

Daewoo Nubira

Featuring 1.6SE Estate



THE NAME MIGHT NOT SOUND TOO exciting, but the Nubira is the second largest model in Daewoo's all-new-for-1998 line-up: no less than four brand new models – Leganza, Nubira, Lanos and, most recently, a pocket-sized people-carrier, the Matiz. Collectively, this quartet succeeds the South Korean maker's departing Nexia and Espero pairing.

While the Nexia and Espero were essentially made-over versions of earlier Astras and Cavaliers, the Nubira (like the three other models in Daewoo's distinctive new line-up) is completely new. Engineered in Britain, styled in Italy and assembled in South Korea, the Nubira comes as a four-door saloon or a load-lugging estate car. In size, it slots in between the old Nexia and Espero models.

These two body styles – powered by either a 1.6- or a two-litre 16-valve petrol engine – make up a four-model Nubira line-up, with well-stocked SE trim level accompanying 1.6 versions, while a still-more complete CDX package is reserved for two-litre models. These power units are, in fact, the only things that aren't brand new, as they're based on existing General Motors engines, extensively revised and reworked by a renowned UK powertrain specialist.

Having already tried Daewoo's executive saloon (the Leganza) and tested the Nexia-replacing Lanos in

hatchback form, it seemed appropriate to pick Daewoo's first estate car for our full sampling of the Nubira. We opted for the smaller of the two engine options, the 1.6 E-Tec unit, which also powers the Lanos SX. Aided by twin camshafts and 16 valves, it develops 105bhp at 5800rpm – a pretty respectable output for the class – and, thanks to variable-length inlet tracts, delivers a generous spread of low-speed pulling power, too.

This gives the Nubira estate a respectable turn of speed – 30-70 mph sprinting in around 11½sec and 110mph flat-out – but it's at the other end of the scale that the 1.6 impresses most. This is one of the most tractable multi-valve, four-cylinder engines we've encountered for some time. You can almost forget about using the slick, easy gearchange, unless you're in a hurry, but this is perhaps just as well, as the otherwise unobtrusive power unit is neither particularly quiet nor refined once the rev counter needle creeps above the 4000rpm mark. We weren't over-impressed by a degree of driveline "shunt" in response to on-off throttle movements around town, either – a characteristic we also griped about on the Espero.

Compared with the Rover 200-looking Lanos, the Nubira, not surprisingly, sports a bigger car "feel", and it proves easy to get comfortable behind the height-adjustable steering wheel and well-spaced pedals. In addition, the driver's lot is helped by clear, accurate dials and displays set into a shapely, soft-touch facia that outperforms the Lanos' rather hard, plasticky affair in both looks and feel. All-round vision proves

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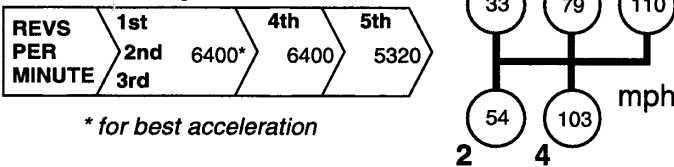
PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds

mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS		2.1	4.5	7.7	11.6
IN 5TH GEAR		6.5	13.6	21.2	29.2
IN 4TH GEAR		5.0	9.4	14.8	20.7

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES		13.4/9.5		14.7/9.8	
			13.6/9.4		15.6/11.3

Maximum speeds



FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade: unleaded Premium, 95 octane	
Type of use - air conditioning off*	mpg
In the city - heavy traffic	22
In the country - quiet driving	44
Typical mpg overall	32
Realistic tank range †	55 litres/390miles

† 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 cylinder in line. Iron block and alloy head; five main bearings

Size 79.0 x 81.5mm = 1598cc

Power 105bhp at 5800rpm

Torque 107 lb ft at 3800rpm

Valves twin (belt-driven) overhead camshafts actuating four valves per cylinder via hydraulic tappets

Fuel/ignition electronic sequential multi-point petrol injection integrated with distributorless ignition. 62-litre fuel tank, with low-level warning lamp

TRANSMISSION

Type five-speed manual; front wheel drive (4-speed automatic option on 2.0CDX)

Mph per 1000rpm 20.6 in 5th, 16.1 in 4th

CHASSIS

Suspension front: independent by MacPherson damper/struts, coil springs and lower arms. Rear: independent by coil spring/damper struts and multi-links. Telescopic dampers and anti-roll bars front and rear

Steering rack and pinion with hydraulic power assistance; 3.1 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 10.7m between kerbs, with 16.1m circle for one turn of the wheel

Wheels 5½in steel with 185/65R14 86H tyres (Hankook 866 on test car); full-size spare

Brakes ventilated discs front, drums rear, (discs on 2.0CDX) with vacuum servo. Electronic anti-lock control standard on all models

SAFETY AND SECURITY FEATURES

Assessed on their effectiveness and convenience (the more black blobs the better)

Seatbelts

front ●●●○○ rear ●●○○○

Door locking

central locking?

remote control?

Head restraints

front ●●●○○ rear

auto window closure?

dead locks?

Interior

safety padding ●●○○○

driver's airbag?

other airbags? (1)

side impact protection ●●●○○

Luggage

secure from interior/hidden from view ●●●○○

Alarm

engine immobilised?

Fuel anti-spillage

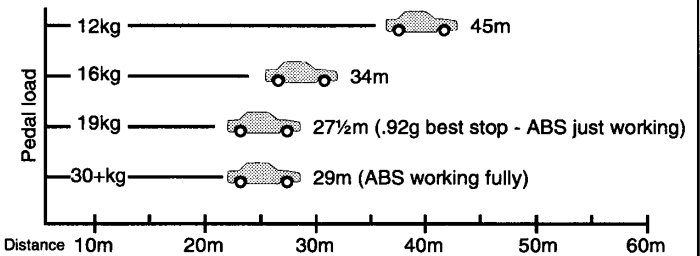
standard on test car factory fitted option not available

Euro NCAP crash test results - not available

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

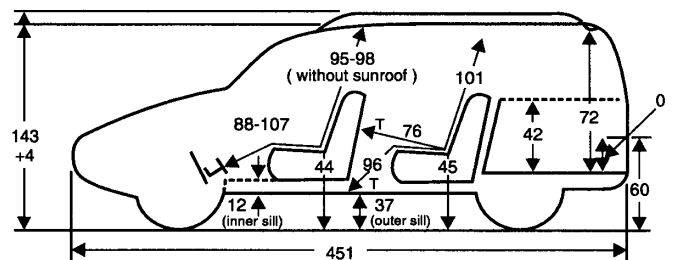


Fade test: pedal load required for a moderate (34m/.75g) stop: 15kg at start of test, 16kg at end of test (ideal brakes show no change)

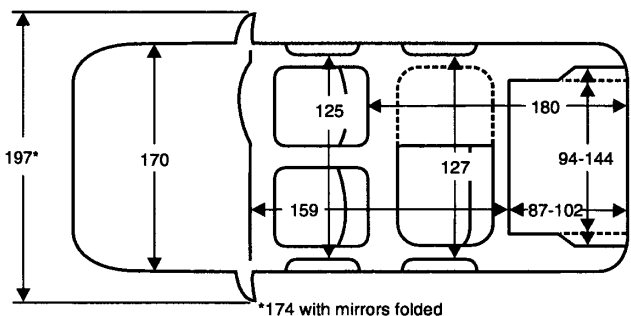
MEASUREMENTS

Centimetres

Five-door Estate



T: typical back seat space behind medium-sized front occupants



better than the norm these days, making the square-backed estate, in particular, easy to manoeuvre and place when reversing. The front seats' lever-type backrest recline setting and the lack of a lumbar support adjuster for the SE's driver's seat drop a few Brownie points, but the seat cushion tilt facility provides some compensation.

Both the saloon that we've sampled briefly and the estate prove reasonably nimble and surefooted handlers, aided by nicely weighted (though lacking much real "feel") power steering, generously wide 185/65 tyres (homegrown Hankooks on our test car) supported by anti-roll bars at each end. The Nubira's supple suspension affords the occupants an easy, unruffled passage over most surfaces, but the softly sprung estate can feel a little "floaty" at times, especially with a load up. The brake pedal (working an all-disc set-up on the two-litre, but drums at the rear on the 1.6) provides reassuring, positive-feel braking in all normal use, although ultimate stopping capability proves unexceptional – despite the commendable provision of ABS as standard on all models.

Front or rear, passengers are treated to ample leg-stretching space in comfortable, well-presented surroundings. There's plenty of head clearance for taller types, too, as the sunroof is confined to the options list. But with air conditioning standard on all models, who needs one?

Estates, of course, are meant to be all about load-carrying and versatility, and in the main, the Nubira doesn't disappoint. Being larger than most Escort-class rivals, with which it competes on price, gets it off to a head start here, while generous proportions behind the 60/40 split-folding back seats and a large, near-vertical tailgate only add to its advantage in this respect.

It's not all plain sailing, though; intrusive wheelarches make the cargo area awkwardly shaped when it comes to swallowing bulkier loads, and although the unsupportive rear backrests flip forward easily onto the fixed rear cushion, they don't lie completely flat. This arrangement also means there's no protective barrier to restrain unruly loads. Taller tailgate operators need to exercise caution when approaching the load area, as the tailgate can be slow to rise out of scalping range. The tailgate also provides home for the wash/wipe set-up (convenient, apart from lacking a much-needed intermittent setting) and the now almost obligatory third, high-level stop lamp, while a pair of roof bars (with clip-on crossbars optionally available) and a roller-blind load cover complete the estate's load-carrying credentials.

Both SE and CDX versions are very well equipped, with the aforementioned air conditioning and ABS supplemented by twin airbags, remote-control central locking, electric front windows, plus an alarm and an immobiliser, on all versions. The 1.6SE misses out on the CDX's electric rear windows, foglamps, electrically adjustable and heated door mirrors, and has to suffice with only four of the CDX's six speakers for its sound system, in return for its £1000-lower asking price, but none of these items can really be considered essential.

Overall, we obtained 32mpg from the estate – a fairly acceptable result, though hardly one to put the Nubira among the mile-stretching champions in the economy stakes. Mid-forties miles-per-gallon is readily there for the taking with a little restraint, while the 62-litre tank allows a fairly respectable 400 miles between forecourt visits from each tankful. When it comes to servicing, the Nubira needs workshop visits at 10,000-mile intervals, but interest here is more academic than usual, as a full warranty, all routine maintenance requirements, collection and delivery including a courtesy car, and even three years' AA cover, are all provided as part of Daewoo's three-year/60,000-mile umbrella of after-sales care. The 1.6 should also incur modest insurance premiums, thanks to its group 7 rating – four groups lower than the two-litre's.

VERDICT

We were impressed by just how far Daewoo has come in such a short space of time when we tested the Leganza. Our sampling of the Nubira has done little to alter our view. It's a sensibly competent rather than a crowd-drawing performer, in all fairness, with decor and dynamic prowess that aren't going to seriously worry a Golf or the new Focus.

However, there's no escaping the fact that it offers a lot of motoring for your money, substantially out-delivering its major rivals when its roominess, full tally of equipment and easy-going, affable nature are taken into account. On top of this, there's also the unrivalled Daewoo "deal" to consider, which aims to provide "fit-and-forget" family motoring – just what most pragmatic, self-funded purchasers are seeking.

A well-equipped Mondeo-sized estate for the price of a low- or mid-level Focus, with comprehensive three-year after-sales peace of mind thrown in for good measure? As the advertising slogan says, "That'll be the Daewoo."

HOW THE NUBIRA COMPARES	Engine cap/power (cc/bsp)	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)
DAEWOO NUBIRA 1.6SE ESTATE 5DR	1598/105	3390	11.6	29.2/20.7	32	27½/19*	107	96/76	3.1/10.7	451
Citroën Xsara 1.4 Estate 5dr	1360/75	3400	14.0	31.9/22.1	38	29/20	107	99/73	3.3/10.7	435
Peugeot 306 1.6 Estate 5dr†	1587/87	3350	11.6	27.0/18.7	38	30/17	104	94/67	3.3/10.9	434
Renault Megane Scenic 1.6RT 5dr	1598/90	3450	13.7	28.4/21.0	34	29/30*	105	102/76	3.5/10.5	414
Seat Toledo 1.6 5dr	1595/75	3320	14.9	28.4/22.0	37½	33/18	103	103/70	3.3/10.1	432
Skoda Octavia 1.6GLXi Estate 5dr†	1595/101	3510	11.3	24.8/18.1	35½	24/27*	112	97/69	3.1/10.5	451
Vauxhall Astra 1.6 16v Estate 5dr†	1598/100	3440	11.2	23.6/16.3	41½	26/21	108	95/70	3.1/10.4	429
† performance/economy figures for hatchback						*with ABS		(p) all power-assisted		