



SRi MODEL SHOWN

Devilishly good looking the new Vauxhall Astra

Some very exciting new features go into making the new Vauxhall Astra, a car many folk would simply love to own. I say 'new' features but one specifically has some pretty old antecedents. The linkage applied to the rear suspension works to prevent relative sideways motion between the axle and body of the car. It enables the use of softer rear trailing arm bushes and softer springs and all without affecting the road holding abilities of the vehicle. It's a feature that makes driving along winding, bumpy roads a complete and comfortable doddle.

Then there is the electric power steering. The powered rack, as opposed to a powered column, made it possible for designers to tune the steering electronically to cope seamlessly with all speeds and conditions. The result is a wonderful feeling of confidence when driving, you just seem to know what's going on 'twixt wheel and road. Advanced Forward Lighting, Vauxhall's third generation AFL+ changed intensity and reach, further enhance the feeling of complete control. And

depending on driving and road conditions, there are nine different light functions. A core body structure, stiffer than that of the previous model, enhances the ride and handling even further and you will note an enormous reduction in noise and vibration on your journey.

But that's all very well, but what does it look like? Has it got the eye appeal motorists look for these days? Does it turn heads? Well it certainly has eye appeal. The long, smooth lines are completely

in sympathy with the latest design style. The sporty, coupé outline is punctuated by four side windows framed in chromium. There are the strong, forward silhouette, steeply raked windscreen and sloping rear roof line.

It looks so aerodynamic that you can well imagine owning and being in the driving seat. It simply oozes class with a capital 'C'. Most surprising of all, it's a compact vehicle with a price and model range that puts it well within the reach of most folk.

Inside the flowing design follows the exterior. The finish is superb. The front seats enfold you with loving care. Those at the rear are just as comfortable. For the driver, everything is well within reach and the pedals are perfectly aligned. These front seats are Ergonomically designed. Features on the driver's include a six-way adjustment, four-way lumbar adjustment and an extendable seat cushion. The front passenger's seat sports a four-way adjustment and the same four-way lumbar adjustment. Comfort for both seat occupants is therefore completely assured.

Storage is imaginative to say the least. There are a range of carefully researched and patented storage cubbies. Investigations revealed that amongst the twenty most common items carried in their car by motorists are an MP3 player and a 1.5-litre drinks bottle. Storage has been designed to cater specifically for



these, and the other eighteen. The boot features a moveable floor mountable in three positions. Vauxhall's original bike carrier is integrated into the rear bumper as an option that will transport up to two bikes.

Eight engines should be available ranging from 87PS to 180PS. Powerful efficiency is guaranteed, but CO₂ is surprisingly low and represents an overall reduction in emissions of 13.3%. The manufacturers expect diesel engines will represent almost half of all Astra sales and will include a 1.7-litre unit producing 110PS and a 2.0-litre generating 160PS. Neither are designed to emit more than 128g/km when used in conjunction with a manual transmission. An ecoFLEX model, equipped with a 95PS 1.3-litre CDTi is also worth consideration this spring. It should achieve 109g/km without sacrificing either refinement or sheer driveability. Five petrol engines will also be available. The range goes from an 87PS 1.4-litre to a 180PS 16-litre Turbo and will include an all new, 1.4-litre turbocharged unit producing 140PS. It replaces the 1.8-litre now in the previous range.

Prices climb upwards from around £15,600 for the entry level 1.4-litre 87PS Exclusiv model to £23,695 for the top-of-the-range, 2.0-litre 160PS Elite automatic.

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