

First Drives: Vauxhall Insignia

Guernsey provides a great challenge for driving.

Cars owned by the locals are bashed and dented. So too, are the hire cars. The reason for this, I soon discover, is that the roads can be uncomfortably narrow. And I mean so narrow that there's absolutely nowhere to pull over.

Lay-bys are few and far between. If you meet an oncoming motorist one of you will have to reverse for some distance in order to get passed.

So, what better place to put the Vauxhall Insignia through its paces?

When I first sit in the Insignia my first impression is that it feels wide and when I use the indicators the stalk feels a little too plasticky and flimsy for my liking. Then I cannot fathom how to open the boot. After watching Vauxhall's YouTube video I understand. The very sleek design at first makes you think that the emblem is just that but look closer and there is a bit of a gap between this and the bodywork. So, push it down and the boot opens. Simple. A little gap appears between the boot lid and the bumper; slide your hand into this and open the boot. I'm not convinced that this is very easy compared to traditional grab handles and if it's dirty you're going to get filthy.

The boot itself is sizeable and while there is a good amount of room in the rear for three passengers, installing three standard child seats is a chore due to the placement of the seatbelt slots.

The Insignia is comfortable to drive but the manual six speed

Tim Saunders tries Vauxhall's family saloon for size in the confines of Guernsey

gearbox is notchy. There's an electric handbrake. The sat nav is a joy to use, being simple to operate.

And so, perhaps naively, we visit Guernsey not really appreciating what will await us.

Boarding the ferry introduces us to tight spaces. Motorists are warned about disabling their alarms so that they don't go off during the sea crossing. I've never fathomed how to do this and hope that it doesn't. It's all fine.

On arriving at Saint Peter Port, Guernsey, we are introduced to the 35mph speed limit and the fact that there are no speed cameras. But the police use mobile radar guns. Apparently offending motorists must attend court and are banned for anything from one month upwards. "This should be the case in the UK," says a taxi driver, adding that speeding has been drastically cut as a result.

With trepidation I potter around the island's roads but note that locals can become very impatient and are not averse to using their



horns, even if they happen to be an elderly woman.

There's certainly no chance to exceed 35mph on this tiny island and so we have to wait until we return to Poole to get up to 70mph when cruise control can be engaged and more relaxed mainland driving can be enjoyed. 🇮🇪

THE BIG NUMBERS

Price.....	£18,995
Engine	1.5 Turbo
Power.....	165bhp
0 to 60mph	8.4secs
Top speed	138mph
Economy	50mpg

Watch the video at www.testdrives.biz

