

PROBLEMS WITH THE SAT NAV

By Tim Saunders, Motoring Correspondent

This week I test the Seat Tarraco; a sports utility vehicle. It's high up and can also transport seven occupants in comfort.

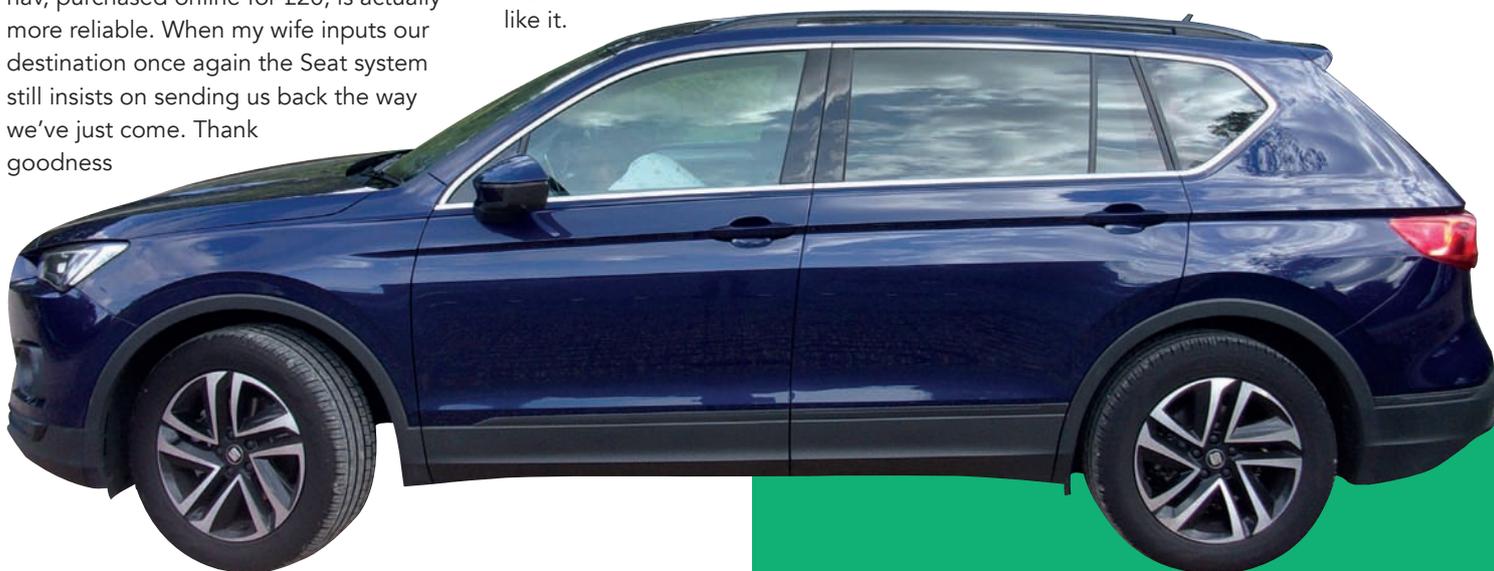
From a distance this Atlantic blue model looks just like a Skoda or VW but with Seat badging. But on closer inspection, unfortunately it's not up to their standard of build quality. The driver's seat isn't as supportive; my back complaining after a 70-mile trip to Sherborne in Dorset. The six-speed manual gearbox is notchy. And don't get me started on the sat nav. Fortunately, I know where Sherborne is but the sat nav doesn't. As always I give it the benefit of the doubt but when it keeps making mistakes I get fed up. When it tells me to turn off the A31 I think it must know a cunning shortcut that I don't and I've been driving this route for over 25 years. I quickly realise it doesn't and curse as we get stuck in yet more traffic. It comes to something when my very cheap sat nav, purchased online for £20, is actually more reliable. When my wife inputs our destination once again the Seat system still insists on sending us back the way we've just come. Thank goodness

I'm obstinate. Eventually it simmers down and when it suggests taking us down the A357 I relent. These roads are some of the steepest and bumpiest I have driven on for some time but the Tarraco handles it well and its height provides wonderful views of the lush green fields to the left and right. Heidi (7) and Henry (4) are sitting in the third row of seats in the boot while Harriett (7) has opted for peace and quiet in the middle row. I can see why large vehicles like this work well for families. In economy mode it is a slow vehicle.

There's no 30 on the reading, and this is probably the most important speed. After driving it for some time I then discover that there is an exact speed reading underneath the 160mph. It's just not logical. I don't like it.

We take the Tarraco to Hestercombe near Taunton. On both directions the sat nav insists that there's four miles of queuing traffic on the A36 heading towards Salisbury. I give it the benefit of the doubt on the outward journey but find that all it does is take us on a detour via some country lanes only to lead us back to the worst part of the A36 where there are always traffic jams. Absolutely useless. It's one of the worst sat navs I have come across. The Tarraco's saving grace is its height because on our return trip there is torrential flooding that causes some roads to be completely impassable for some motorists. However, thankfully the Tarraco takes what is probably approaching two feet of water in its stride.

Tim Saunders is an advanced motorist and journalist. He has always been passionate about motoring and regularly reviews cars from the leading manufacturers. His first report on a BMW 520i was published in the Dorset Echo when he was 17 (just after passing his driving test) in 1995. He went on to become business and motoring editor at the Bournemouth Echo.



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FACTS AT A GLANCE

Seat Tarraco 1.5 TSi EVO

Price: £29,670

Engine: 1.5-litre petrol

Economy: 43mpg during test

Power: 150bhp

CO2 emissions: 151g/km

0-60mph: 9.7secs

Top speed: 125mph

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