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Jeep Renegade 2.0 140 hp Limited – Road Test

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An assessment of Jeep's latest 4x4 machine...



By Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

Jeep is going on the warpath with its Renegade. As the founding company of the modern four-wheel-drive sector and who provided the inspiration for the legendary Land Rover brand, Jeep knows an awful lot about off-roaders.

Their UK sales are flourishing this year, showing a near 40% increase for the first nine months of 2016 compared with the same period last year. That outperforms the rest of the country's new car market which is up by just 2.5%.

So, with their boost in sales the arrival of the latest Renegade series is something we all have to take very seriously. I have thought that for a few years Jeep took its eye off the ball and let competitors overtake it, now in its partnership with Fiat it's right up there with them, and in many ways it's better than what has gone before.

The off-road sector has fragmented and diversified but at the core is a need for capable, comfortable, cleaner and low consumption cars. Serious off-roaders still need models to cross very rough terrain or pull heavy trailers, but for the majority of adventurers today it's a trek to the shops over some tricky speed bumps, or negotiating occasional water-logged or snow covered roads.

Image demands a new face, and few are as distinctive as the seven-slot Jeep grille. What comes behind it with the Renegade is a compact car with big potential.

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There is a huge tribe of Renegade models with 1.4 petrol or 1.6 and 2.0 litres diesels, offering between 120 and 170 hp, with two or four wheel drive, in a handful of standard (together with special edition) trim levels. Depending on engine and trim you get a manual or dual-clutch auto six speed transmission, or automatic/manual with nine ratios. On road prices start at £17,500 and rise to £29,000.



Our test drive Renegade is towards the top of the totem pole of possible choices and it manages to combine compact dimensions with big ability.

Between the familiar Jeep grille and “crossed” tail-lights is a car which can take five in comfort, although we found that boot capacity was a bit on the small side when all five seats were used, and amounted to just 351 litres (11.12 cu.ft), but folding down the three in the back, in stages, almost tripled this space to 1,297 litres (45.80 cu.ft).

Access was good to the bootspace and cabin, and once inside the room included a lot of headspace, plus plenty of places to put small items. The well shaped and trimmed seats were very comfortable with good adjustment range on the front pair.

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For the driver, everything came to hand and foot, and while I would have liked better steering feedback, the brakes were powerful and the nine-speed autobox was silken and slick.

The powertrain was very efficient as well and the ratios meant it was always running in as high a gear as possible. I regularly returned over 40 mpg and occasionally nudged towards 48 mpg at a constant motorway speed. It is not quick off the mark and maximum speed is modest.

Secondary controls were effective with big wipers and powerful washers, very bright lights and a simple transfer range selection switch for rougher off-road use. Visibility was clear, which was just as well because I found the reversing sensors did not give much warning of objects when close to them.

Instruments and infotainment screen were good sizes and clearly displayed contents.

The ride quality was comfortable edging towards firm, but it never jolted nor jarred, irrespective of what was underneath the wheels. Roadholding was good and predictable



handling meant you could be very relaxed behind the wheel.

Noise levels were generally low, the big wheels and tyres generating the most intrusions while engine, mechanical and wind noises were hushed.

VERDICT

The Jeep Renegade is a very refined 4WD model, but that's what you might expect from a brand which was there first and lasts.

For: Comfort, economy, ride, powertrain and build quality.

Against: Small boot, performance, steering remoteness.



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

Jeep Renegade 2.0 Multijet 140hp Limited. Price: £28,295 (plus £2,650 options).

Engine/transmission: 2.0 litre, 140 hp, four cylinder, turbodiesel nine speed auto with 4WD.

Performance:



0-62mph: 10.2 seconds.

Top speed: 113mph.

Fuel consumption: 41.8 mpg, CO2: 150 g/km, VED road tax £145, BIK company car tax: 30%.

Insurance Group: 14.

Warranty: 3 years/ 60,000 miles.