BYD Atto 3 Design – Road Test

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Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales) puts this BYD newcomer through its paces.

There is no doubt that China's BYD car company is a new major challenger to legend European manufacturers with its Atto 3 cross-over.

Not only does it have Europe's familiar family cars in sight but it will be aiming to pick off sales from the Korean and Japanese brands which have had it much their own way up to now.

Build Your Dreams, to give the company its full name, launched in Britain with the Atto 3 mid-way through 2023 and followed up at the end of the year with its Dolphin and Seal saloons as it progressively establishes 90 showrooms by 2025 with well-known retailers, supported by stand-alone service centres infilling these locations.

They have a good warranty and the sophisticated lithium iron phosphate battery is guaranteed for eight years or 125,000 miles, which will appeal to business buyers and taxi businesses with its range efficiency and rapid recharging. On a 150 kW fast charge point it will boost from 30 to 80% in under half an hour, enough to cover 200 miles approximately.


Powertrain Domain Controller
Cooling Type : Water-Cooling
BYD Auto Industry Co., Ltd.
BYD

The five-seat BYD Atto 3 launched in three trim levels, Active from £36,490, Comfort £36,990 and Design £38,990. Our top-line Design specification included powered tailgate, multi-colour interior lighting, air purification system, 15.6-inch rotary touchscreen, 11 kW heat exchanger charger and 3 phase charging cable. All models are mechanically identical and have the same “Dragon Face” design style.

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The simple switch on and sweep away starting system was silent and acceleration good for a car weighing 1.7 tonnes but it was not neck-snapping as some BEVs can be.

You have to anticipate overtaking opportunities and prepare to move accordingly when a gap appears because the mid-range pickup is good but not sports-car like.

It did respond well to the accelerator, with strong braking a bonus and regeneration can be tailored to taste and boosting the battery to extend range. The steering felt a bit lifeless at speed and around town the turning circle could have been tighter when parking.

Secondary controls on the wheel, column, fascia and console were convenient and worked well, and those for opening the air vents were eye-catching as well as very effective.

The compact display immediately infront of the driver carried the barest of information but it was neatly and cleanly shown. The Atto 3 party piece must be the 15.6-inch central infotainment display which can be rotated from landscape to portrait modes, ideal when following directions.

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Our test car came with a sophisticated air purification system for smoggy cities and the air conditioning worked very well throughout the large cabin. A big sunroof is standard as well as four powered windows.

There was plenty of oddments room in the cabin for a family car although the individual recesses were on the small side, but I smiled at the elasticated strapping on the door casings and the quirky door opening handles to get out.



The bootspace was good for a family of five and the capacity could be quickly increased as the 60:40 split rear seats folded down almost flat giving access to the front of any cargo.


BE23 BYD

With all seats in use, entry and exit was easy and generally leg and headroom was good for anyone of normal height but taller rear seat passengers might find their head brushing the roof.

The seats were nicely shaped to support and locate occupants, with good adjustment on the front pair and they helped smooth out the sometimes lumpy ride over very bad surfaces which could be heard passing underneath.

Body roll was evident as the Atto 3 is not a sporting crossover in the true sense and it did not feel very agile when pushed hard through a series of bends, but it did stay on line and roadholding was safe and surefooted.

The big windows, good washers and wipers, with lots of sensors, helped when driving or manoeuvering but at night I would have liked faster reacting automatic headlights with a brighter long range main beam.

VERDICT

Apart from the constant though mostly low level of road rumbles the Atto 3 was a very quiet car which added to its visible sophistication and refinement.

The equipment and features were pleasing and represent very good value but the Atto 3 goes further because it is also a pleasant drive, distinctive to look at and has an honest 260 miles range with practical recharging time an long warranty.

If BYD is to do really well, it needs a bigger dealer network and a customer relations ethic which exceeds competitors.

For: Extremely stylish, very well equipped, good range, easy to drive, good seats, reasonable performance.

Against: Ever present road noise, lumpy ride, big turning circle and weak headlights.

FAST FACTS

Model: BYD Atto 3 Design

Price: £38,990

Mechanical: 204 PS/ 310 Nm motor, 60 kWh 150 Ah battery, front wheel drive

Max Speed: 99 mph

0 – 62 mph: 7.3 secs

Range: 261 miles

Insurance Group: 38

C02 emissions: Zero

Bik rating: 2%, £ZeroFY, £ZeroSR

Warranty: 6 years/ 93,000 miles

Size: L 4.46 m (14.63 ft), W 2.05 m (6.73 ft), H 1.62 m (5.31 ft)

Bootspace: 440 to 1,338 litres (15.54 to 47.25 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,750 kg (3,858 lb)

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