Isuzu D Max EV – Road Test

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Isuzu is Japan’s oldest motor manufacturer with more than a century of experience and it has been the slowest to move into the electrical age, writes Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales).

Its progress may appear to resemble an ice-berg on the move but the fact is, like that big lump of frozen water, you ignore it at your peril.

While other manufacturers compromised carrying capacity and capability and sacrificed serious off-road ruggedness in the drive for zero emissions, Isuzu took on the challenges bumper to bumper.

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Starting with their platform of the immensely able D-Max pickup, out went the diesel powertrain and into the very strong ladder chassis they put a comparatively compact twin motor system, one at each end with a good-sized battery under the floor.

The rear end was also given a de Dion suspension to dramatically raise payload capacity while improving handling in bad conditions.

It is Europe's first all-wheel-drive pure electric pick up with the heaviest carrying ability. So you might say the "weight" was worth waiting for.

But that comes at a heavy price as well and means it's probably going to find buyers in the corporate or business world and working in very challenging conditions. It is, I think, too

expensive for private buyers to consider.

A pity as they are missing out on an extremely capable shire horse.

The beefy battery packs a good warranty but it is capable only of a moderately quick charge and it is not configured for rapid reboosting. I expect it would be plugged in overnight at a depot or farm for some hours between tough jobs.

Oddly, it has been configured to only accept a 50kW maximum charge which means a reboost from 10-80% will take about an hour and that might be an important point for some users.

As with all BEVs, how you drive will ultimately determine range and overall journey time and the company says a user might expect approximately 160 to 220 miles charged.

You will not suffer in that time, however, as borrowing heavily from the original D-Max diesel, the cab and its five seats are roomy and comfortable, practical and purposeful.

Our test model came with the rear bench three seats but you can also specify a rigid platform instead, while the front pair of seats have powered adjustment to refine comfort, although they are not very thick but reasonably well shaped to support users.

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There was not a lot of adjustment room for the steering column and some may not be happy with this, but the major and minor controls were well laid out and generally fell to hand and foot.

The infotainment centre was large and in the middle of the fascia, clearly labelled and fairly easy to read while the heating and ventilation system was straightforward and effective. Powered windows were quick working.

The driver’s instrument pod was big, clear and reasonably well marked.

The propulsion system was near silent, with bags of pulling power underfoot and the full-time four-wheel-drive ensured you never lost grip and had the benefit of a rough-road setting as well to limit speed and protect from damage underneath. The selection lever resembles a conventional gearshift too.

For a genuine off-roader, the turning circle was quite good, the effort needed was minimal and it did not suffer from twitchiness at speed on good roads.

Big wipers and deep windows meant visibility was good most of the time but you needed to be careful pulling out into traffic from a side road or when reversing.

Acceleration was respectable but it is no sporting model although it could keep up with

traffic and it only just keeps pace on motorways and dual carriageways.

The ride is on the firm edge of comfortable most of the time as it's obviously set up to take heavy loads and lightly laden it can feel skittish, particularly around tight turns. Off road it coped well with some challenging ruts and ridges.

Noises were modest in the absence of a conventional diesel engine and transmission but it did mean the tyre rumbles and drumming became more appreciated.

VERDICT

Anyone spending £60,000 or thereabouts on a vehicle might expect more refinement but in reality it comes well equipped with driving safety and convenience features as well as creature comforts and it stands wheel to roof with many saloons or coupés.

It is just that this is a shire horse for serious users not a weekend hacking mount.

For: Big payload and towing capacity, good powertrain, well equipped, two cab sizes.

Against: Short range, slow charging, expensive, stiff ride.

FAST FACTS

Model: Isuzu D-Max EV

Price: £60,000 ex taxes

Mechanical: 200 bhp/ 140kW dual motors, 325 Nm (240 lb.ft) torque, 66.9 kWh battery, AWD

Max Speed: 80 mph

0 – 62 mph: 10.1 sec

Range: 163 to 224 miles

Insurance Group: TBA

C02 emissions: Zero

Bik rating: 4%, £10 FY, £640 SRx5

Warranty: 5 years./125,000 miles & 8 years/100,000mile battery

Size: L 5.28 m (17.32 ft), W 1.90 m (5.23 ft), H 1.79 m (5.87 ft)

Payload: One Tonne/ 3.5 tonnes towing

Kerbweight: 2,345 kg (5,170 lb)

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