New Vauxhall Grandland X – First Impressions

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New Vauxhall Grandland X joins the fast-growing SUV market...

By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

Other than the growing demand for Alternatively Fuelled Vehicles – up by 34.6% in the UK so far this year, the fastest growing sector by vehicle size are SUVs, with sales increasing by 30% in Europe year-to-date and by approximately the same amount in the UK.

In just the last few weeks we have seen the introduction of the Alfa Romeo Stelvio, the Range Rover Velar, the Peugeot 5008 and in short time the mid-sized Vauxhall Grandland X, Citroën C3 Aircross and Kia Stonic compact SUVs will be wheeled out to the motoring media before UK sales start. More new SUVs of all sizes are also on their way

The Vauxhall Grandland X is a mid-sized five door, five seater SUV which is closely related to the Peugeot 3008 – and the collaboration took place before the more recent takeover by PSA Peugeot-Citroen of Vauxhall/Opel European production and sales operations. The Grandland X is Vauxhall's third SUV, joining their line-up after the compact Mokka X and more recently the slightly smaller Crossland X, which is based on the Peugeot 2008 SUV.

Grandland X models will begin to appear in Vauxhall showrooms towards the end of November and into December, with customer deliveries starting in January 2018.

Vauxhall Grandland X prices range from £22,310 up to £29,535. For now it is available with two PSA Group engine options, a 1.2 litre 130 hp Turbo petrol unit and a 1.6 litre Turbo D 120 hp diesel unit, all with Stop/Start, and both are available with six-speed manual and automatic gearboxes. None are available with four wheel drive but there is the option of the Vauxhall's designation of Peugeot Group's Grip Control system called IntelliGrip, which lets the driver select from five different driving modes to optimise traction – and this option comes with grippier mud and snow tyres.

The specification levels are SE, Tech Line Nav aimed at the fleet market, Sport Nav and Elite Nav, and all are available with both engines and both manual and automatic transmissions.

The single most popular model in the range for the UK will be the Grandland X 1.2 Turbo petrol manual with Sport Nav specification, priced at £24,595. At last week's UK Media launch, Grandland X Brand Manager Ian Mitchell said there has been huge growth in UK sales of all sizes of SUVs. The core mid-sized C-segment SUV sector accounted for 10.8% of all UK new car sales last year, around 291,000 units, and the smaller compact B-segments SUV sales grew to 8.3%, or around 223,500 units and Vauxhall predicts those figures will increase to 11.2 and 8.5% respectively this year – and grow again in 2018.

He said, "Grandland X is a very important car for us to get into a very important sales sector. The sector UK sales leader is the Nissan Qashqai with 62,7000 sales last year,

followed by the Kia Sportage with 40,100 sales and the Ford Kuga with 35,5000 registrations".

He added, "We expect the Grandland X range to become our second highest selling model range in the UK after the Corsa hatchbacks. We should sell around 20,000 units of Grandland X in the UK next year and 75% of sales will go to retail customers. I expect 65% of customers to choose the 1.2 Turbo petrol engine and 80 to 85% will choose a manual transmission model. As far as specification choices go, Sport Nav will account for 60% of sales followed by Tech Line at 25%, Elite Nav at 10% and the base SE level with 5%".

"With regard to the number of customers taking the IntelliGrip option, which costs between an extra £50 and £500 because of the change in wheel size, currently we have no indications of take up" he added. The IntelliGrip option costs £200 more for the most popular Sport Nav spec level.



At the media launch we stepped into the predicted best selling version – the 1.2-litre Turbo petrol manual with Sport Nav specification priced at £24,595 and it had the extra cost £200 IntelliGrip traction option. With the same engine, transmission and a mid range popular spec with GripControl a Peugeot 3008 costs £26,195 and currently that difference in price is reflected through the two brand's ranges with the advantage to the Grandland X.

From the outside you can see the similarity of the Grandland X to the Peugeot 3008 and they are both built on the same PSA Group production lines in France. The Grandland X has a different face, following the Vauxhall family line, but the front remains upright with the central grille flanked by sleek headlights. Move around the vehicle and there are the same

sculptured doors as the 3008, the plastic cladding around the wheelarch edges and over the door sills, there is a slightly rising waistline, and at the rear remodelled bumpers which differentiate the Grandland and 3008 variants.

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Inside there is a much more noticeable difference in the front of the vehicle. Whereas the Peugeot 3008 has the futuristic i-Cockpit striking multi-layered dashboard, much of it seemingly fabric covered with prominent elevated central touchscreen, the Grandland has a simplified, less fussy moulded fascia with soft-touch vinyl and neat printed stitching lines. The touchscreen is centrally positioned and inset into the fascia panel, and most of the controls and switchgear are Vauxhall rather than Peugeot. Unlike the 3008, where many of the main functions need to be operated through the touchscreen, the items such as heating and ventilation controls are separate to the touchscreen in the Grandland, which is much more user-friendly. Also the Grandland has a conventional and larger multi-function steering wheel, not the same as the much smaller diameter wheel used for the Peugeot 3008. The downside to this for the Grandland is that that 3008 has sharper steering responses.

Whilst the components such as engines, transmission, platform, steering and suspension are the same for the Grandland and 3008, Vauxhall has tuned the steering and suspension characteristics to suit their standards. This has resulted in a similar level of ride compliancy but the 3008 felt a shade more agile in its overall handling. The worst potholes do create thumps and bumps felt inside the cabin but not to any real detrimental effect. Higher speed cruising on better road surfaces is comfortable for both versions.

Like the 3008 the Vauxhall Grandland is 4,477 mm (14.69 ft) long, 1,856 mm (6.09 ft) wide and 1,609 mm (5.28 ft) high with a 514 litre (18.15 cu.ft) boot with all five seats in use. Fold down the 60/40 split rear seat backs and this grows to a very useful 1,652 litres (58.34 cu.ft). The braked towing weight is 1,350 kg (2,976 lb), 50 kg (110 lb) less than the comparable 3008 variant.

The Grandland’s standard core specification includes Vauxhall’s popular OnStar automatic crash response SOS system with Wi-Fi hot spot, smartphone connectivity, stolen vehicle assistance and vehicle diagnostic functions. Also standard is the IntelliLink connectivity with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, a 7-inch touchscreen, Bluetooth, dual zone air-con, cruise control, lane departure warning, LED daytime running lights, rear parking sensors, remote locking with alarm and 17-inch alloy wheels plus of course electrically operated windows and door mirrors.

Some of the additions the most popular Sport Nav specification level has include an 8-inch touchscreen, full European sat-nav mapping, voice control, a Flex-Floor height adjustable boot floor, 18-inch alloy wheels, front and rear bodywork skid plates, tinted rear windows, powered tailgate, electrically folding door mirrors, front parking sensors, the Safety Pack which includes driver drowsiness alerts, forward collision protection, automatic emergency braking, and lane keep assist plus there are side blind-spot alert and keyless entry functions.



The 1.2 litre, three cylinder turbocharged petrol engine with 130 hp and 230 Nm (170 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm we know well from Peugeot and Citroën models. It is a real gem and multi-year Engine of the Year winner. Matched with ideal ratios in the six-speed manual gearbox it's a smooth, quiet and yet responsive unit.

Officially the top speed is 117 mph, with a zero to 60 mph acceleration time of 11.1 seconds. The Combined Cycle fuel consumption figure is 55.4 mpg and on our test drive around the Chiltern hills and M40 motorway the real-life figure was 42.7 mpg, virtually the same as my longer test drive with the Peugeot 3008 with the same engine, gearbox and similar specification during a family journey to Cornwall and back.

With CO2 emissions of 117 g/km, VED road tax is £160 First Year rate and then £140 Standard rate. Company car drivers will pay 22% Benefit-in-Kind tax. Insurance is Group 15E, two groups more than the equivalent Peugeot 3008 and the Warranty varies as well with the Grandland X having a three years/60,000 miles period whist the Peugeot 3008 has three years/unlimited mileage cover.

We also had a short drive in the Grandland X with the 1.6 litre, four cylinder 120 hp/300 Nm (221 lb.ft) turbodiesel engine with the manual gearbox and the same spec level which costs £25,950. Top speed is 117 mph, zero to 60 mph takes 11.8 seconds, Combined Cycle is 70.6 mpg, CO2 is 104 g/km so VED road tax is £140 each year; Benefit-in-Kind tax is also 22% and insurance is Group 12E. Our test drive returned 56.4 mpg, still well short of the official figure but realistically impressive in the real driving world. There is virtually nothing to choose in the driving performance between this refined diesel engine and the petrol unit except the diesel model costs £1,355 more to buy – but its better fuel economy and lower insurance rating will recoup that extra cost in time.

VERDICT

Overall the Grandland X is an important addition to Vauxhall's portfolio of models in a fast growing sector of the new car market. Which version you choose, or indeed if the Peugeot 3008 alternative appeals more, it's a buyer's market. It will be down to which brand's dealership is most convenient because other than small price differences there is nothing to choose between the Vauxhall Grandland X and Peugeot 3008. Perhaps the 3008's longer warranty may sway your decision.

Personally I think the Peugeot 3008 is more distinctive for its outside styling but I prefer the front interior layout of the Grandland X – but Peugeot offers a higher mileage warranty. I'm well and truly sat on the fence choosing between them; it would probably be down to availability and haggle-price.

For: An important mid-sized SUV addition to the Vauxhall line-up courtesy of its partnership with PSA Peugeot-Citroen, high spec, brilliant PSA Group engine options, roomy,

comfortable, practical and well laid out logical and easy to use controls.

Against: Doesn't have the unlimited mileage warranty of the Peugeot 3008, exterior front end bland styling, first customer deliveries not until January 2018.



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

Vauxhall Grandland X Sport Nav, 1.2 Turbo petrol 130 hp, manual.

Price: £24,595. (Expected best selling model).

Engine/transmission: 1.2 litre, three cylinder, turbocharged direct injection petrol, 130 hp, 230 Nm (170 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm, six speed manual, plus £200 IntelliGrip traction option.

Performance: 117 mph, 0-60 mph 11.1 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 55.4 mpg (42.7 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 117 g/km, VED First year road tax £160 then £140 Standard rate, BiK company car tax 22%.

Insurance Group: 15E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,477 mm (14.69 ft), W 1,856 mm (6.09 ft), H 1,609 mm (5.28 ft), boot/load space 514 to 1,652 litres (18.15 to 58.34 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,350 kg (2,976 lb), five doors/five seats.