

Proton Impian

Featured model: 1.6 4-door



AT A GLANCE

considering size, price and rivals

Overtaking ability	☆☆☆☆○
Space/practicality	☆☆○○○
Controls/displays	☆☆☆☆○
Safety	☆☆☆☆○
Handling/steering	☆☆☆☆○
Comfort	☆☆○○○
Fuel economy	☆☆☆☆○

SPECIFICATION

engine 1584cc, 4-cylinder, petrol; 102bhp at 6000rpm, 103 lb ft at 2750rpm; belt-driven single overhead camshaft, 16 valves
transmission 5-speed manual, front-wheel drive; 20.7 mph/1000rpm in 5th, 17.1 in 4th

suspension front: MacPherson coil spring/damper struts, anti-roll bar. Rear: coil spring/damper struts with multi-link location, anti-roll bar
steering hydraulic power assistance; 2.8 turns lock-to-lock; 11.35m diameter turning circle between kerbs (15.2m for one turn of the wheel)
brakes ventilated discs front, solid discs rear, with standard anti-lock control (ABS)
wheels/tyres 6½in alloy with 195/55R15V tyres (Goodyear Eagle NCT3 on test car); temporary spare

LIKES ...

illuminated ignition keyhole
 very effective mudflaps
 seat padding at rear shin/ankle level
 individual rear interior lamps

and GRIPES

greater air flow to ns front footwell
 facia rattle, poor door/boot closure
 c/locking handset too easy to work
 red clock/trip numerals hard to read

backrests. The smallish door mirrors have insufficient outward travel, though, and annoyingly the sun visors won't stay down and pushed forward. Apart from small warning lights and the low-set heater controls, the switchgear is convenient.

Cut-price plastics and fittings let the interior down, but even this entry-level Impian is well equipped with items such as air conditioning, four electric windows, alloys, foglamps and steering wheel audio controls. Safety features haven't been skimped, either.

Back seat passengers enjoy softer seating than those up front, with good kneeroom and adequate headroom. But the Impian falls short of the competition on leg-stretching space; it turns out, after all, to be more lower-medium than upper-medium in its accommodation.

The boot volume is reasonable despite sizeable wheelarches, but the opening isn't ideally shaped and there's a sill to cope with. It's useful that the rear seatbacks can be folded almost flat to provide an extended load area.

VERDICT

Apart from the fact that it handles well and has undoubted showroom appeal, the Impian brings nothing new or innovative to a market in which it struggles to keep pace with the best in class. The new model will impress loyal Proton fans, but its appearance and generous inventory of equipment can't disguise a disappointing shortfall in comfort and overall refinement.

COULD THIS BE YOUR DREAM come true? Kuala Lumpur-based Proton hopes so by naming it Impian. Available initially only as a four-door saloon that's virtually the same length as a Vectra, the Malaysian newcomer faces stiff opposition in the white-hot heat of the upper-medium sector.

It enters the Proton range above the Wira in both size and aspiration and, being created entirely in its home country, ends Proton's mainly-Mitsubishi policy. Well, almost...

The Impian is, in fact, powered by a 102bhp Mitsubishi 1.6-litre petrol engine that's tough and torquey, and no slouch, either. It isn't exactly sweet-running, though; indeed, from 4000rpm it becomes unpleasantly boomy. We couldn't attain Proton's almost class-leading fuel consumption claims for it, either.

Thanks to Lotus's input to its chassis development, the Impian steers with almost sporty precision and handles very tidily and securely (with the aid of both traction control and ABS brakes).

Trim handling takes precedence over ride comfort, though – progress can be agitated over broken surfaces. Elsewhere, the suspension proves acceptable.

The hard, thinly padded front seats have height adjustment that tilts the driver's cushion forward as it's raised, to mar what is otherwise a satisfactory driving position. The steering wheel adjusts only for height, but the large speedometer and tachometer are clear and all-round vision is pretty good – the rear head restraints can be partially recessed into the

THE IMPLIAN RANGE

size and type upper-medium (budget-priced) 4-door saloon
trim levels standard and X
engines petrol: 4 cylinder/1.6 litre/102bhp (1.8 DOHC 16v due 2002); diesel: none
drive front-wheel drive, 5-speed manual; 4-speed stepped automatic (with torque converter) optional

OVERTAKING ABILITY ★★☆☆

Gruff 1.6 engine is a game performer, but becomes boomy from 4000rpm. Even so, it gives brisk acceleration if you rev it through the gears. Tractable in town, too, with an easy, positive gearchange

acceleration in seconds	through gears*	④ th gear	⑤ th gear		
20-40mph	3.5	9.9	13.2		
30-50mph	4.5	9.5	13.1		
40-60mph	5.1	9.7	13.3		
50-70mph	7.0	10.8	14.1		
30-70mph	11.5	20.3	27.2		
max speed in each gear (*using 6250rpm for best acceleration)					
gear	①*	②*	③*	④	⑤
speed (mph)	29	54	77	106	114

SPACE AND PRACTICALITY ★☆☆☆☆

Good for tall drivers, but rear passenger space mediocre considering Impian's overall length. Rear seatbacks hinge forward to increase good luggage area, but boot lid arms intrude badly to steal space

in centimetres (4-door saloon)		inside	(† without sunroof)
outside		front	- legroom 86-109
length	447		- headroom 97-101†
width - inc mirrors	193	rear	- typical leg/ 97/
- mirrors folded	174		kneeroom 76
height (no roof bars)	142		- headroom 95
load sill height	19/69		- hiproom 126
(inside/outside)		load space (all seats in use)	
steering		(litres/cu ft)*	530/18.7
turns lock-to-lock	2.8	load length	95
turning circle (metres)	11.35	full length to fascia	No
easy to park/garage?		load width	92-136
	★★☆☆	load height	48

* Theoretical (boot lid arms impinge on load space) – see picture

CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS ★★☆☆

Clear dials and convenient stalks/switches with audio controls on steering wheel; variable intermittent front wiper. Heater/air con controls low and obscure, though. Sensible pedal layout/footrest



SAFETY ★★☆☆

ABS brakes nicely progressive and consistent. Front side airbags provided, as are three 3-point rear belts. Immobiliser and alarm (with a will of its own) standard. Rear seatbacks not thiefproof

braking	dry road stopping distance from 50mph (with standard ABS)
pedal feel ★★☆☆	pedal load
in emergency ★★☆☆	unhurried 10kg 34m
handbrake ★★☆☆	sudden 18kg 26½m best stop
	+4kg ie 22kg 26½m ABS on

EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS

Impian not yet tested

SECURITY FEATURES

central locking ✓	alarm ✓
remote control ✓	immobiliser ✓
auto window closure ✗	luggage security ★★☆☆
deadlocks ✗	
✓ standard	0 factory option ✗ not available

HANDLING AND STEERING ★★☆☆

Accurate, well-weighted steering and tidy handling with controlled roll reflect Lotus' input to chassis. Quite a sporty feel through the bends. Fail-safe handling with standard traction control back-up



COMFORT ★☆☆☆☆

Suspension has short, sharp reaction to secondary road surfaces, though ride is reasonable otherwise. Hard, thinly padded front seats with stiff backrest adjusters. Prominent tyre noise. Air conditioning standard

FUEL ECONOMY ★★☆☆

Our fuel consumption results fall short of Proton's figures. How did they achieve over 50mpg? A gentle right foot does pay dividends, though. No hiccups when filling large tank that gives a long range

AA test results (mpg)	official figures (mpg)
worst (hard/urban) 23	urban 31.4
best (gentle/rural) 46½	extra urban 52.3
overall mpg on test 36½	combined 42.2
realistic tank capacity 53 litres	CO ₂ emissions 161g/km
typical range 425 miles	car tax band B

HOW THE IMPIAN 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 from * 50mph (m/kg)	maximum legroom - front (cm)	typical leg/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	steering turns/ (p) circle (m)	overall length (cm)
PROTON IMPIAN 1.6	4/1584/102	3390	11.5	27.2/20.3	36½	26½/18	109	97/76	2.8/11.35	447
Daewoo Leganza 2.0	4/1998/132	3240	9.4	22.6/16.1	30	26/40	109	102/78	3.2/11.4	467
Ford Focus 1.6	4/1596/100	3150	10.8	29.1/20.1	40½	26½/15	107	100/71	2.9/10.6	436
Honda Civic 1.6	4/1590/110	3550	10.5	24.5/17.8	42½	26½/16	107	102/76	2.8/11.6	429
Hyundai Elantra 1.6	4/1599/106	3390	12.2	30.7/21.0	36	26/21	108	100/74	3.2/10.4	449
Skoda Octavia 1.6 †	4/1595/102	3510	11.3	24.8/18.1	35½	24/27	112	97/72	3.1/10.5	451
Vauxhall Vectra 1.8	4/1796/115	2940	11.1	28.6/20.8	38½	24/18	111	101/73	3.0/10.9	450

† 1998 version * all with ABS (p) all power assisted