



Vauxhall Zafira 2.0Di



What's different?

Lower-powered version of Vauxhall's direct-injection turbo-diesel engine now available in the clever seven-seater Zafira.

IN ONLY A SHORT SPACE OF TIME THE ZAFIRA has, justifiably, made a name for itself in the ever-expanding world of the MPV. The only thing that it's been lacking is a diesel engine to complement the 1.6- and 1.8-litre petrol units and thus complete the line-up.

No doubt to the delight of derv-burning devotees, that omission has been remedied with the introduction of Vauxhall's 2.0Di direct-injection turbo-diesel engine. Curious, though, that the company should choose to install the lower-powered (82bhp) version of this Ecotec 16-valver instead of the more muscular (100bhp) one. The latter has an intercooler and higher boost pressure for the turbocharger and is now available in the CD and CDX derivatives of the (lighter) Astra.

After driving that relatively lively model, this Zafira feels decidedly lethargic – and that's just two up. Vauxhall quotes 0-60mph in an unhurried 16sec and a top speed of 99mph. With all seven seats occupied, progress will no doubt prove leisurely.

That said, this lower-powered engine feels less harsh and vibrant than the 100bhp version in the Astra

particularly if you're gentle on the accelerator. Indeed, it's sweet running at lower revs. Wider throttle openings, however, induce a period of coarseness on either side of 2000rpm (about 50mph in top gear). Avoid these and you can enjoy effortless higher-speed cruising, thanks to long-legged gearing, as well as 40-45mpg in mixed use. MPVs are heavier than cars like the Astra, so don't expect class-leading economy.

Not only is the Zafira designed to seat seven, it also boasts a cavernous load space with the seats staying on board, where they belong, thanks to the ingenious Flex 7 system. In addition, it has remarkably good road manners – better in ride quality, in fact, than the Astra on which it's based – if a bit more top-heavy. Its smooth, fluid ride is made that little more compliant by the weightier diesel engine, yet the steering remains pleasantly light. It all adds up to a small MPV that rides and handles really well, to give a more rewarding driving experience than you get at present with similarly sized rivals.

VERDICT

If you put economy before performance and don't regularly travel seven-up, this Zafira diesel might well fill the bill. But as far as we're concerned – no thanks. We'll stick to the more civilised petrol models until Vauxhall twigs that a more refined and livelier oil-burner is needed under the bonnet.