



Land Rover Defender 90 Station Wagon

Founded on a lineage stretching back to the debut of the first Land Rover in 1948, today's Defender takes pride of place as the toughest vehicle in the Land Rover range.

The iconic Land Rover Defender can trace its roots back sixty years, to the first-ever Land Rover.

The Defender 90 Station Wagon's new 2.4-litre diesel engine offers increased torque and improved driveability while a new six-speed gearbox gives much wider spread gear ratios, which perks up off-road towing performance and on-road capability.

An anti-stall device is handily fitted, which adjusts the fuel mapping so it can operate at low engine speeds in deep mud conditions. As always, permanent four-wheel drive is standard fit with a high and low ratio transfer box and differential locks.

Changes to the vehicle exterior have been kept to a minimum, with a revised bonnet profile the only clue to the new Defender's increased potential. But inside, you will find a better full-width fascia and a general air of improved quality and ergonomics. Forget it if you want the safety of airbags though – there aren't any!

Instruments from Land Rover's Discovery 3 provide clear information to the driver, and details like all-LED

instrument illumination help ensure high standards of reliability. There is also a new heating and ventilation system which, according to Land Rover, increases cabin airflow by almost fifty per cent.

The seating comfort is impressive. The Defender 90 Station Wagon has four individual passenger seats; the rear ones, which are forward facing, also fold sideways. Access to the rear



seats is via the side-hinged rear door.

Because the core function of the Defender is to be a durable working 4x4 it is not very sociable to drive or ride in if you are a country lifestyle user. By its very nature, the Defender has tough suspension. That is great off-road, but on the tarmac it gives a bouncy, noisy ride with lots of body roll.

Off-road it is quite simply the King of 4x4's. And because it is built like a tank it should last a lifetime if treated

with respect. The short front and rear overhangs, combined with excellent ground clearance, makes avoiding obstacles easy. The all-wheel drive system is terrific, and having low ratios and locking differentials means the Defender can cope with just about anything the countryside can chuck at it.

The new diesel engine can cope with a top speed of 82mph but the legal maximum of 70mph is fast enough, given the poor quality of road holding. Average fuel economy is 28.3mpg — which is around what my test car achieved. Of more significance to 'proper' Defender users are the facts that the maximum braked towing weight is 3,500kg and the wading depth through water is 500mm (20 inches).

The Defender is a true British icon, so if you are royalty, a farmer, a land owner, lord of the manor or simply a traditional Land Rover enthusiast then the Defender 90 Station Wagon is right up your estate. But if you are fashion conscious and simply want a country lifestyle vehicle, you should steer well away. Buy a Range Rover instead.

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