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MG GS Road Test

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The MG GS – A New Kid on the Crossover Block.

By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

“Is that the new MG Crossover”, just one of several questions people asked during my spell with the latest Crossover to come to the fast expanding SUV and Crossover market sector.

“It’s much larger than I thought” said one Nissan Qashqai owner. I said “Why did you think it was a small vehicle” – “Well the price” he said. And so the various conversations went on during my week with the MG GS. I have to say it caused more comments and looks inside and under the bonnet from interested people than most other new vehicles I have driven recently. The £395 Sunset Orange paintwork option my test car has also proved popular.

And the price is the hook that could be catching new UK customers as it starts from just £14,995 which is ultra competitive in the five-door mid-sized Crossover market sector. There are three versions in the range, Explore at £14,995, Excite at £17,495 and the model I tried – the Exclusive at £19,495. Three year PCP purchase costs range from £199 to £299 a month plus MG is offering an £850 deposit contribution using their finance scheme.

All models are powered by the same 1.5 litre 166 hp turbocharged petrol engine. Most versions have a six-speed manual gearbox but there is a seven-speed dual clutch automatic available for the top spec version which brings the price up to £20,995. All version are have 2WD and the icing on the cake is they are covered by a five-year warranty.

Although built in China, the MG GS was designed and engineered by MG Motor UK at the famous Longbridge plant and it sells alongside the MG3 supermini and the larger MG6 hatchbacks. As a reminder, the famous British MG brand was launched in 1924 building iconic sports cars. In 2005 the assets of MG Motors were bought by the Chinese Nanjing Auto and in turn they were taken over by SAIC of China in 2007 and their subsidiary is MG Motor UK, based in Longbridge, Birmingham, which also houses their sales and marketing operations.



The MG GS sells against the sector-leading Nissan Qashqai as well as the Renault Kadjar, Kia Sportage, Hyundai Tucson, Honda HR-V, Mitsubishi ASX and Suzuki Vitara but also it competes, due to its low price, with the budget Crossover models such as the Dacia Duster and SsangYong Tivoli. MG also plans to launch a smaller Crossover which will compete for sales against the Nissan Juke, Peugeot 2008 and Renault Captur.

The MG GS will more than double the brand's UK sales from their limited model range to around 5,000 units this year. MG's UK sales are up by 13.5% for the first six months of this year at 1,896 registrations.

The MG GS biggest selling point, apart from must-have SUV styling, is the price undercutting most of its rivals. Not even the base version is low on specification and is probably the best-buy of the range. Air conditioning, LED daytime running lights, cruise control, trip computer, electric windows, 17-inch alloys, electronic parking brake, hill hold assist, Stop/Start and folding split rear seats are all standard. Excite models additions include auto headlights, rear parking sensors and rear view camera, DAB radio, Bluetooth and Mirror Link connectivity. Top of the range Exclusive models additions include 18-inch alloys, front fog lights, leather sport seats, electrically adjusted and heated front seats, iGO navigation, electrically adjusted and heated door mirrors, roof bars, side steps and central locking.



All versions are 4,500 mm (14.76 ft) long, 1,855 mm (6.18 ft) wide and 1,665 mm (5.46 ft) high with a 335 litre (11.83 cu.ft) boot expanding to 1,336 litres (47.18 cu.ft) with the rear seats folded flat, and all versions get a space-saver spare wheel for peace of mind motoring. The boot and load space, with no load-over lip, is not as big as the Qashqai or even the smaller and cheaper Tivoli, but it is adequate for most users unless they have a large family. That said rear seat headroom and legroom is good enough for two adults and three children so it measure up for families or empty nesters wanting to get into the fashionable Crossover market at a budget price.

There are some cheap looking hard plastics used for the interior trim but look on them as



durable rather than aesthetically pleasing. The fascia looks dated by European standards but it does the job well enough and the top-of-the range Exclusive model adds some nicer quality touches with the leather upholstery and piano black trim inserts. The high-set seating positions give a good field-of-view of the road and countryside and there is plenty of adjustment for the driver's seat and steering wheel.

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The exterior styling is classic modern SUV style with a strong bonnet with creased styling lines, V-shaped grille with a prominent MG badge, sleek headlights and a huge lower grille. There are flared wheelarches, higher ground clearance and sculptured panels at the side and rear. There is the usual rising waistline and sloping Coupe styling roofline which adds the 'Sport' element to the SUV/Crossover design.

The only engine available for the UK market is the 1.5-litre four cylinder turbocharged petrol unit, developed jointly with General Motors. It develops 166 hp at a high engine speed of 5,600 rpm and 255 Nm (188 lb.ft) of torque through a wide power band of 1,600 rpm to 4,300 rpm - although it doesn't feel that strong or responsive until 3,000 rpm is reached. You can gather from these figures that this is a high revving unit, it likes to be worked to be at its best. At low in-town speeds it can be finicky as you need to get the revs just right to avoid stalling the engine or over-revving it - resulting in tyre-squeal during acceleration from standstill with its front wheel drive only layout. However the engine is quiet at cruising speeds and during gentle acceleration.



The top speed is 118 mph and zero to 62 mph takes 9.6 seconds. Officially the Combined Cycle fuel consumption for the manual version I tried is 46.3 mpg and during my week-long test the overall figure was 36.8 mpg and that included a motorway journey, local country A/B roads and some in-town stop/start driving. It is not in real-life as fuel efficient as I expected. With CO2 emissions of 139 g/km, the VED road tax is £130 every year and company car drivers will pay 24% Benefit-in-Kind tax. Insurance is rated as Band 17E.

Ride comfort is generally on the firm side although MG says the suspension, MacPherson struts at the front and multi-link at the rear, has been tuned for UK roads. More tuning



needs to be done. It needs to be more compliant to soak up impacts from potholes and iron out the expansion joints on motorways. Depending upon the state of the road surface handling can be fidgety at higher speeds but there seemed to be plenty of cornering grip and the steering was well-weighted and relatively precise.

VERDICT

Overall the new MG GS Crossover offers plenty of passenger space, a good level of specification, a five year/80,000 mile warranty and distinctive styling, all at a budget price for the cheapest version. The £14,995 Explore version makes the most sense because of its low price but it still has a reasonable and practical level of specification. The Exclusive model I tried is much less appealing because of its higher price, bearing in mind it will have to compete with models being discounted in price because of the competitive nature of this sector.

For: Good value low starting price of the range, high spec, 5 year warranty, roomy apart from the boot, willing engine, slick gearchange.

Against: Lacks the overall refinement in ride comfort, handling and the quality of the interior of most of its competitors, no diesel engine option.



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

MG GS Exclusive, 5-door Crossover.

Engine: 1.5 litre, four cylinder, direct injection turbocharged petrol, 166 hp, 255 Nm (188lb.ft) of torque from 1,600 rpm to 4,300 rpm.

Transmission: 6-speed manual, front wheel drive.



Performance:

0-62mph: 9.6-seconds.

Top speed: 118 mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 46.3 mpg (36.8 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 139 g/km, VED road tax £130, BIK company car tax 24%.
Insurance Group: 17E.

Warranty: 5-years/80,000-miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,500 mm (14.76 ft), W 1,855 mm (6.18 ft), H 1,665 mm (5.46 ft), boot/load space 335 to 1,336 litres (11.83 to 47.18 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,750 kg (3,858 lb), 5 doors/5 seats.

Price: £19,495 (range starts at £14,995).