated exhaust catalyser. 61-litre (13.4-gallon) tank with low-fuel warning lamp. Fuel required: diesel

**Ignition system** compression ignition with electrical pre-heating for cold starting

**Maximum power** 80bhp at 4400rpm

**Maximum torque** 124 lb ft at 2400rpm

### TRANSMISSION

**Clutch** 7.9in diaphragm spring, dry plate; cable operated. Pedal load/travel: 22 lb/5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>in

**Gearbox** 5-speed (all synchromesh) and reverse. Ratios: first 3.55, second 1.96, third 1.30, fourth 0.89, top 0.71 and reverse 3.31:1

**Final drive** 3.72:1, to front wheels

**Mph per 1000rpm** 26.1 in top, 20.8 in 4th

**Rpm at 70mph** 2680 in top gear

### CHASSIS

**Suspension** front: independent by MacPherson damper/struts with coil springs and an anti-roll bar. Rear: torsion beam axle with coil springs, trailing arms and an anti-roll bar. Dampers: telescopic all round

**Steering** power-assisted rack and pinion with 3.4 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 34<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>ft between kerbs, with 59ft circle for one turn of the wheel

**Wheels** 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>J steel with 175/70 R14 tyres (Michelin MXT on test car)

**Brakes** 9.3in solid discs front, 7.9in drums rear, with engine-driven servo pump

**Kerb weight** 2613 lb