Isuzu D-Max Double Cab Pick-Up – Road Test

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Isuzu D-Max V-Cross Double-Cab Pick-Up…

...tried by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

With escalating purchase and tax costs of serious 4×4 cars and sports utilities it's little wonder that edgy double-cab pickups have cornered the pick-up 4×4 market and they are now again more appealing tax-wise than large SUVs.

Overall for 2021, the pick-up market in the UK ended 19% up on the previous year with 42,488 units registered in the segment across all manufacturers, according to the latest figures published by the SMMT.

One of the most popular series is the Isuzu D-Max, recently voted Company Car & Van magazine's Pick-Up of the Year 2022. Isuzu UK recorded 3,688 sales of the D-Max pick-up at the close of 2021, an increase of 16.9% over 2020.

In the D-Max range are Utility, DL20, DL40 and V-Cross derivatives built on the same chassis, using the common powertrain with 6-speed manual or automatic transmissions and nearly all 4WD, but their cab space varies along with payload so buyers have maximum choice of model for any particular purpose. Prices start from £21,549 CVOTR + VAT.

Building purely commercial vehicles allows Isuzu to concentrate on a specific sector where work comes first but they recognise in the harshest conditions that comfort is really valued and there is also the active leisure line of buyers who want a workhorse for towing and outdoor pursuits.



Unusually it has a dedicated fleet specialist team who can advise and source all manner of specialist equipment and conversions for particular needs. This hand in hand relationship is valued by customers and there are affinity programmes with farming and countryside bodies.

Isuzu is one of Japan's oldest vehicle makers and was founded in 1916, came to the UK in 1987 with the Trooper SUV and then introduced the first pick-up the following year, the TF. The D-Max launched in 2012 and has been refreshed mid-term in 2017 before the all-new D-Max appeared last year, and this is the model we tested as the company looks towards 10,000 annual registrations in 2025.

Our top of the range V-Cross has been introduced to satisfy the growing adventure leisure

sector anticipated to take between a quarter and a third of registrations in future.

Standard equipment includes Gun Metal detailing to front and sides, bigger alloys, with nine-inch multifunction touchscreen, CD player and eight speakers, auto headlight levelling and tough leather upholstery and it tows up to 3.5 tonnes.



The familiar but developed 2.0 litre diesel engine, with 16-valves and four cylinders pushing out 360 Nm (266 lb.ft.) torque at 2,000 rpm and up to 164 PS at 3,600 rpm, is not the quietest on the market, but it is more acceptable in the upper overdrive ratios of the 6 speed automatic we experienced.


ISUZU
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The new auto transmission has quiet changes and they are now quicker than before without losing their smoothness, whether going up or down the box. It also gets fuel-saving stop&start ignition.

Really excellent enlarged brakes do a good job underfoot and inspire confidence when the loadbed is laden. They are sufficiently sensitive to ease to a halt if necessary and the parking brake is strong. I liked the feedback through the steering, which was not too insulating, and its ease of operation, but would have welcomed a tighter turning circle, particularly in an urban environment.

Secondary controls were all close to the driver's hands and fingers and operated with a satisfying action. The touchscreen worked well but it's not very large and navigation may be an issue for some relying on a mobile phone link to use.

The V-Cross is packed with a lot of driver aids and enhanced comfort features including very bright headlights, lane assist, parking sensors and reversing camera, heated front seats and rear heating ducts, powered driver's seat, dual zone climate control and folding, heated mirrors, keyless entry with button start/ stop. So it's not really lacking anything you're likely to need or appreciate for an adventurous weekend away.

The seats front and back were comfortable and fairly supportive with plenty of room for four/ five while access was easy. There is not a lot of oddments room but the heating and ventilation did a very good job along with the heated front seats.


VCROSS



Visibility is enhanced by the reversing camera while forward and side sightlines are very good and the wipers are big and come with a powerful washing system. I liked the lights' illumination beams but several times thought they may have dazzled oncoming traffic which 'flashed' us.

Generally the V-Cross had a very absorbent ride and only really bad bumps could be felt but then you knew about it. The improved front suspension has firmed up the handling and reduced body roll while keeping the wheels better fixed on the road surface and for a pick-up it really handled well.

Piling into the loadbed was straightforward once the tailgate dropped and the integrated step in the bumper has helped loading and reaching items, which can be secured by eyelets. Our test model came with a loadbed liner and this is recommended to minimise damage and keep up residual value.



VERDICT

It’s little wonder the Isuzu D-Max has picked up industry awards for its all round competence and is a favourite with those who live, work and play in the countryside. The newest models will surely build on that solid reputation and reliability.

For: Roomy & comfortable for a double-cab pickup, big loadbed and high capacity, easy to live with, reasonable economy, very good major controls, good warranty, strong build quality, high towing weight capability, tax friendly alternative to an SUV.

Against: Road and suspension noises continuously, engine note intruded at higher speed, slow acceleration, poor oddments spaces.



MILESTONES AND WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC. IN BRIEF:

Isuzu D-Max V-Cross Automatic Double-Cab Pick-Up

Price: £32,759 CVOTR + VAT

Mechanical: 164 PS 2.0 litre 4 cyl turbo-diesel, 6 sp auto, 4WD

Max Speed: 112 mph

0 – 62mph: 13 sec

Combined MPG: 31

Insurance Group: 50D

CO2 emissions: 241 g/km

Tax costs: Commercial Vehicle rated annual VED road tax £275, BiK company car tax CV rate £58.33 per month for 20% tax payers/£116.67 40% tax payers

Warranty: 5 yrs/ 125,000 miles

Size: L 5.2 7m (17.29 ft), W 1.87 m (6.14 ft), H 1.79 m (5.87 ft)

Braked towing weight: 3.5 tonne/Payload 1.070 tonne

Kerbweight: 2,030 kg (4,475 lb)