Latest Ford Ranger – Road Test

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Ranger Limited.

THE 2020 REVISED FORD RANGER – RANGE ROUNDUP.

David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) tells all...

*In the UK the award winning Ford Ranger sold 16,458 units in 2019, retaining its top sales position. The 2019 pick-up market sector saw 53,055 total sales, a 1% fall over 2018.

Europe's, and the UK's, best selling pick-up range received major changes towards the end of last year plus the addition of new variants to the line up which includes 2-door 2-seat Regular Cab, 2-door 4-seat Super Cab and 5-seat 4-door Double Cab models plus the Limited, Wildtrak and Raptor Double Cab flagship versions. All models have 4WD as standard as well as car-like safety spec such as Pre-Collision Assist, Pedestrian Detection and Intelligent Speed Limiter. Active Park Assist is also available as one of the many options.

Prices for the huge line-up vary enormously from £25,924 to £49,324 including VAT or £21,656 to £41,156 excluding VAT for businesses. The huge price differences reflect the number of models, body options, specification levels and performance capabilities. There is also a wide range of extra cost options that will push the price up even further. These range from load bed liners, load bed secure storage trunks, roller shutter blinds, side steps, interior protective rubber mats, upholstery choices and numerous different size alloy wheel options plus in-car entertainment packs etc.

As always the revised Ford Ranger line-up of models caters for a wide range of users, farmers, builders, those who tow through to rural families, business users attracted by their lower Benefit-in-Kind tax rates and also appealing to outdoor sporting activity types and enthusiast off-roaders. In many ways the more popular Double Cab versions from many competing brands have already replaced hard-core, agricultural 4x4s such as the defunct Land Rover Defender and for some the higher spec Double Cabs offer a realistic and practical alternative to large SUVs but with added load carrying capacities, huge towing weight capabilities and superior off-road performance.

The Ranger's competitors remain formidable but it continues to marginally outsell the new Mitsubishi L200 range followed by the Nissan Navara, Isuzu D-Max, Toyota Hi-Lux,

Mercedes-Benz X-Class and VW Amarok.

Getting to the nitty-gritty of spec levels; XL is the base level available with all three cab body types and the choice of 2.0 litre TDCi 130 or 170 hp turbodiesel engines, both matched with six speed manual gearboxes. Next up the spec ladder is XLT available with Super and Double Cab body options, 170 hp TDCi engine and six speed manual gearbox. The Limited is likely to be the most popular and is available for Super and Double Cab bodies and there is the choice of 2.0 litre TDCi 170 and the new Bi-Turbo 213 hp turbodiesel units with either six speed manual or the new 10 speed automatic transmissions.

Getting into the specialist Wildtrack territory this version is only available as a Double Cab but with the choice of the new 2.0 litre Bi-Turbo 213 hp TDCi unit with six speed manual/10 speed auto transmissions or for a remaining short while the familiar 3.2 litre, five cylinder 200 hp turbodiesel engine which retains the older six speed automatic gearbox as standard fit. Top step of the Ranger ladder is the very specialist, bad-ass, hard-core Raptor available only as a Double Cab and only with the new 213 hp turbodiesel engine with the new 10 speed auto gearbox as standard. All models have 4WD as standard for the UK market, 2WD versions are available in other countries.



Ranger Wildtrack.



Ranger Wildtrack.



Ranger Raptor.



Ranger Raptor.

As far as tax costs go, all models are classed as commercial vehicles so the VED road tax is £260 every year and all but the Raptor have the low Benefit-in-Kind company car tax costs of £57.17 a month for 20% tax payers and £114.33 per month for those users paying 40% income tax. However BiK for the Raptor, as its payload is less than 1.0 tonne because of the heavyweight off-road dampers and coil spring long travel suspension and slightly smaller capacity load bay due to the suspension mounting changes, will see tax costs of £298.71 for 20% BiK payers and £597.41 for those taxed at 40%. Insurance groups are 9E to 12E and warranty is three years/60,000 miles.



Ranger Limited.

My exact revised Ford Ranger test model was the likely best selling version – a Double Cab Limited with the new 2.0 litre, four cylinder EcoBlue 170 hp turbodiesel engine with 420 Nm (310 lb.ft) of torque. It was mated with the new 10 speed automatic transmission which also has a manual gear selection facility. It also has 2WD, 4WD High and 4WD Low driving mode selector plus Hill Descent Control operated via the speed limiter. The on-the-road price of this version is £36,305 but with options it costs £38,525 including Vat. These options were £600 for the Blue Lightning body colour paint, 17-inch alternative colour black alloy wheels at £120 and £1,500 for the lockable load bed Roller Shutter, load bed Bedliner and Caro area management system.Top speed of this test drive model is 112 mph, zero to 62 mph takes a modest 11.4 seconds, the commercial vehicle Urban Cycle fuel economy figure

is 36.7 mpg and during my week of on-road driving using mainly country roads in 2WD mode the figure was 31.7 mpg. The CO2 emissions figure is 197 g/km but that's for information only as it's classed as a commercial vehicle so tax costs are not based on CO2 figures.

This new engine is a strong unit, seemingly with fewer vibrations through the controls and relatively quiet for a diesel engine. With the wide torque powerband there was always plenty of acceleration response available especially as it was mated with the 10-speed auto gearbox. Why it has 10 ratios I have no idea with that amount of torque? Having all those ratios meant there was constant changing between gears, mainly done smoothly I'll admit, but on winding roads it just didn't need to swap cogs so often. On open roads once cruising speed was reached it was fine in top gear but accelerate and down the cogs the gearbox went. However I must say this new 10-speed unit is vastly better than the agricultural six speed auto gearbox it replaces for all models except for the Wildtrak version with the 3.2 litre diesel unit.



The ride compliancy and comfort I found better than other Double Cab models on-road, but being a truck it doesn't provide the handling finesse or body control of a large SUV although the ladder frame chassis and tough and durable suspension certainly ate up impacts from potholes.

If it's a workhorse vehicle you need it can tow up to 3,500 kg (7,716 lb) with a payload of 1,068 kg (2,355 lb) for this model plus it can seat five people in relative comfort so it is easy to see why the Ford Ranger is the best selling Double Cab in the UK and Europe. Another reason for company car drivers to use one is of course the very low personal Benefit-in-Kind tax costs compared to a large SUV but you have to be prepared to live with a very big vehicle.



The Limited spec level is good with air con, cruise control, electric windows, stability control, driving safety support systems and so on. Some of the additions for the Limited spec level are 17-inch alloy wheels, the much needed rear bumper step, sports bar over the load area with high mounted brake lights, heated door mirrors with puddle lights, easy lift/lower tailgate, privacy glass, DAB radio with SYNC 3 connectivity with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto and an integrated 8.0-inch touchscreen. But no sat-nav system is included; you have to connect your mobile phone mapping for that function which I personally detest. Surely sat-nav for what will be a high use business model at this cost should be standard. You have to move up the range to Wildtrak and Raptor versions to get sat-nav as standard, probably the models that need it least given their leaning towards more off-road use than on-road driving.

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I digress the Limited spec continues with items such as leather upholstery and door panel inserts, power operated driver's seat, heated front seats, stop/start system and push-button start, rear view camera, front and rear parking sensors and a cool box in the centre console. The front cabin layout is well done, all the controls come to hand, the quality looks good, there is plenty of legroom in the rear seating area plus the impressive load carrying and towing functions but it is a very large vehicle so it can be difficult to park and being very high of the ground, those with shorter legs will find it difficult to get in and out of the vehicle, even with the side sill steps.

VERDICT

Big, bold, tough, well-equipped, effective!

For: Wide range of models, engines and options meets a wide range of users' requirements, UK's best selling pick-up range, low cost company car tax, strong vehicle, new engine, smooth new auto gearbox, compliant ride, mostly well equipped, impressive load area payload and braked towing weight, felt very durable.

Against: Huge vehicle to find a parking space for, no sat-nav included in this high spec level business/family user's model, very high ground clearance makes it difficult to get in/out of the vehicle unless passengers are long-legged, ungenerous warranty.



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

Ford Ranger Double Cab, Limited, 2.0 litre, EcoBlue 170 hp, 10 speed automatic with selectable 2WD/4WD high/low ratios.

Price: £36,305 including Vat (£38,525 as tested).

Engine/transmission: EU6.2 compliant new 2.0 litre, four cylinder EcoBlue turbodiesel, 170 hp, 420 Nm (310 lb.ft) of torque, new 10 speed auto gearbox with manual mode, 2WD/4WD/4WD Low driving modes.

Performance: 112 mph, 0–62 mph 11.4 seconds, Urban CV rate 36.7 mpg, (31.7 mpg on test), CO2 197 g/km.

Taxes: VED CV rate £260 each year, BiK company car tax costs £57.17 for 20% rated users and £114.33 for 40% rated users.

Insurance Group: 11E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 5,359 mm (17.58 ft), W 1,977 mm (6.49 ft), H 1,810 mm (5.94 ft), wheelbase 3,220 mm (10.56 ft), load bed length/width 1,647/1,560 mm, (5.40/5.12 ft) payload 1,068 kg (2,355 lb), braked towing weight 3,500 kg (7,716 lb), four doors/five seats.