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New diesel powered Vauxhall Grandland X – Road Test

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Given the turmoil in the world's car industry, the faltering global economy, falling sales, demonization of diesel engines and in the UK that touchy issue about Brexit, Vauxhall's latest advertising strapline for their Grandland X mid-sized SUV, 'Keeps Calm - Carries On', looks like sensible advice if we chose to take it.

All sectors of the new car market except SUVs show a decline in demand so Vauxhall is well placed with their trio of SUVs, the Mokka X, Crossland X and Grandland X to compete for



sales. Although the reduction in demand for diesel powered models in all classes continues, bringing the latest lower emission 1.5 litre 130 hp turbodiesel engine to market in the latest Grandland X range will appeal to high mileage users where fuel economy and company car tax rates are still important factors. It shouldn't be forgotten that the latest diesel engines for most brands will meet the current known legislative demands for many years until petrol and diesel powered cars are banned altogether. My advice is if you want a diesel model do as Vauxhall implies 'Keep Calm and Carry On'.

The Vauxhall Grandland X was introduced to UK customers just over a year ago and under the brand's new ownership by the PSA-Group, the model uses the same EMP2 platform, engines, transmissions and other components as the award winning Peugeot 3008, the DS 7 Crossback and the just introduced Citroën C5 Aircross mid-sized SUVs.



The competition is strong in this mid-sized SUV sector from other brands, headed by the Nissan Qashqai, the Ford Kuga, Kia Sportage, Hyundai Tucson, Skoda Karoq and many more.

Although the PSA Group of mid-sized SUVs all use the same platform and bodyshell, styling wise the Peugeot, Citroën and DS models look a bit more glitzy, as the Grandland X looks more conservative both outside and in. Other than the new C5 Aircross with its signature cushioned suspension and comfort seats, the Grandland X offers the most compliant ride



which a lot of customers prefer, especially those spending long periods behind the wheel.

The new 2019 Vauxhall Grandland X range has prices ranging from £23,780 up to £34,930 but the heartland models are all in the region of £25k. The latest range offers the new generation EU 6.2/ RDE2 compliant engines. These all have Start/Stop as standard and are a 1.2 litre three cylinder 130 hp turbo petrol with manual and auto gearbox options, plus the new 1.5 litre four cylinder 130 hp turbodiesel, which replaces the previous 1.6 litre 120 hp unit. The new engine is currently available only with a manual gearbox. Top of the tree is a 2.0 litre, four cylinder, 177 hp turbodiesel unit mated as standard with an automatic transmission.

Specification levels are SE, Design Line, Tech Line Nav, Sport Nav, Elite Nav and Ultimate. The availability of engines does vary depending on the spec level chosen. None are available with four wheel drive but there is the option of the Vauxhall's designation of Peugeot Group's Grip Control system called IntelliGrip, which lets the driver select from five different driving modes to optimise traction, and this option comes with grippier mud and snow tyres. This option ranges in price depending on the wheel size but starts from £200.

Whilst the 1.2 litre 130 hp, three cylinder turbocharged petrol engine with 230 Nm (170 lb.ft) of torque remains the most popular engine in the line-up, for my latest outing in the 2019 model year Grandland X range it was the new 1.5 litre, 130 hp, 300 Nm (221 lb.ft) turbodiesel unit I tried, with its standard fit six speed manual gearbox. The spec level was Tech Line Nav and this model is priced at £25,080, which given its comprehensive specification looks really good value.



The specification is comprehensive and just some of the main features are an 8-inch touchscreen with a fully integrated European sat-nav system, Smartphone connectivity with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, voice control, DAB radio, dual zone air-con, multi-function computer, cruise control with intelligent speed control, 60/40 split folding rear seats, electrically adjustable heated and folding door mirrors, alloy effect door sill covers, alloy front and rear skid plates, Safety Pack with driver drowsiness alert, forward collision alert, automatic emergency braking and lane assist, front and rear parking sensors and side blindspot alert.



Unlike the Peugeot 3008 the Grandland X doesn't have a digital cockpit layout, it's more conventional - which I like. The touchscreen is mounted centrally into the fascia panel, not mounted proud of the dashboard, and thankfully it has separate heating controls mounted below the screen which are much easier to use than with Peugeot/Citroën/DS similar models. However the heating/ventilation distribution outlets have to be adjusted via the touchscreen. Unfortunately given the recent cold spell no heated front seats are included in this spec level, they are a £200 option, or a £550 option if you want heated rear seats and heated steering wheel as well.

The quality of the interior is generally good and the driving position ideal, with a good range of seat and steering wheel adjustments. Rear seat legroom is sufficient but not generous, although still better than a Qashqai. There is a generous sized boot ranging from 514 to 1,652 litres (18.15 to 58.34 cu.ft).

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

Outside the front has a conservatively styled face, some will say bland. The side profile has a rising waistline, a coupé style roof - lowered towards the rear of the car, and a neat spoiler links nicely to the large rear tailgate.



The handling is well controlled, the ride quality comfortable and it's easy and well balanced to drive whether fully loaded or not. The nitty-gritty of this Grandland X model is the use of the latest fuel-efficient, cleaner CO2 and NOx emission turbodiesel engine.

With 10 hp more than the outgoing 1.6 litre unit, the new 1.5 litre 130 hp turbodiesel feels livelier and more responsive, although with the six speed manual gearbox you still need to make full use of the gear ratios to keep it in its most responsive powerband. With 300 Nm (221 lb.ft) of torque available from 1,750 rpm, for it to be responsive for acceleration you need to keep the turbocharger blowing. Drop below the 1,750 rpm level and the response is 'flat' until the revs pick up. However pottering around town at low speeds the unit is very flexible and smooth, it just takes time to pick-up momentum moving from low to medium



and then higher speeds. In winding country road driving I found fourth and fifth gears to be optimum and that was confirmed by the gearchange prompt light. Open road driving varied between fifth and sixth gear ratios with top gear happiest when over 60 mph was reached.

Tall gear ratios are an important element in meeting new emission standards and improving fuel economy. This Grandland X 1.5 litre model has a new WLTP Combined Cycle figure of 55.4 mpg and my week of test driving saw an overall average of 49.7 mpg. With CO2 emissions of just 110 g/km current VED First Year diesel rate road tax is £165 before reverting to the Standard rate of £140. From April the rates change for this RDE2 compliant engine to a First Year rate of £150 and then £145 Standard rate for year two onwards. Company car drivers will currently pay 27% Benefit-in-Kind tax and that goes up to 30% from April this year, which might further dent the appeal of diesel power for already highly taxed business car drivers. Insurance, given it's a well equipped SUV model, is a relatively low Group 14E.

VERDICT

An important mid-sized SUV model in the Vauxhall line-up, courtesy of its partnership with PSA Peugeot-Citroen.

For: High spec, brilliant PSA Group engine options, roomy, comfortable, practical and well laid out logical and easy to use controls.

Against: Doesn't have the unlimited mileage warranty of the Peugeot 3008, some people might find the front exterior styling rather bland and the same applies to the fascia layout.



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Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Vauxhall Grandland X Tech Line Nav, 1.5 Turbo D, 130 hp, manual.

Price: £25,080.

Engine/transmission: 1.5 litre, four cylinder, turbodiesel, 130 hp, 300 Nm (221 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm, six speed manual.



Performance: 119 mph, 0-60 mph 10.2 seconds.

Fuel consumption: WLTP Combined Cycle 55.4 mpg (49.7 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 110 g/km, VED First year road tax £165 then £140 Standard rate, BiK company car tax 27%.

Insurance Group: 14E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,477 mm (14.69 ft), W 1,856 mm (6.09 ft), H 1,609 mm (5.28 ft), boot/load space 514 to 1,652 litres (18.15 to 58.34 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,400 kg (3,086 lb), five doors/five seats.