

# Vauxhall Corsa

*Featured model: 1.7DTi 3dr Elegance*



**I**N ITS DAY THE EARLIER CORSA (and Nova) 1.5-litre turbo-diesel, with indirect injection, was the best diesel supermini, in our book. Its technical merit outstripped the rest of the car, however, but the Corsa kept selling – to prospective owners who presumably liked its style and its roomy accommodation.

The new Corsa has changed these assumptions. In some directions the interior isn't as roomy but underneath, its power units and suspension are now properly located on a sub-frame. This has produced much crisper, more precise handling, better sound insulation (especially in the 1.2 16v petrol version) and better crash protection.

This test is of the higher-powered new diesel, however. As before, it's from Isuzu but has been converted to direct injection and, at 1.7 litres, produces more power and torque to contend with the new model's increased weight.

The diesel story through the late nineties has been one of no real improvement in terms of fuel economy, but of much reduced tail-pipe pollution. So, this latest car's 55-65mpg normal range puts it ahead of most current counterparts, although owners of five-year-old Corsa TDs won't notice much difference. Its turbo still tends to cut in too abruptly (at around 1700rpm), but it certainly generates a head of steam that makes overtaking very easy without much gearchanging.

That gearchange still isn't as positive as some, by the way, but the accelerator

action is much cleaner than the old diesel's.

In several respects, this new Corsa, like Ford's Fiesta, pays more attention to the driver's well-being and less to rear passengers' – especially this three door. The new Skoda Fabia and some of the semi-MPV-style hatchbacks do better with more attention to detail. The Corsa does have a variable-rake rear backrest, however, as well as three proper seatbelts. It's also possible to detach the (flimsy) rear cushion hinges from their location and make room for long, slimmer objects, through to the fascia.

Our track tests revealed that the brakes give creditable emergency stopping power, with no fade under duress; this was with the extra-cost ABS, however. The handbrake is heavy-going, though.

## VERDICT

**This new diesel, like the new Corsa in general, almost cuts the mustard. It's fast, frugal and, at mid-range speeds, very refined. However, this latter quality is more consistently delivered by the 1.2 petrol version of equivalent power – which probably costs 27 per cent more to fuel.**

**The new Corsa is a real improvement in most respects. Its road manners in particular make it a good choice for keener drivers, but with the new Polo and Fiesta coming over the horizon, it will be interesting to see if it's good enough.**

## 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** 1686cc, 4-cylinder, diesel; 75bhp at 4400rpm, 122 lb ft at 1800-3000rpm; belt-driven twin overhead camshafts, 16 valves

**transmission** 5-speed manual, front-wheel drive; 24.6mph/1000rpm in 5th, 19.7 in 4th

**suspension** front: sub-frame-mounted wishbones with damper/struts, integral coil springs. Rear: torsion beam (dead) axle with compound link location and coil springs

**steering** electric power assistance; 2.9 turns lock-to-lock; 10.35m diameter turning circle between kerbs (14.75m for one turn of the wheel)

**brakes** ventilated discs front drums rear, with optional extra electronic anti-lock control test car

**wheels/tyres** 5in steel or alloy with 175/65R14T tyres (alloy wheels on Elegance test car); full-size spare

## LIKES AND GRIPES

beam trim/dial dim sensibly set apart sunglasses holder in roof panel screen/face level air simultaneously variable rear seat backrest rake

low-set obscure warning lamps no timer on heated rear glass switch prominent load sill just paint on rear seatbacks

## THE CORSA RANGE

**body** 3 and 5 door supermini, mid-priced.  
**trim levels** Club/GLS, Comfort, Elegance, SXi, SRi

**engines** petrol: 3 cylinder/1.0/60bhp 4/1.2/75; 4/1.4/90; 4/1.8/125.

diesel: 4/1.7/65(Di); 4/1.7/75(DTi)

**drive** front-wheel drive, 5-speed manual (Auto shift synchromesh option on 1.2; 4-speed with torque converter on 1.4)

**OVERTAKING ABILITY** ☆☆☆○

Lots of low-rev pulling power, spoilt only by roughness below 1500rpm. More lively than most.

acceleration in seconds	through gears*	④ <sup>th</sup> gear	⑤ <sup>th</sup> gear		
20-40mph	3.6	9.9	15.6		
30-50mph	4.8	7.7	12.0		
40-60mph	6.0	7.5	10.3		
50-70mph	8.0	8.6	10.8		
<b>30-70mph</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>16.3</b>	<b>22.8</b>		
max speed in each gear (*using 4500rpm for best acceleration)					
gear	①*	②*	③*	④*	⑤
<b>speed (mph)</b>	22½	43	64	88½	109

**SPACE AND PRACTICALITY** ☆☆☆○

Comfortable driving position but too low for some. Three door's rear quarters block view and not easy to exit. Smaller boot and loss of legroom, but more kneespace than before.

in centimetres (3-door)		inside († with sunroof)	
<b>outside</b>		front	- legroom 82-106
length	382		- headroom 91-98†
width - inc mirrors	196	rear	- typical leg/ 95/ kneeroom 70
- mirrors folded	165		- headroom 95
height (no roof bars)	144		- hiproom 124
load sill height	23/68	<b>load space (all seats in use)</b> (litres/cu ft) 295/105	
(inside/outside)		load length	55-122
<b>steering</b>		full length to facia	213
turns lock-to-lock	2.9	load width	104
turning circle (metres)	10.35	load height (to shelf/ to top of aperture)	52/ 87
easy to park/garage?	☆☆○○○		

**CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS** ☆☆☆○

Neat accurate dials, but info display too small. Gearshift still obstructive on downchanges and "sudden" turbo effect makes progressive acceleration difficult.

**SAFETY** ☆☆☆○

Active head restraints, five inertia belts and airbags look promising, but our car's brakes would be over-servoed without ABS.

braking	dry road stopping distance
pedal feel ☆☆☆○○	from 50mph (with optional ABS)
in emergency ☆☆☆○○	pedal load   distance
handbrake ☆☆☆○○	10kg   30m
	14kg   24m best stop
	+4kg ie 18kg   26m

**EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS**

New Corsa not yet tested

**SECURITY FEATURES**

central locking	✓	alarm	0
remote control	✓	immobiliser	✓
auto window closure	✗	luggage security	☆☆○○○
deadlocks	✓		

✓ standard      ○ factory option      ✗ not available

**HANDLING AND STEERING** ☆☆☆○

Electric steering (medium weight) fine into the turn, but inert, sticky feeling from straight-ahead, spoils agility. Grippy and poised otherwise

**COMFORT** ☆☆☆○

Acceptable bump suppression, in view of its eager cornering abilities. Puny tailgate heating and no rear footwell warmth. Engine noise worst between 60 and 70mph.

**FUEL ECONOMY** ☆☆☆○

Frugality surpassed only by the Polo at present, but it does use more than the Astra equivalent on the motorway, due to shorter gearing

type of use (air conditioning off)	AA test (mpg)
urban (17mph average/heavy traffic)	40
suburban (27mph average/6.4 miles from cold start)	50
motorway (70mph cruising)	53
cross-country (brisk driving/20 miles from cold start)	59
rural (gentle driving/20 miles from cold start)	70
<b>typical mpg overall</b>	<b>57½</b>
realistic tank capacity/range	not measured
official mpg (urban/extra urban/combined)	48.7/68.9/60.1
CO <sub>2</sub> emissions 126g/km	car tax band A

**HOW THE CORSA 1.7 DTi COMPARES**

	engine cap/power (cyl/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>VAUXHALL CORSA 1.7DTi</b>	<b>4/1686/75</b>	<b>2850</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>22.8/16.3</b>	<b>57½</b>	<b>24/14*</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>95/70</b>	<b>2.9/10.35</b>	<b>382</b>
Peugeot 206 2.0HdI	4/1997/90	2600	11.4	19.8/14.4	52½	26½/8	108	94/66	3.3/10.1	384
VW Polo 1.4TDi PD	3/1422/75	2650	13.3	22.8/15.4	62	26/26*	108	93/66	2.9/10.1	374
Ford Fiesta 1.8TDi	4/1753/75	2880	15.4	28.4/20.2	52½	26/18*	105	93/67	2.8/10.1	383
Fiat Punto 1.9JTD	4/1910/80	2330	14.2	25.4/17.1	52	27/12	108	96/67	2.8/10.9	384
previous Corsa 1.5TD†	4/1488/67	2920	12.9	29.5/19.7	60	27/16	104	99/67	4.1/9.8 <sup>o</sup>	373

† tested in 1993

\* with ABS

◉ manual steering