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Isuzu DMax XTR Doublecab – Road Test

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The Isuzu DMax XTR Doublecab pickup for work or play uses.

By Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

The Isuzu DMax is a first team player in the Pickup sector. The official supporter of the Welsh Rugby Union has gone for the niche serious off-road and utility market with its 23-strong range of mostly double-cab but also a solo single cab and extended cab models.

Isuzu dealers sell Business, All-purpose and Adventure Pickup ranges from £20,832 to £43,921. It's a very defined and targetted range which also caters to true outdoor adventurers and country dwellers and not the weekend cottage set.



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Our DMax XTR test model sits between the practical and the extreme off-roaders. It's very much a back to basics turbo-diesel of modest capacity but big ability nevertheless, thanks to a bomb-proof but not very user-friendly six-speed manual gearbox operated through a long-travel and weighted clutch.



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I found the gear ratios were a wide mixture of short and long, so you can easily get moving with a heavy load but then find the top pair are much more long-legged to cope with motorway runs to markets and stretch the fuel out.

The main road ride is generally firm but good while secondary roads can induce a lot of bumping and jumping about underneath and it's a noisy traveller over poor surfaces.

In town you may find the turning circle an inconvenience despite the power steering but it makes more sense on open roads or in the country. Anywhere you drive, however, you'll be impressed by the tremendously powerful brakes, their progressive action and the security of the conventional handbrake.

All D-Max models come with air-conditioning, LED daytime running lights, electric windows and Bluetooth connectivity. Spend a bit more and you can have your Isuzu D-Max with sat nav, a rear parking camera, climate control, roof-mounted speakers and a load-bed liner.

It tows 3.5-tonnes and carries 1,161 kg (2,559 lb). The Arctic Series is the workhorse of the outdoor heavy businesses and backbone of emergency services.

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Most secondary controls are on the wheel spokes and wipers/ lights column stalks, sometimes not too easy to see or use, and there are a few on the fascia and central console, which also carries the large infotainment screen on the dash. A small display between speedo and tacho shows essential data such as mileage, consumption and fuel remaining.

The infotainment system is not particularly attractive but does work well and it's easy to read. Heating and ventilation is very good with air conditioning, simple controls, large outlets and good performance, plus four powered windows. Lights are reasonable and the front wipers/ wash do a good job.

Oddments room is very good in front with a chiller box and glovebox, door and console trays



as well as a central medium sized storage box, but in the back there's just seat pockets and very small door recesses. It's well served with USB and charging points.

Behind the double cab is a long, wide and reasonably deep loadbed, but in the XTR spec its high to load and despite a loadbed liner items could slide about unless restrained or netted. Ours came with the optional Black Mountain lockable roller cover and well worth having even at £1,560.





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The access to the loadbed meant you dropped the tailboard but there was no easy way to climb in and entry to the front or rear of the cabin necessitated a step on the stylish running board and pull up.

Once inside I liked the XTR seat-stitched detailing and comfort with fairly good movement to adjust, and matched with the moveable steering column you could find a good position to drive. There was good legroom but not a lot of rear seat head-room and it was much the same in front.

The high riding and driving position allows excellent visibility to front and sides, helped with good lights and wipers when it's not so good weather. The deep B & C-pillars restrict what you can see around and the high tail wipes out what lies low down behind so you have to rely on the very good, wide and clear camera view so you need to keep the lens clean, but its disappointing that this price point did not include front parking sensors.

Noise levels are generally modest but rise as the engine is stretched or the road surface deteriorates and the gearbox whine is always present. Wind noise wasn't really a problem.

The overall fuel consumption of 31 mpg was good for this workhorse and its running costs are not high - as well as getting a 125,000 miles warranty over five years.

VERDICT

Unlike some rivals which pretend to be what they're not, the Isuzu DMax XTR is a genuine serious 4x4 pick-up with a visible appeal to the eye as well as practical personality.



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Two and four wheel drive; high and low ratios...

For: Very capable tough workhorse with large payload, big loadbed and high towing weight, reasonable economy, room for five, excellent ground clearance and simple 2WD/4WD mode changes, strong brakes.



Against: High loadbed can be difficult to use, headroom particularly tight in the rear seats, big turning circle and ponderous gearchange with long travel clutch, stiff ride over some surfaces, noisy powertrain and road rumbles.



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

Isuzu DMax XTR Doublecab pickup 4WD.

Price: £42,721

Mechanical: 164 hp, four cylinder, 1,898cc turbo-diesel, six speed manual, 2WD/4WD

Performance: 112 mph, 0 - 62mph 12.7 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 40.4 mpg (31 mpg on test).



CO2 emissions: 192 g/km

Taxes: £260 VED Commercial Vehicle rate, Bik CV company car tax fixed rate £698 per annum for a 20% payer and £1,396 for a 40% tax payer

Insurance Group: 42A

Warranty: Five years/125,000 miles

Sizes/capacities: L 5.30 m (17.38 ft), W 1.86 m (6.10 ft), H 1.98 m (6.50 ft), load bed L 1.48 m (4.85 ft), W 1.53 m (5.01 ft), H 465 cm (1.52 ft), payload 1,161 kg (2,559 ft), braked towing weight: 3.5 tonnes, four doors/five seats.