

Land Rover Discovery

Featuring TDi Diesel 5-door



DESPITE THE RECENT INTRODUCTION of a bevy of multi-purpose vehicles, proper off-roaders, complete with four-wheel drive, continue to attract a lot of users who will seldom (or never) utilise their rough-terrain ability.

Many people are drawn by the lofty view out and solid build, which conspire to create a sense of invulnerability. Land Rover's Discovery is nowadays fulfilling the most popular market niche, originally pioneered by the first Range Rover, before it was elevated to its present even loftier (and more wealthy) status.

In fact, some of the original Range-Rover's mechanicals are retained in the Discovery, such as its manual transfer 'box, with its own second gear lever. In practice, this stick is left well alone in ordinary road use. The other good news is that the latest primary gearshift is much less quarrelsome, with fewer "noises off" than used to afflict the transmission; the clutch is much lighter nowadays, too. The accelerator take-up can still snatch and clonk the manual's drive-line if you're not careful, although the trait isn't so pronounced on the automatic. This auto shift is a bit

stiff to use, however, and you can hit your elbow on the centre console box, en route to the lever.

Improvements to the facia and control layout were introduced in early 1994, as well. These include a new instrument pack, revised rotary heater controls (including separate temperature dials for each side of the car) and a smaller, re-angled steering wheel, with rake adjustment.

The revised steering, though quicker in response, actually feels heavier too, and sitting tall makes one aware of coming roll (despite standard anti-roll bars these days). On road, neither the absorbency nor the swervability of the suspension compares with a good estate car's or a new-generation MPV like the Galaxy/Sharan. From a design-engineer's point of view, this will come as no surprise – the Discovery has been designed to excel at something else. It's off the beaten track that it really shows its stuff and achieves its go-anywhere antics with an aplomb that few rivals can manage.

Which power unit best suits the Discovery? The V8 gives really lusty performance on or off-road, because it ambles as well as it roars away for maximum

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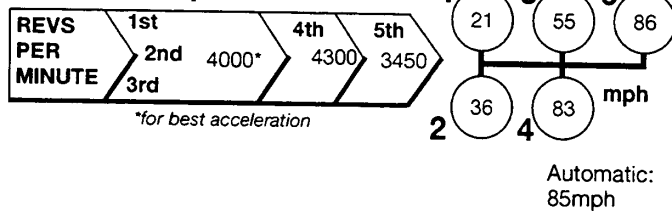
PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds (Automatic in brackets)

mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS	3.2 (3.4)	7.6 (7.4)	13.7 (14.5)	23.5 (25.7)	
IN 5TH GEAR	9.1	16.9	26.2	38.1	
IN 4TH GEAR	4.8	10.0	16.1	25.2	

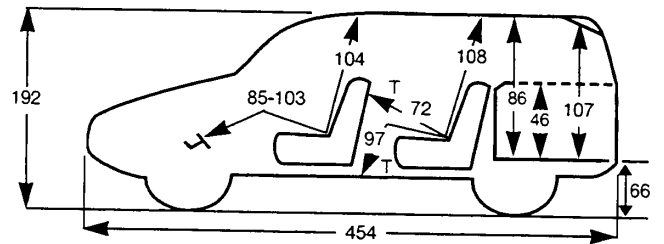
20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES	21.3/11.8		17.7/11.9		
		17.1/10.4		22.6/16.2	

Maximum speeds

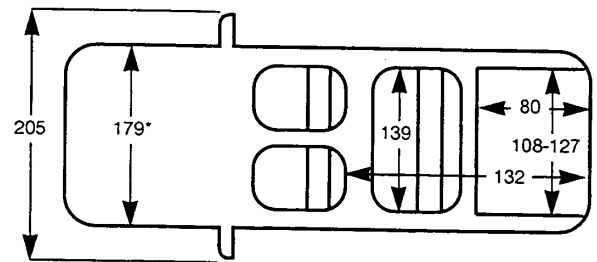


MEASUREMENTS

Centimetres



T: typical back seat space behind medium sized front occupants



*with mirrors folded

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Normal range	mpg
Hard driving, heavy traffic	22½
Short journeys in the suburbs	26½
Motorway – 70mph cruising	25
Brisk driving, mixed roads	28
Gentle driving, rural roads	34½
Typical mpg overall	(Automatic: 26½) 28
Realistic tank range*	73 litres/450 miles

*based on fuel gauge/warning lamp and filling station experience

acceleration: 30–70mph takes less than 11sec. If you want the complete ego trip, this is the one for sublime motorway cruising head and shoulders above ordinary family saloons. However, the price you pay is at the pumps – expect less than 20mpg.

The heavily reworked 2.5-litre, direct-injection turbo-diesel goes to the other extreme. It's still acoustically prominent (although better than before) with a hammery note that seems worst in mid-range cruising; by 70mph the noise has abated to acceptability. Our figures show that it's no fireball, with all that weight and friction in the transmission to contend with, so its consumption is respectable in the circumstances.

The Discovery can suffer the affliction of wind noise, but tyre rumble is never a problem, interestingly.

At the wheel, the driver enjoys excellent all round vision – unlike in an MPV, you can see the whereabouts of the front end. Heating isn't accompanied by very generous cool airflow from the facia vents, so the twin electric sunroof option, (that works very well) is desirable, unless full air conditioning is specified. Incidentally, you lose the glovebox if the latter is fitted.

The latest facia and interior trim are still not perfect, but there's undoubtedly an underlying robustness that's in character. The front seats lack lumbar support and climbing in can present problems for the less agile, as well as the risk of muddy legs from the door sills. The rear offers generous accommodation, however, and has the potential to seat seven. The rear pair of seats neatly unfolds from the flanks of the load area – passengers

gain access via the side-hinged rear door, treading on the rear bumper and a spring-loaded step; headroom is just adequate.

The normal rear bench seat has a split/fold arrangement and here headroom is more than generous. This is probably the most comfortable place to sit, except that the fixed-height seatbelts (with no pre-tensioners) are awkward, tending to "cut your throat". The front belts do have the height adjusters. A driver's airbag is standard only on top ES versions.

Vehicle security is helped by a standard alarm/immobiliser that's triggered by the handset that also operates the centre locking. Safety in an accident must depend on where you're sitting – the rearmost sideways-facing seats, with simple lap-straps, are not ideal. The solidity and weight of the Discovery help to prevent collapse of its solid centre passenger cell, however, in a serious impact.

VERDICT

If you're drawn to the Discovery (or any of its rivals) as an all-purpose, super estate car, never to venture off-road, we recommend that you hire one before you buy – and keep your critical faculties alert. We think that the best of the new MPVs are much more rewarding to drive "on road". The Discovery is a distinguished off-road performer, however. The TDi version remains slow and somewhat uncouth compared with the best that this kind of money and 28mpg can buy. The V8's refinements are more convincing, but its fuel costs are even more profligate.

FOR THE TECHNICAL

ENGINE

Type front-mounted longitudinal four in line.
Iron block and alloy head; 5 main bearings

Size 90.5mm x 97mm = 2495cc

Power 111bhp at 4000rpm

Torque 195 lb ft at 1800rpm

Valves belt-driven side-mounted camshaft, actuating two valves per cylinder via pushrods and rockers

Fuel/ignition two-stage mechanical direct-injection with turbocharger and intercooler. 89-litre tank with low level warning lamp

TRANSMISSION

Type five-speed manual with Hi/Low transfer 'box and permanent four-wheel drive

Mph per 1000rpm (in Hi) 25.1 in 5th, 19.3 in 4th (26.8 in Auto top gear)

CHASSIS

Suspension front: live axle with radius arms. Panhard rod and coil springs. Rear: coil-sprung live axle with trailing arms, upper A-frame. Anti-roll bars and telescopic dampers all round

Steering power-assisted worm and roller with 3.7 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 12m between kerbs with 20.5m for one turn of the wheel

Wheels 7J steel with 205R16 104S tyres

Brakes ventilated discs front, solid discs rear with servo assistance. ABS optional extra (standard on ES) for on and off-road use