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## Road Test – MG ZS Extended Range EV – Trophy Connect

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Chris Adamson has been testing out MG's claims for its new long



## range ZS sports utility in real world driving conditions...

*(All words and photographs by, and copyright, Chris Adamson).*

MG has surprised many of its rivals by how popular its initially unfancied all-electric ZS has been, regularly sitting in the top 10 best-selling EVs in the country and pushing the brand to record sales figures during a difficult last 24 months.

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Sales of the original ZS EV could probably have been even higher but for the niggling concern about range anxiety – on test I, for one, found that in everyday driving situations I couldn't be certain of travelling more than 130 miles despite the 163 mile claims.

In an attempt to overcome these concerns, MG has refreshed the ZS EV where the most significant update is the installation of a larger capacity battery pack and the promise of up to 273 miles between re-charges.

In comes a 72 kWh long-range Lithium-Ion battery pack that the makers say can be charged from zero to 100 per cent in under 11 hours on a standard 7 kW charger unit or as little as 42 minutes on a 100 kW rapid charger if you can find one in operation that is not already occupied.

On delivery the ZS I had booked on test came with an 80 per cent charge and 200 miles of indicated range – a little less than I would have expected but at this stage nothing to worry about.

In fine, day-light, weather conditions with the Normal driving mode selected and the maximum setting on the KERS button (energy recovery under braking) I headed out on a journey through the New Forest on a mix of dual carriageway and tight country roads.





Attempting to be as economical with my driving style as possible without going to extremes and sticking to the national speed limits I reached my initial destination some 37.1 miles later with 67 per cent of charge remaining and a revised range of 162 which was just about spot on MG's performance claims.

By the time I returned home after a day's worth of short local outings, the charging level had dropped to 45 per cent and 111 miles of predicted range demonstrating that stop-start journeys don't favour EV performance.

As I don't yet have a fast charger unit I was relying on a standard three-pin 240V domestic



connection from my garage to do the re-charging - the ZS comes with a suitable portable unit and a warning from the makers that zero to full charge can take up to 34 hours!

Worryingly, once connected, it indicated that the time to full capacity from the 45 per cent I already had was going to be 17 hours - fortunately I was plugging it in at 3pm in the afternoon so it had sufficient time before I needed it the next morning.



Come 9am and yes there was a 100 per cent green light showing and somewhat surprisingly 275 miles range indicated - this quickly dropped to the advertised 273 the moment I hit the start button and engaged drive.





Before setting off I initially selected the Eco driving mode, but out of curiosity switched this to the Normal setting and the predicted range immediately dropped to 263 miles - obviously the computer brain was re-calculating based on the driving mode selection.

I returned to the Eco setting (range now back up to 273 miles) with the maximum KERS engaged for day two but this time the weather had deteriorated significantly to wind and rain with an accompanying fall in temperature (this is Britain after all) so the heater was on constantly, the windscreen wipers were in intermittent use and the headlights were switched on.

Trying to be as delicate on my throttle application as possible and once again keeping to the speed limit I reached my destination with 87 per cent charge remaining and 232 miles predicted range, a drop of 41 miles since setting off - the only problem was that I had only covered just over 26 miles.

This experience clearly demonstrates how environmental conditions rather than driving mode or driving style can significantly impact on the potential range of an electric vehicle.

This was emphasised when another overnight charge to 100 per cent left the ZS with an indicated range of just 257 miles (16 miles shy of its previous maximum prediction) - the computer brain had worked out from the previous day's driving that 273 miles was going to be beyond its reach.

Obviously I didn't have the opportunity to try the ZS on an extended journey and in motorway conditions so a better performance might be possible at consistent speeds.

To help you keep track of the progress of energy use and the electric motor function the new digital instrument panel provides lots of useful information with instant readouts on the flow of power to and from the batteries and motor, the level of charge, predicted distance, electrical voltages etc.

Particularly useful is the power use dial that is an aid to a more energy efficient driving



style.

If range isn't a worry the ZS now has the facility to charge up or power external equipment such as an electric bicycle using an accessory cable and, with the added power, the ZS now becomes the first EV from MG that has a mild towing capability - up to 500 kg (1,102 lb) towing capacity means you can attach a small trailer or a cycle carrier.

Overall I have to say that given the unpredictability of the British climate and the desire for creature comforts such as a warm cabin I wouldn't want to trust the long range ZS much beyond 230 miles in one stint in typical every-day use during the winter. However this is significantly better than before and puts the ZS up there with many of its sector rivals.

In addition to being competitively placed on range against the opposition the latest ZS holds up well as a driver's car. Although there is no mention of changes to the ride and handling the new ZS feels a touch more settled and assured on its suspension with a fraction less body roll than before and a slightly firmer control at the wheel.

Acceleration from the electric motor is as ever instantaneous and very progressive; the response from the Normal setting is brisk and almost makes the Sport mode obsolete except on the rare occasion when sudden rapid overtaking is required.

As well as extending the range of the ZS EV, MG has also taken the opportunity to give it a mild make-over, the most obvious evidence of this is the new front end treatment where the fake traditional grille has been replaced by an increasingly common dimple stamped panel along with LED headlights and daytime running lights.



The large chrome MG badge still takes pride of place on the nose but bizarrely instead of arranging for this to pop-out and reveal the charger connection point (as it does on the original ZS EV), the designers have cut another hinged panel out of the grille which destroys the clean aesthetics of the front.

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Pop the bonnet and the electric motor and its associated components are revealed in all their glory – but, unlike a combustion engine, there is very little for the owner to do here. I was surprised that the engineers didn't think it necessary to fit some sort of cover over the



motor and electronics to keep them free from damp and road grime.

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There are more changes for the rear bumper with more attractive inset lights and new style wheels but beyond this the compact ZS appears as before.

Having gradually improved over the years the quality of the materials used in the comfortable and spacious cabin, the revised ZS is a pleasant place to be with a limited choice of colours and textures that flow together well.

The dashboard is dominated by the latest 10 inch tablet-style touchscreen that works in conjunction with a line of switches to control most of the vehicle functions such as the air conditioning, satellite navigation, audio entertainment, front and rear cameras, a clear and easy to operate satellite navigation and the heated front seats which are a god-send in the winter.





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With each new generation of model MG packs in more technological gadgets so this ZS in range topping Trophy Connect trim comes with a whole world of goodies to play with such as MG iSMART which offers connection via a smartphone app that can control many of the vehicle functions including battery charge level and locking and unlocking the doors - it also provides weather and traffic information along with Amazon Prime.

Standard on the new ZS is MG Pilot that features a suite of driver assistance technologies such as Active Emergency Assist with Pedestrian and Bicycle Detection, Lane Keep Assist, Traffic Jam Assist, Intelligent Speed Limiter, Rear Cross Traffic Alert and Blind Spot Detection.





One word of advice . . . take some time to read the handbook before you go anywhere as trying to work out how to operate many of the functions for the first time on the move can be very frustrating.

One aspect I was disappointed to note where MG hasn't made any changes is with the 60/40 split folding rear seats which still don't fold down flat enough to make for a fully functional load space.







Fortunately the larger output battery pack doesn't eat into luggage space and there is still a two position boot floor that can be dropped down to increase the carrying capacity.

An aspect of electric vehicles that I hadn't fully appreciated was that without the heat generated by a combustion engine the cabin atmosphere on a cold damp day with just electrical heating elements needs constant fine tuning to maintain a degree of internal warmth and keep the windscreen and windows clear.



## VERDICT

At £33,495 before any government grants the longer-range ZS EV isn't the cheap entry level family SUV that it was previously, but it does come with that attractive seven year warranty and a more respectable and practical driving range which may just address the concerns that many motorists still have about how far they can go in an electric vehicle.





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Wheels-Alive Tech Spec:

Vehicle: MG ZS EV Trophy Connect





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Synchronous Electric Motor: Front wheel drive

Transmission: Automatic

Power: 156 PS / 115 kw

Torque: 206 lbft / 280 Nm

Performance:

0 - 60mph: 8.2 seconds



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Top Speed: 108 mph

Battery Capacity: 72.6 kWh Lithium-Ion (nominal) / 68.3 kWh (usable)

Charging:

7 kW to full charge - 10.5 hours

50 kW CCS to 80% charge - 1hr 3mins

100 kW Rapid Charge to 80% - 42 mins

Driving Efficiency (WLTP Combined): 3.5 miles/ kWh / 17.8 kWh/100 km

Driving Range (WLTP Combine Cycle): 273 miles

Price (On the Road £33,495) After PiCG £31,495