All-electric Vauxhall Corsa – Road Test

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Vauxhall Corsa-e Elite Nav 11kW plugged-in…

…and driven by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

Britain’s oldest car-maker is gearing up for the electric future, beginning with the Corsa-e.

The highly popular small hatchback is a natural starting point aimed at those who mostly commute or have low mileage lifestyles. It has dabbled in the EV sector between 2012 and 2015 with the electric and petrol assisted Vauxhall Ampera, but that was axed by the American owners at the time.

Now, responding to the UK Government's drive towards lower and zero emission cars from 2030, the Vauxhall Corsa-e is available in six trim versions but is purely electric drive.

Launched last year just as all car sales slowed when the coronavirus broke out, Vauxhall has since rejigged the Corsa-e model trims and cut prices while improving specifications.

However, these still see the Corsa price list showing the Corsa-e series at almost double the price of their petrol stablemates, which is a potential setback to ownership.

Even at the higher price, the Corsa-e comes with only a rapid charger power cable and if you want to charge at home from a normal domestic socket the optional cable will cost over £585.

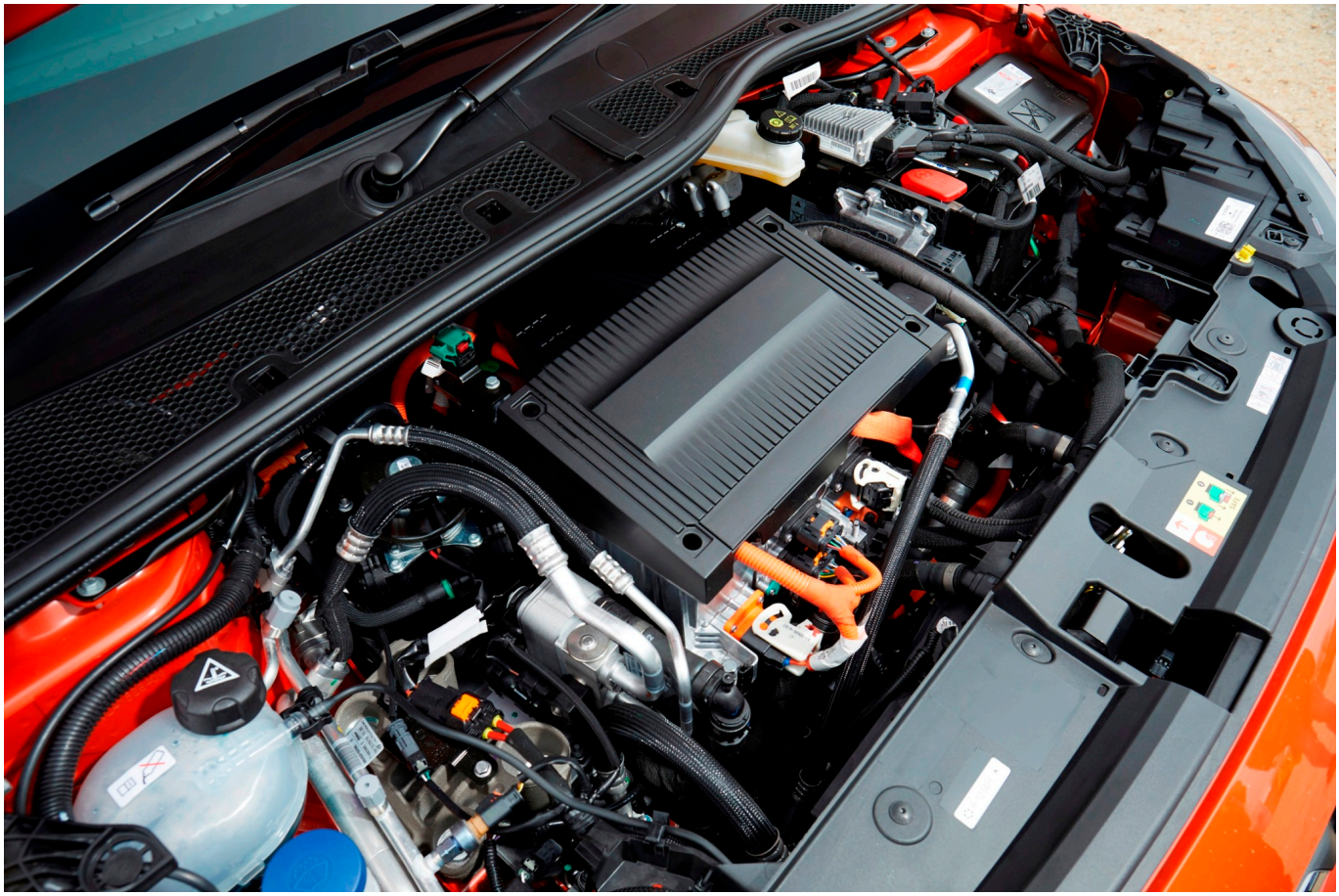
Vauxhall is hoping to boost the take up of its Corsa-e with a special home charging offer until 11 January. Take out a PCP at £330 a month and British Gas will fit a Home Charging Unit with Exclusive Tariff covering 30,000 miles electricity credit.

The offer is available on Corsa-e Personal Contract Hire whilst stocks last and users receive a free six-month subscription to the Polar public charging network when away from home.

A key change for 2021 models is the on-the-road price reduction across every all-electric Corsa-e variant, with savings of more than £1,000 on-the-road for entry-level SE Nav Premium models, making each of the six fully electric models better value.

All Corsa-e trim levels have also been renamed for 2021, and now include ‘Premium’ as part of the new naming structure in recognition of the comprehensive standard equipment. The Corsa-e is available in SE Nav Premium, SRi Nav Premium and Elite Nav Premium.

All Corsa-e models feature a 50 kWh battery and 100 kW or 136 PS electric motor, capable of a claimed 209 miles potential range from a single charge. Supporting up to 100 kW rapid charging, an 80% charge can be achieved in just 30 minutes.



How you drive and the sport, normal or eco modes chosen by the transmission tunnel button actually determine the real range and play a big part in the practicality of the Corsa-e.

For instance a near 80% charge indicated about 120 miles on our test car but after just a few miles it was down to about 100 miles. Staying off motorways and high speed roads and using A-class roads we managed to regenerate some electricity by coasting and braking and after 52 miles journey it indicated about 98 miles left to range.

That was confusing enough and I am told ambient temperatures can have a significant impact on the charging and range. However, returning the same 52 miles saw the range falling to a little over 45 miles.

This wide fluctuation in energy use and range over the same distance defies logic. Even running with lights and heating may affect the range and in the winter you need wipers as well and have to factor in these power uses.

That said, the charging network is growing and you are usually fairly close to a point but it's best to use a dedicated charging map and sign up to a number of power point providers to make payment as easy as possible. We had an issue with an Engie chargepoint at Parc y Scarlets, Llanelli which was overcome with a call to the control centre and a very helpful assistant. It's just that you don't want to be stuck at a poorly lit charge point on a cold evening while the car reboots. A domestic charging connection should be standard not an extra.

The connection and range issues aside, the Corsa-e is a very civilised commuter car with

excellent seats and a comfortable ride, good infotainment and connectivity and a respectable turn of speed when needed. Heating and ventilation was good.

Press on and the Corsa-e chassis is up to the job, delivering good responses to steering, brakes and throttle, with strong roadholding and no vices in its handling.

A slim-roofline design ensures excellent vision and the wipers and lights are up to their task on winter days.

Controls are well laid out around the wheel, across the fascia and on the central console and the driver and passengers have good but not exceptional room.

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Access is easy and the boot quick to load or empty with a near doubling of capacity when the rear seatback is folded.

With its electric motor spinning away and driving the front wheels, there is very little mechanical noise in the Corsa-e and what is comes from the tyres and suspension.

After the initial shock of the list price, the Corsa-e running costs are very low with, at the time of writing, no tax costs and recurring charges are non-existent. It also looks very

attractive inside and out and it’s very refined and stylish.

VERDICT

There is a place for the Corsa-e but Vauxhall really need to look at its pricing in the sector where other pure battery and hybrid models are competing for buyers.

For: Easy to drive, very responsive, good handling, comfortable seats and suspension, adequate for four people, good controls, clear visibility, cheap to run.

Against: Hugely variable driving range, comes without a domestic charging cable so that’s almost £600 extra, road noise intrusion, expensive to buy.

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

Vauxhall Corsa-e Elite Nav 11kW.

Price: £31,810 after £3,000 plug-in grant and including options.

Mechanical: 100 kW/136 hp synchronous electric motor, 260 Nm (192 lb.ft), 50 kW lithium-ion battery, automatic, front wheel drive.

Performance: 93 mph, 0 – 60 mph 7.6 seconds, WLTP driving range 209 miles, 120 miles on test, CO2 0/g/km.

Tax costs: VED First Year £0, Standard rate £0, BiK company car tax 0%.

Insurance Group: 25E.

Warranty: 8-years/100,000 miles.

Size: L 4.06 m (13.32 ft), W 1.96 m (6.43 ft), H 1.44 m (4.72 ft).

Capacities: 5-doors/5-seats, boot space 309 – 1,118 litres (10.91 – 39.48 cu.ft).