SsangYong Tivoli Ultimate – Road Test

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The SsangYong Tivoli Ultimate petrol auto SUV with 2WD...

Test-driven by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

Everyone likes surprises, especially if they give you even more than expected, such as with the SsangYong Tivoli SUV.

I think it's a bit of liberty calling it an SUV when the petrol version tested is only 2WD and is little more than a taller hatchback, but the Tivoli goes deeper.

In the Tivoli range of compact SUVs there are four trim levels spanning £14,000 to £21,700 and using 128 hp 1.6 petrol or 115 hp 1.6 diesel engines, but only the latter come with the choice of 4WD transmission, the rest are front wheel drive only.

Tivoli's have a seven year/150,000 miles warranty, one of the best of any model on UK sale and unsurpassed at this price.

While the longer XLV version offers more space and the 4WD transmission is limited to the less powerful 1.6 diesel, the original Tivoli 2WD can still hide surprises.



Personally it looks a bit different to the run-of-mill hatchbacks with its taller stance, its two-tone paint and Ultimate spec privacy glass but the real smiles come when you look inside.

Behold there are leather covered seats, ventilated and powered for the driver to use, with a heated front passenger seat matching, leather bossed steering wheel and gear knob and a "smart" instruments panel with six selectable colour hues.



It has keyless entry and starting, powered windows and automatic headlights with rain sensing wipers and adjustable-weight steering as well as cruise control.

Those are enough to fit out a much more expensive mid-range German model, but on the Tivoli they are little short of a revelation. Of course it comes with the latest safety and security systems, multiple airbags and child-seat fittings as you rightly expect, but it’s those luxury items that really impress at the price.

Which helps cope with the slightly disappointing powertrain. The 1.6 litre four cylinder 16v turbo-petrol engine is not outstanding in any respect and feels distinctly throttled back by contrast.



It’s slow off the mark and overtaking is best judged well in advance as the automatic gearbox, if you choose this version, is distinctly slow and even clunky at low speed, and there seemed little improvement if manually sequentially eased through the ratios.

You don’t seem to benefit from outstanding economy either but rather mid-range performance between fill-ups.

The weight-adjustable steering was useful but it didn’t give sharp feedback you might expect in an SUV, and the brakes were adequate but not heart-stopping in effectiveness. The parking brake did hold on our regular test slope.

Secondary switches were reasonably well laid out and accessible and the multi-coloured

instruments display was entertaining even if the dials were on the small side.

Heating and ventilation was good for those infront or back and the bootspace quickly tripled in capacity and was fairly easy to load, being deep and wide.

Access for driver and passengers was easy, a cosy fit for three behind but the front pair of seats were really comfortable around the back and under the thighs in particular and had good adjustment range from short to tall users.





Vision was clear to front and sides, more restricted to the rear, but the big wipers and intelligent long range, wide beamed headlights left little to worry about at night.

Noise levels rose from the engine as revs were lifted through the gears, but it cruised with more composure on main roads and only the constant road rumbles and bump-thump from the tyres intruded all the time.

It felt a little ponderous when sweeping through corners at speed, especially bumpy ones, and its handling was nose heavy while it also rolled on tight turns. There were no real vices to its handling, just a lack of refinement and poise.

VERDICT

Tivoli is more than a no-nonsense family car, it has a distinctly up-market appearance and honesty, a useful practicality and price competitive advantage.

Now, if the SsangYong engineers would refine its powertrain and chassis, and coax out more power and economy they would have real challenger in their hands and those of potential buyers awaiting a surprise.

For: Well priced, very well equipped, comfortable, good visibility, good warranty, reasonable room.

Against: Some road and suspension noises, slow performance, slow automatic gearchanges, dead-feel steering, small oddments spaces, high tax costs.



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

SsangYong Tivoli Ultimate 1.6 petrol, auto, 2WD, SUV.

Price: £19,195.

Mechanical: 128 hp, four cylinder, 1.6 turbo-petrol, six speed auto, 2WD. Performance: 99 mph, 0–62 mph 11.0 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 39.8 mpg (36 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 167 g/km, VED £515/£140, BiK company car tax 37%.

Insurance Group: 18.

Warranty: Seven years/150,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities:

L 4,202 mm (13.79 ft), W 1,798 mm (5.90 ft), H 1,590 mm (5.22 ft), boot space 423 – 1,115 litres (14.94 – 39.38 cu.ft).