Ineos Grenadier FD – First Impressions

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Robin Roberts samples the Ineos Grenadier FD, on and off road.

He writes, “Inch by inch, metre by metre and after just a few miles the Ineos Grenadier impresses…”

Conceived to replace the outgoing Land Rover Defender at the time, the Grenadier is the product of a multi- million pound investment by chemical firm Ineos and its owner, one of the richest men and motoring enthusiasts in Britain, Sir Jim Radcliffe, who named the vehicle after a pub he frequented in London.

He identifed a gap in the market which Land Rover appeared to be leaving open for country dwellers and businesses and was determined to fill it, but at the same time improve on what had gone before.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the Grenadier was designed around the highly practical and purposeful shape so familiar to generations since 1948 but brought very up to date in terms of technology which is not so obvious.

The task of driving it from drawing board to desirability was entrusted to an independent specialist engineering company which has worked with some of the world’s biggest car makers and after a couple of years the Grenadier has come to market thanks to Ineos investment.

Ineos has built up a comparatively small network of dealers who are strategically located to serve their immediate regions and who best know their customers.

So far 213 dealer partner sites have been confirmed worldwide with 164 retail partner locations offering sales and service and an additional 49 sites covering service only. Globally, an additional 49 authorised repairer locations have been identified and nominated.

In Britain there are partners in 24 locations and 1 in Rep of Ireland, and significantly 1 in Falkland Islands. Looking ahead, Ineos has a really strong order book, equating to more

than six months' production. There are around 1500 Grenadiers registered and on UK roads at the moment, 55% are Belstaff edition models, Fieldmaster or Trialmaster, 45% are commercial variants with two or five doors.

The Grenadier models use 249 PS 3.0 litre BMW six-cylinder diesel or 286 PS petrol engines and eight-speed automatic/ manual transmission/ high/ low range, a ladder-frame chassis, permanent all-wheel-drive, three differentials and solid beam axles with coil springs for unrelenting hard work.

The bodies are galvanised steel and they tow 3.5 tonnes. Diesels are good for about 25 mpg

and petrol return approximately 19 mpg with emissions from 276 g/km for the oil-burner and 325 g/km for the petrol. They get a five-years warranty with unlimited mileage.

There are crew cab, van and station wagon versions offering from two to five seats, bespoke specifications to suit a buyer's needs and rising from £64,500 to £76,000.

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Our station wagon was tested off and on roads around the Glan Usk Estate, near Crickhowell, typically in conditions that a countryside dweller might experience. The immediate and lasting impression was how comfortable the Grenadier wagon felt on road even on extreme tyres.

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Off road these really gripped the rocks and fallen branches and with an instructor beside me pushing the three diff-lock selector buttons on the overhead panel the Grenadier relentless crept up steep ascents at walking pace. Letting it pick its way down a rocky track was also effortless for the driver.

The long-travel coil springs eased over some big obstacles and the skid plates underneath took the bumps without the steering jerking too violently. There was no opportunity to experience its wading depth but it has a feature to prevent water being thrown up into the ventilation system.

There was plenty of noise from the surroundings under and around the Grenadier's body but the engine and transmission were quiet. Put simply it just got on with dealing whatever it faced over the high & square bonnet.

Moving on-road, the smooth performance of the BMW petrol engine in the test car was matched to a creamy gearchange, very good brakes and good roadholding albeit with a little body roll.

I would have liked a much tighter turning circle for parking or manoeuvring on narrow twisting tracks off- road and when taking on hairpin bends. I think some might also find the legroom in the back not as generous as the overall size might suggest.

The offset rear dog-door will also find favour with some owners and when the companion wider door is also opened the space revealed will take a normal pallet, more than rivals can boast.

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VERDICT

There is no doubt that the Ineos Grenadier will fill a gap in the market with its utter practicality, but it’s not cheap and aligned to more established if less able or well equipped rivals.

Nevertheless, it also deserves to be experienced before you decide what you want or, more importantly, really need.

As the Grenadier Guards motto says, Honi soit qui mal y pense “Shame Upon He Who Thinks Evil Of It”.