



Vauxhall Zafira 1.8

Featuring Comfort

**What's different?**

Sixteen-valve 1.8-litre engine in Vauxhall's clever seven-seater Scenic rival.

RENAULT RECKONS THAT ONLY EIGHT per cent of mini-MPV owners make regular use of seven seats. If you're among this minority there are few alternatives to the Zafira. Not that that's much of a hardship, particularly as the versatile Vauxhall has those clever now-you-see-'em, now-you-don't rearmost seats that fold away flat into the boot floor and are always there if you need them. But a lot of bodies add up to a lot of weight, so there are engines to consider, as well.

The two-litre/82bhp turbo-diesel is economical but lethargic, while the 1.6-litre/100bhp is smooth and subdued but works harder, particularly on motorways. Cue the 16-valve 1.8. This smoothly spinning engine is shared with the Vectra and Astra and produces 113bhp. A

fair enough figure until you compare it with the rival two-litre Scenic's engine that pumps out a hearty 140bhp that will spur the galloping Gaul from 30 to 70mph through the gears in under 10sec (see R0013A) – that's 1½sec quicker than the Vauxhall.

Where the Zafira gets its revenge is in its in-gear acceleration, which is noticeably nippier than the heavier and higher-g geared Renault's. You don't get owt for nowt, though, and in this case the Zafira's low overall gearing makes it tiresomely busy on a motorway, and has the driver yearning for a sixth gear to cut the revs and quieten things.

It does make for flexibility in the upper ratios, however, although gearchanging is undemanding, thanks to the positive shift that just manages to avoid notchiness. The clutch is fine, too, but what mars the initial take-off from rest is the play in the accelerator that's still present – newcomers tend to stall the engine.

The Zafira has been around for a year now and has remained unchanged in that time and since our previous reports. That's fine in most respects, except that there are a few irritating aspects that are highlighted in our Likes and Gripes panel.

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PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds

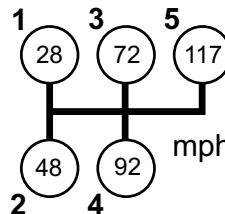
mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS		1.9	4.4	7.5	11.3
IN 5TH GEAR		5.7	11.0	16.5	22.4
IN 4TH GEAR		4.0	7.8	11.8	16.3

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES		12.2/8.3		10.8/7.8	
			11.0/7.8		11.4/8.5

Maximum speeds

REVS PER MINUTE	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
		6000*		6000*	6100

* for best acceleration



FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade: 95 octane unleaded petrol	
Type of use – air conditioning off*	mpg
In the city – heavy traffic	21
In the country – quiet driving	38
Typical mpg overall	32
Realistic tank range†	about 51 litres/360 miles

†based on fuel gauge/warning lamp and filling station experience – not nominal tank capacity

*with air conditioning switched on, consumption will increase by 2–4% in winter and 4–8% in summer

FOR THE TECHNICAL

ENGINE

Type front-mounted, transverse four cylinders in line, with alloy block and head; five main bearings

Size 80.5 x 88.2mm = 1796cc

Power 113bhp at 5400rpm

Torque 125 lb ft at 3400rpm

Valves belt-driven double overhead camshafts operating four valves per cylinder via hydraulic tappets

Fuel/ignition electronic multi-point sequential petrol injection integrated with programmed distributorless (direct) ignition. 58-litre fuel tank with low-level warning light

TRANSMISSION

Type five-speed manual (four-speed automatic optional); front-wheel drive

Mph per 1000rpm 19.3 in 5th, 15.3 in 4th

CHASSIS

Suspension front: independent MacPherson struts, integral coil springs, lower wishbones and an anti-roll bar. Rear: coil-sprung torsion beam (dead) axle with trailing arms. Gas-filled telescopic dampers all round.

Steering rack and pinion with electro-hydraulic power assistance; 3.2 turns between full locks. Turning circle diameter averages 10.9m between kerbs, with 16.8m circle for one turn of the wheel

Wheels 6J x 15 steel with 195/65R15H tyres. Full size spare. Optional 6J x 15 alloys (plus full-size steel spare) with Michelin Energy tyres fitted to test car

Brakes ventilated discs front, solid discs rear with vacuum servo. Electronic anti-lock control (ABS) and electronic brake force distribution (EBD) plus traction control optional extra on Comfort

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Seatbelts

front height-adjustable, pre-tensioning

rear fixed-height adjustable, three-point inertia reel

Airbags

driver 60 litre

passenger 120 litre

others front seat side

Head restraints

front vertically adjustable and removable

second row vertically adjustable and removable, but centre seat has compact type only

rear height adjustable, not removable

Other features decoupling pedals, child seat restraint system, first aid kit

Euro NCAP crash test results

no data available

Door locking

central locking?

remote control?

auto window closure?

deadlocks?

Luggage

secure from interior/hidden from view

Ignition switch/immobiliser

Alarm

●●●●● assessment of effectiveness and convenience - the more black blobs the better

0 factory fitted optional extra

✓ standard on this model

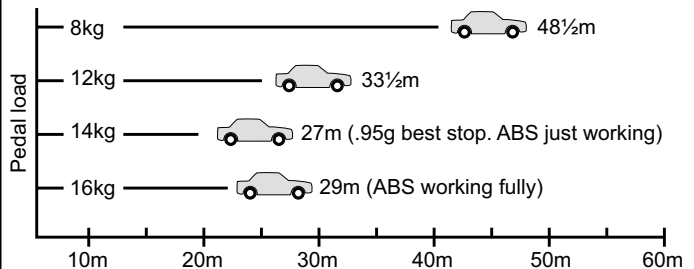
✗ not available on this model

BRAKES

Pedal feel ●●●●○ Behaviour in an emergency ●●●●○ Handbrake ●●●●○

Dry road stopping distance from 50mph (with standard ABS)

A good-to-average best stop is about 26m at 15-20kg pedal load



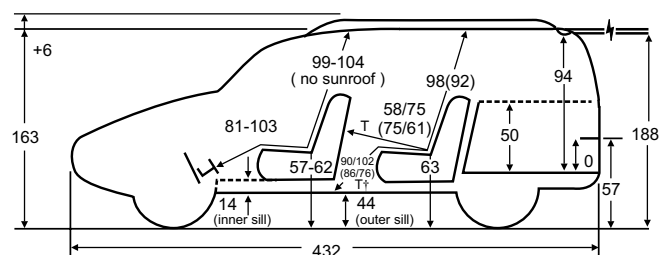
Fade test: pedal load required for a moderate (34m/.75g) stop:

14kg at start of test, 18kg at end of test (Ideal brakes show no change)

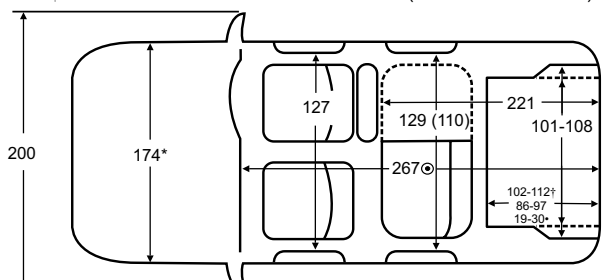
MEASUREMENTS

Centimetres

Multi-purpose 7 seater



T: typical back seat space behind medium-sized front occupants
† with middle row seat forward/rearwards (third row in brackets)



*with mirrors folded • in 7 seat mode
⊙ fold-flat front seatback optional extra

It's a pity that the all-black facia looks so funeral, but we like the seats, the driving position, the good all-round vision and the way this MPV displays an almost sporty agility in its roll-resistant cornering. It rides well, too, with pleasantly light and direct steering; be prepared for a touch of side sway on a windy motorway, though.

Passengers appreciate the high seating, including those on the split-fold centre bench. This glides smoothly fore and aft (once the rather awkward catch is released – there's a knack to it) to apportion priorities between luggage and passengers. With it folded up and slid fully forwards, and the two rearmost seats folded down, the load space is huge; but with all the seats in place there's room for only a couple of squashy bags in the tail – good job roof rails are available to come to the rescue.

VERDICT

Presumably because of its seating ingenuity, the Zafira doesn't come cheap. Compared with the Renault Scenic the Vauxhall isn't only more expensive, it also lacks many of the French rival's standard "surprise and delight" features, as well as its more relaxed gait when cruising the motorway.

Elsewhere though the Zafira feels lively, it rides and handles well and offers a congenial (if sombre) interior to all the occupants. It feels well built, too. If you can't justify buying a seven seater, the Scenic should top your mini-MPV list; if you can, then the Zafira with this 1.8-litre engine is the obvious choice.

LIKES AND GRIPES

Height adjustable driving seat	...	but cushion tilts forward as it's raised
Reach and rake steering adjustments	...	but wheel doesn't lower sufficiently
Big, clear speedometer	...	but it's calibrated 20, 40, 60 etc
Excellent "arms folded" wiper pattern	...	but thick front pillars can prove obstructive
Head restraints all round	...	but they're difficult to remove
Air conditioning standard on Comfort and Elegance models	...	but poor air apportionment - too much to face when bi-level "tiering" selected



HOW THE ZAFIRA 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 (m/kg)	Maximum legroom - front (cm)	Typical leg/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	Steering turns/ (p) circle (m)	Overall length (cm)
VAUXHALL ZAFIRA 1.8 (7)	4/1796/113	3630	11.3	22.4/16.3	32	27/14*	103	102/75	3.2/11.0	432
Daihatsu Grand Move 1.6 (5)	4/1590/90	3370	10.8	28.1/20.0	35	28/16	103	109/75	3.7/9.5	410
Fiat Multipla 1.6 (6)	4/1581/103	3780	12.7	29.2/20.6	29	27½/20*	106	114/83	2.8/11.1	399
Mitsubishi Space Star 1.8GDi (5)	4/1834/121	3150	10.6	27.1/20.4	38	27½/18*	109	103/75	3.1/10.0	403
Peugeot 806 2.0 (7)	4/1998/123	3210	13.4	35.1/23.4	30	27/25*	102	97/78	3.0/11.8	445
Renault Scenic 2.0 (5)	4/1998/140	3120	9.7	26.9/17.6	30	24/50*	106	102/76	3.5/10.6	413
() seating capacity in brackets						*with ABS			(p) all power assisted	