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Mazda 6 Tourer – Road Test

Published: November 28, 2017

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Online version: <https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/mazda-6-tourer-road-test/>



Keith Ward test drives the Mazda6 Tourer (estate car).

WHILE a new, fourth generation Mazda 6 is on the far horizon, with a global unveiling at this month's Los Angeles Motor Show, the current version continues to hold respect here.

That is particularly in estate form, an old faithful which accounts for 70 per cent of the model's 8,000 UK sales to date (end of October) this year and is looked at here. Note there is no hatchback version of the 6, so this is the only alternative to the saloon.

In practical terms, you can see the 6 estate's appeal to business users as well as to families. With rear seats lowered, the luggage deck extends to a level 1,680 mm on our tape, or five and a half feet, rating a cargo volume of nearly 1,650 litres (58.27 cu.ft) to beat in this respect such rival estates as the VW Golf, Ford Focus and Vauxhall Astra.



With all seats up, there is good leg and head room in a generally comfortable cabin, pleasantly furnished.

From a seven-strong range starting at just under £23,000, our sample was the top-trim Sport Nav with the heartiest 175 PS diesel, breasting £27,000. It comes with navigation, reversing camera, black leather, powered and heated front seats, colour active driving display on an easy-to-use screen, powerful 11-speaker Bose audio and 19-inch alloys.

That price was further boosted to £28,555 by special paint and an £800 Safety Pack of adaptive LED headlights, blind spot monitoring, rear cross traffic alert, lane keep assist on the open road plus automatic emergency braking in city traffic, all worthy.

On the road, this estate is good to drive and is no lumbering load-lugger, clocking just 8.0 seconds to the 100 kph or 62.5 mph and responding through a slick six-speed box. It's an easy cruiser for long-distance users, when initial noise from the four-cylinder diesel has settled down and the ride is happiest, away from some choppiness in town when those big 19-inch wheels encounter increasingly common pot-holes and patches.

On fuel, this diesel was returning around 48 mpg against an official combined rating of 61.4. There is a less thirsty 150 PS unit available in the 6 and a pair of petrols at 145 or 165 PS to cater for the increasingly diesel-shy market.

Over the years, Mazda have gathered fans among long-term owners who have praised the engineering pedigree and durability of the cars, although the warranty remains at a standard three years and question marks have cropped up in recent times.

The Consumers' Association Which? magazine, in a generally favourable review recently, adds: "The reliability of the current Mazda 6 is average – it scores three stars out of five for cars aged up to three years old, according to our latest survey. The main problem area is the onboard computer, with glitches affecting about one in 12 surveyed cars."

When it comes to alternative power, Mazda declare themselves to be "Concentrating for the



time being on further evolution of the internal combustion engine”, adding: “We are a small company... on a quest to make the best internal combustion engine in the world.”

To that end, they disclose work on an exclusive new power unit combining the high-revving and cleaner exhaust of petrol – in Mazda terms their SKYACTIV-G technology – with the superior take-off response and economy of a diesel – their SKYACTIV-D. So the cross-over SKYACTIV-X now under development is a next-generation petrol engine harnessing petrol-type spark to diesel-type compression ignition – a first.

Meanwhile Mazda are hedging their bets by jointly developing with Toyota an electric car for 2019 and a plug-in hybrid for 2021. And driverless? They insist: “We believe people will want to go on driving cars and we will continue to build cars which people want to drive.”





Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Mazda 6 Tourer 2.2 Sport Nav 175ps Diesel.

Type: Medium estate; five seat; five door.

Size: Length 4,805 mm (15.76 ft); width 1,840 mm (6.04 ft); height 1,475 mm (4.84 ft); kerb weight 1,602 kg (3,532 lb).

Boot Deck length 1,040 – 1,680 mm (3.41 – 5.51 ft); luggage volume 506 – 1,648 litres (17.87 – 58.20 cu.ft).

Engine: Diesel; 2,191 cc; four cylinder; six speed manual; front wheel drive.

Power: 173 bhp @ 4,500 rpm; max torque 420 Nm (310 lb.ft) @ 2,000 rpm

Pace: 137 mph; 0-62 in 8.0 sec.

MPG: On test 48.2; official combined 61.4; tank 62 litres (13.64 Imperial gallons).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 121 g/km; Euro 6; Band G; VED £160 then £140; tax liability 25%.

Tyres: 225/45 on 19-inch alloys; puncture repair kit (i.e. no spare wheel!).

Insurance Group: 23E.

Warranty: 36 months/36,000 miles.

Service: Every 12 months/12,500 miles.

PRICE: £27,195; as tested (including £800 Safety Pack) £28,555.



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Rivals (estates): Kia c'eed SW; Honda Civic; Skoda Octavia; VW Golf; Ford Focus;
Vauxhall Astra; SEAT Leon ST