



Vauxhall Zafira Polished

The Vauxhall Zafira was the first and the smartest. This middle-sized MPV was the first that offered seating for 7 people despite its modest exterior measurements. Furthermore the Zafira was the first MPV where the seats didn't have to be removed to create extra luggage space. In the meantime the competition has copied all the tricks and that leaves the ball in Zafira's court again. Is the brand new Zafira capable of another revolution in MPV-land?

Usually an MPV that offers seats to 6 or 7 people has two disadvantages. The first is its enormous size, which makes the car not very practical in the city. Besides that one of these mega-busses doesn't look particularly charming. From the start the Vauxhall Zafira managed to get an almost miraculous amount of space out of refined exterior measurements. While the new Zafira is considerably larger than the previous one, the car seems more compact and streamlined. Like all other new Vauxhalls the Zafira is designed with smooth lines and sharp folds in the bodywork. As a result the new Zafira looks more like a large Astra than a family van.



Flex 7

The second disadvantage of a 7-seater MPV is the cumbersome procedure to use the available space. When the seats need to give way for luggage both backseats need to be taken out after which they remain in the house or garage. Not with the Vauxhall Zafira! From the first generation the "Flex 7"-system is Vauxhall's MPV trump card. The first backseat on rails slides up to the front seats which leaves just enough room to fold the second backseat cleverly out of the floor. The whole system works very easily and intuitively. In

contrast with other 7-seaters the instruction manual was not consulted this time.



With regard to the previous Zafira the whole "Flex 7"-system is refined but remains the same in principal. As with all cars in this segment the rear backseats are mainly meant for children. These seats are not only small, they are also hard to get to (our "test children" preferred getting in and out through the rear door). The room on the first backseat is sufficient for adults. Depending on the model there are also flip-up tables, power for a laptop and cup holders.

Luggage space

Still, the Zafira will hardly ever be driven with 7 people on board. With all seats in situ luggage space is reduced to practically nil. Even luggage for a weekend away will not fit behind the second backseat. This is where the Zafira loses against the 3x3 MPV's (two rows of three seats) and the (more expensive and ungainly) "full size" MPV's.

Fortunately the Zafira offers several possibilities between 7 seats and the maximum luggage space of 1,820 litres. The second backseat consists of two separate seats that can be pulled out of the floor independently. The first backseat can be folded flat. This creates a long but sloping floor. Folding the backrest of the passenger seat can extend the floor. As an alternative the seat of the backseat can be lifted up after which the whole backseat can slide towards the front seats. Vauxhall only offers the "Flexorganizer", consisting of netting and bungee bands, as an option. As a result of not having this option in the test vehicle the luggage hopelessly slid through the car on fast bends or braking hard on more than one occasion.

Road holding

From the driver's perspective there is a big difference with the last generation Zafira. The dashboard has been designed with the same smooth lines as the rest of the car. The number of pockets, compartments and most of all cup holders in this "Enjoy"-version is rather disappointing. More expensive models have a panoramic roof, which apart from looking elegant also offers extra storage space. The steering wheel now is adjustable in height and distance to the driver. More important are the comfortable solid seats that have many adjustment options.

The chassis is "comfortably solid" as well. While the previous Zafira only started to win people over after a few dozen miles, with this new model it is immediately clear that road holding has been well taken care off. Handling is significantly better than average for an MPV and is almost equal to that of a passenger car. This is not meant for speeding on bends but it is mostly very safe if one ever needs to swerve to prevent an accident from happening. The brakes are excellent and even more powerful and have more bite than those of the average passenger car.

Engines

From its introduction the Zafira has been available in a number of petrol and diesel engines. The test vehicle has the lightest petrol engine on the pricelist. This 1.6-litre 4-cylinder has 105 horse power, which is just enough for a car this size and particularly its sensitivity to side winds. At traffic lights the Zafira 1.6 is sometimes slightly hesitant and when merging on the motorway more often than not requires full throttle. One of the more powerful engines is recommended when driving with a full load or a trailer.

Once on the way the 1.6 engine is not a restriction. The test vehicle has travelled enormous distances without ever getting tired because the engine had to work (too) hard. Even better: the car is pleasantly quiet and it offers a good view over the traffic because of its high seating. Time and time again the test driver reached his destination extremely relaxed.



Conclusion

This is the second completely new generation Vauxhall Zafira since the introduction in 1999. In the meantime the competition hasn't sat still. The new Zafira still is very smart and flexible with space but is no longer unique. On other points the earlier revolution doesn't materialize either.

Yet the Zafira has definitely been improved. For starters with the exterior. The new Zafira looks more compact and elegant but still offers more space than before. The "Flex 7"-system works even easier and quicker. Technically speaking the engines have been refined and road holding qualities have improved considerably. ■



Specifications

Vauxhall Zafira Zafira Life a/c 1.6i 16v

Size and weight

Length	447 cm
Width	180 cm
Height	164 cm
Wheelbase	270 cm
Kerb weight	1505 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Fuel capacity	60 l
Luggage space	140/1820 l

Engine and performance

Capacity	1598 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	105 bhp @ 6000 rpm
Max torque	150 Nm @ 3900 rpm
Drive	voorwielen
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	13.6 secs
Top speed	176 km/h
Average mileage	7.2 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	9.3 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	6 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	gr / km



Price

Price	£ 15,300
Price base model	£ 13,545