Vauxhall Insignia Country Cruiser – Road Test

Published: February 16, 2018

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Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/vauxhall-insignia-country-cruiser-road-test/



David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) assesses the latest 210 hp Tourer addition to the Insignia range.

Vauxhall's first generation Insignia range of D-segment Hatchbacks and Tourer estates was launched in 2008 as a replacement for their Vectra models. The Insignia models received a facelift in 2013 and the second generation, rebranded Insignia Grand Sport for the five door hatchbacks and Sports Tourer for the estate versions, were launched early in 2017. At the end of last year Vauxhall added the Country Tourer 170 hp turbodiesel estate to the line-up but now we are trying the latest addition, the 210 hp Bi-Turbo diesel model.

Now owned by PSA Peugeot-Citroen, the latest GM Vauxhall/Opel Insignia models are likely to be the last to have a GM designed platform, components and engine as sharing will

become common throughout the brands as it has already with the Vauxhall/Opel Crossland X and Grandland X SUVs being based on Peugeot SUVs.

The Insignias have been popular models with fleet and business users as 100,000 of them were sold by Vauxhall/Opel last year. But the D-segment (upper medium) has been hard hit for sales with a 5.4% fall in UK registrations last year and a fall of 7.4% in Europe overall. This segment has been particularly affected by the growth in demand for SUV/Dual Purpose vehicles which have increased by 5.1% in the UK and 19.5% in Europe.

But it’s not everybody that is being seduced by the frantic must-have need for an SUV and there is still a small but important need for roomy large estates both with 2WD and 4WD and the Insignia Country Tourer is one option. Others include the VW Passat Alltrack, Audi A4/ A6 Allroad Estates, Skoda Octavia Scout and Volvo V90 Cross Country ranges.



Whilst conventional Insignia Grand Sport hatchbacks priced from £17,635 and Sport Tourer estates costing from £19,135 will continue to be mainly a fleet purchase, the Country Tourer is expected to attract mainly retail and business user-chooser sales in the UK and at the media launch at the end of last year around 500 annual UK sales was the figure quoted.

The Country Tourer range has a starting price of £25,635 but that is only with front wheel drive and a six speed manual gearbox or £27,535 for the new eight-speed automatic. Most demand will come from the 4WD version with a manual gearbox priced at £27,235. These Country Tourer versions all use a 2.0 litre 170 hp turbodiesel engine. But just added to the 2018 line-up is the flagship 2.0 litre, Bi-Turbo, 210 hp diesel 4WD model with the new eight speed automatic gearbox as standard, priced at just £28,435, and that is the version I have

just been test driving.

All versions come with one high level of specification but of course there are other optional added cost spec items available such as leather covered sports style front seats at £1,155, IntelliLux LED matrix headlights at £1,295, a Winter Pack at £400, Power Tailgate with foot opening sensor at £380 and two-coat metallic paint at £565. All these were showcased on my test vehicle, giving a total price of £32,230.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

Standard fit specification items are numerous, too many to include in this review but worthy of mention is Vauxhall's OnStar 4G Wi-Fi connectivity which offers services ranging from automatic crash response to stolen vehicle assistance and with the added concierge service it can be used to ask OnStar advisors to select a hotel or restaurant and proceed with the reservation. Up to seven devices can be connected to the Wi-Fi hotspot available with OnStar. The IntelliLink infotainment function is compatible with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto phone integration. Of course European mapping sat-nav is standard as is cruise control, eight-inch touchscreen, dual zone air-con, multi-function trip computer, FlexRide adjustable suspension, driving response modes, automatic lights and wipers, front and rear parking sensors and 18-inch alloy wheels. For the price and the specification and its added 4WD on and off-road performance the Insignia Country Tourer is unbeatable for value-for-money in this niche sector.

Perhaps just as important being a large estate at almost five-metres (about 16.4 ft) in length is the interior space it provides. It has an elongated wheelbase length of 2,829 mm (9.28 ft) so rear seat legroom is impressive although the sleek design of the cabin does reduce rear passenger headroom for six-footers. With the 40/20/40 split folding rear seats in place there is 560 litres (19.78 cu.ft) of boot space which increases in stages as the rear seat backs are folded to a maximum 1,665 litres (58.80 cu.ft) of total load area.

The ride height of the Country Tourer has been raised by 20 mm (almost an inch) over the

standard Sports Tourer estates for added ground clearance and there is further off-road driving protection with noticeable robust looking plastic cladding along the sills, over the wheelarches and encasing the front and rear lower bumper areas. There are added front and rear skid plates plus underbody protection shields as well.

The vehicle's all-wheel drive system uses torque-vectoring via the GKN Twinster technology, similar to that used for the Range Rover Evoque and Ford Focus RS, but it's configured to suit its various applications in these different models. Instead of a central differential the Country Tourer's rear axle contains two electronically controlled multi-plate clutches. These provide the ability to direct more driving torque to one side or the other. It interacts with the car's chassis control system to send more torque to the outside rear wheel during fast cornering for sharper handling and added grip. The same applies to driving off-road where driving torque can be shuffled front to rear, left to right to whichever wheel or wheels has the most grip and applies the individual brakes to stop wheels with no grip from spinning and so losing drive. The technology doesn't stop there as the FlexRide system provides adaptive damping and steering response through Standard, Sport or Tour (eco) modes. This system also changes the shift-points for the automatic gearbox as well.



As for the new 2.0 litre, four-cylinder Bi-Turbo diesel unit the 210 hp output gives this Country Tourer real pace with a top speed of 142 mph and a zero to 60 mph acceleration time of 7.7 seconds. With 480 Nm (354 lb.ft) of torque available from 1,750 rpm, coupled with the new eight-speed automatic gearbox, engine response is immediate when required with its twin sequential turbochargers but it was relaxed at legal 70 mph cruising speeds. Around town and in busy traffic it was totally fuss-free and a very cultured way to deal with our congested and poorly maintained roads.

As for running costs, well they are not cheap. The Combined Cycle fuel economy is 39.8 mpg and during my week of on-road test driving I easily almost matched that figure with 39.2 mpg. That's the impressive bit, but with the extra power and torque of this engine coupled with the automatic gearbox and 4WD, the CO2 figure is high at 188 g/km so VED is £800 First Year rate before falling to the £140 Standard rate. Company car drivers will pay the

maximum 37% Benefit-in-Kind tax. Insurance is Group 24E.

I have driven the 170 hp version of this model briefly on an off-road course consisting of gravel farm tracks, grassy fields and some woodland scrub and it took all that in its stride so this 210 hp version will have even more ‘grunt’ to deal with steep inclines and it seems to be an ideal vehicle for country estate managers, the equestrian community, architects, surveyors, vets, the Police and rescue services and of course those people who tow caravans, boats and trailers with its 2,000 kg (4,850 lb) braked towing weight.

VERDICT

I liked this Vauxhall in almost all areas… great looks inside and out, high specification, loads of passenger and load space, the comfortable ride which was marginally on the firm and noisy side over poorer surfaces, plus loads of power, good real-life fuel economy and all at a really very good price. Only the high tax costs take the gloss off a very fine country estate.

For: Stylish kerb appeal, smart well laid out high quality interior, high specification, loads of driving support and safety aids as standard, OnStar connectivity, strong new engine, large boot/load area capacity, very competitively priced.

Against: High tax costs, ungenerous warranty.



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

Vauxhall Insignia Country Tourer 2.0, 210hp, Turbo D, AWD auto estate.

Price: £28,435 (£32,230 as tested).

Engine/transmission: Newly added to the range the 2.0 litre 210 hp, 480 Nm (354 lb.ft) from 1,750rpm, Bi-Turbo diesel four cylinder engine, eight speed auto with 4WD. Performance: 142 mph, 0–60mph 7.7 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 39.8 mpg (39.2 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 188g/km, VED First Year road tax rate £800 then £140 Standard rate, BiK company car tax max rate of 37%.

Insurance Group: 24E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,986 mm (16.36 ft), W 1,863 mm (6.11 ft), H 1,500 mm (4.92 ft), wheelbase 2,829 mm (9.28 ft), boot/load space 560 to 1,665 litres (19.78 to 58.80 cu.ft), braked towing weight 2,000 kg (4,850 lb), five doors/five seats.