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Flagship Vauxhall Insignia GSi BiTurbo Diesel – Road Test

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Vauxhall's new Insignia GSi performance flagship models arrive...

... Assessed by David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

The new Vauxhall Insignia range of Grand Sport five door D-segment hatchbacks and Sports Tourer estate were launched last year and in March this year the flagship higher performance GSi versions in both body style arrived in UK showrooms. Prices start from £33,415 on-the-road with both engines costing the same, only the price of the body style differs.

In addition to the availability in both body styles there are two, four cylinder engine choices for the new GSi models. These are 2.0 litre 260 hp, 400 Nm (295 lb.ft) turbo petrol and 2.0



litre BiTurbo 210 hp, 480 Nm (354 lb.ft) turbodiesel units and these units are also available in other models with lesser specification levels. Both engine choices with the GSi come as standard with an eight-speed automatic gearbox, all wheel drive with torque vectoring, FlexRide chassis adjustment, Brembo four cylinder brakes with Michelin Pilot Sport tyres on 20-inch alloy rims.

In Grand Sport hatchback body style the Insignia GSi petrol achieves 0-60mph in 6.9 seconds and has a top speed of 155 mph, the diesel's corresponding figures are 7.3 seconds and 145 mph. Combined Cycle fuel economy is 32.8 mpg with CO2 emissions of 197 g/km for the petrol and 40.4 mpg and 186 g/km for the BiTurbo diesel.

Drivers looking for additional space can select the Sports Tourer estate body style, available from £34,915 on-the-road. The petrol model's figures are 7.1 seconds, 152 mph, 32.5 mpg and 199 g/km. The diesel's figures are 7.4 seconds, 144 mph, 39.8 mpg and 187 g/km.



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Exterior design features include chrome air intakes, front and rear GSi bumpers, side sills and a large GSi rear spoiler (Grand Sport only), as well as incorporating Vauxhall's innovative IntelliLux LED matrix headlamps. On the inside, the GSi features full-leather front sports seats, aluminium pedals, eight-inch colour information display with navigation, plus a Bose sound system and head-up display.



Four driving modes are available through the GSi's FlexRide system, allowing damping, steering, gear change-up points and the car's stability and traction systems to be configured according to a driver's preference. The Tour mode felt the best suited to our road conditions most of the time.

Despite the castigation of diesel powered models Vauxhall still expects the BiTurbo engine and the Grand Sport five door hatchback body to be the most popular version with sales/leasing mainly to high ranking business users, with a healthy demand further down the road from retail used car buyers wanting a roomy good looking, highly equipped sports machine.

Competitor large family car sector models are high spec Ford Mondeos, Skoda Superb, VW



Passat and Arteon and dipping into the premium brands the Audi A4/A6, BMW 3/5-Series, Jaguar XF and Mercedes E-Class models.

Going with the flow of what is likely to be the most popular Insignia GSi model I slid behind the wheel to test drive for an extended period the Grand Sport version with the potentially most popular BiTurbo diesel engine.



The Insignia GSi could be one of the last wholly Vauxhall/Opel model range developed solely by them and all future models will come through their new partnership with the French PSA Group and indeed that is already underway with the Crossland X and Grandland X SUVs.

The Insignia GSi effectively replaces the VRX8 Saloon, now defunct from the Vauxhall line-



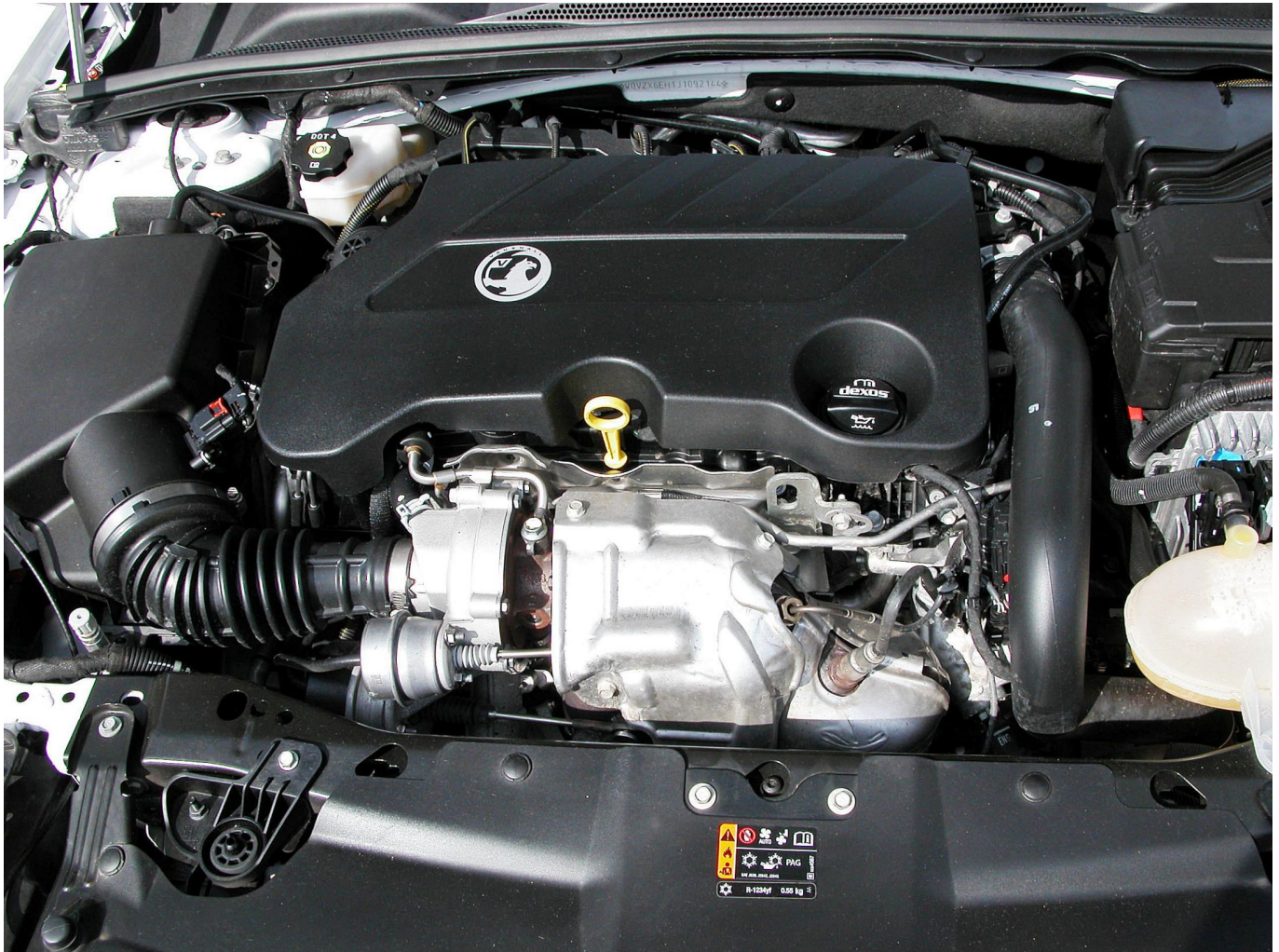
up as EU6 engine emission regulations are in force. The GSi badging has been reintroduced by Vauxhall 25 years ago after it was first used for 'hot' Corsa models. A new Corsa GSi 1.4 litre 150 hp turbo petrol model is scheduled to arrive this Autumn, replacing the Corsa VXR.

Like other models in the Insignia's range, the GSi has shed weight - in this case, 160 kg (353 lb) versus the first-generation VXR which preceded it. Combined with a 10 mm (0.39 in) lower ride height, the difference improves the steering, body control and overall agility, say Vauxhall. They make much 'marketing speak' from the fact the GSi is the fastest Vauxhall yet around Germany's Nurburgring, where much of its chassis development was carried out, and is a full 12.0 seconds quicker than the outgoing, and more powerful Insignia VXR.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

All the GSi exterior styling additions fit the bill, giving the already smart looking Insignia more road presence and kerb appeal. Inside the up-market sports tweaks add a bit more sporting glamour and the spec level is high. Indeed the only annoying missing item of spec I found was the lack of a reversing camera which seems a notable omission, given the sleek design and steeply raked tailgate window of the Grand Sport hatchback doesn't have great rear and rear quarter visibility. An electronically opening and closing tailgate for the price would have been nice as well.

But it's the BiTurbo turbodiesel engine, auto gearbox and 4x4 drivetrain that gives the GSi version of the Insignia Grand Sport its main appeal, especially for drivers who cover high mileages. It is very much more of an open road mile-eater than a cut and thrust sports machine. It is far more at home on motorways where it devours long journeys with effortless ease and with excellent traction and stability. Narrower country roads and the big hatchback is more of a handful and lacks the precise handling and agility of its German premium brand competitors. Yes there are various driving modes to select from but I found the Tour mode the most useful and comfortable.



Top speed is 145 mph and the zero to 60 mph acceleration time is brisk at 7.3 seconds. Acceleration right through the speed range is strong thanks to the 480 Nm (354 lb.ft) of torque available from just 1,500 rpm. Having said this model is best as an open road cruiser, the engine and gearbox combination still remains user-friendly enough around town and in stop-start traffic where the auto gearbox comes into its own, but it's the open road where it is most at home.

The relatively high price also comes with high running costs. With CO2 emissions of 186 g/km the new diesel VED First Year rate road tax cost is £1,240 but reverts down to the industry norm of £140 for the annual Standard rate from year two of ownership onwards.



The Benefit-in-Kind tax for company car drivers is the maximum 37% rate but insurance costs are friendlier with a group 24E rating. The Combined Cycle official fuel consumption figure is 40.4 mpg and during my 10 days of driving, covering all types of journeys, the real-life figure was 38.5 mpg, which given the performance and with the 4×4 drive system was impressive. It just goes to show that big powerful engines have to work less hard and that leads to the potential for good fuel economy. Less stress on the engine equals better mpg.

VERDICT

This BiTurbo GSi Grand Sport is only ever going to be a niche model within the extensive Insignia range and lesser powered and lower specced models are potentially better buys for most users. But there is obviously demand from a minority of customers who have the need for effortless speed, even in today's traffic congested world of motoring.

For: Elegant exterior looks enhanced by sports styling tweaks, smart interior with sports trim, high specification, very strong diesel engine with huge torque, good fuel economy potential, a roomy well equipped 'mile-muncher'.

Against: Expensive, with high tax costs, compliant handling rather than precise agility, no rear view camera, ungenerous warranty.



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

Vauxhall Insignia GSi Grand Sport 2.0 210 hp BiTurbo 4×4 automatic.

Price: £33,415.

Engine/transmission: 2.0 litre, four cylinder, twin turbocharger diesel, 210 hp, 480 Nm (354 lb.ft) of torque from 1,500 rpm, eight speed auto with 4×4 traction.



Performance: 145 mph, 0-60 mph 7.3 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 40.4 mpg (38.5 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 186 g/km, diesel First Year VED road tax £1,240 then £140 Standard rate, BiK company car tax rate 37%.

Insurance Group: 24E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,910 mm (16.11 ft), W 1,871 mm (6.14 ft), H 1,455 mm (4.77 ft), wheelbase 2,829 mm (9.28 ft), boot/load space 490 to 1,450 litres (17.30 to 51.21 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,805 kg (3,979 lb), five doors/five seats.