



Chevrolet Captiva Greetings from Poprad

It was inevitable. Although former car maker Daewoo still has its roots in Korea, it is now lead by Chevrolet. Staying true to the Korean tradition, the brand still offers exceptional value for money. But if the American owner can contribute one thing it is knowledge of SUV's. Therefore the first SUV of the new Chevrolet is now a fact. To prove that the Captiva is about more than just good looks, it has been tested in the mountains of Poland and Slovakia.

According to the tourist guide about the Tatra mountains the area has two months of summer, all other months are winter. According to locals this is much too optimistic. Even in mid June the village of Poprad in Slovakia suffers from strong winds and violent thunderstorms. This affects the roads and that's why this is the ideal place to test drive the new Captiva.

Comfort

The main challenge of developing an SUV is finding the right balance between comfort, road handling and off road capability. If, for example, handling is prioritised, off road capacity and comfort will suffer. This forces most car builders make a clear choice, but Chevrolet wants to excel in all three areas.

Whatever the test drive will bring, comfort is fine. To put it mildly: the roads on the border of Poland and Slovakia leave some things to be desired. In some villages roads have never been paved at all. Still the Captiva offers enough comfort to keep the passengers from shaking and bouncing in their seats.



The only thing that's moved are the locals, who seem to have been frozen in time. Farmers still use horse and carriage to work the land and cattle walks freely on the streets. A flying saucer would not cause more commotion than this modern looking Chevrolet.

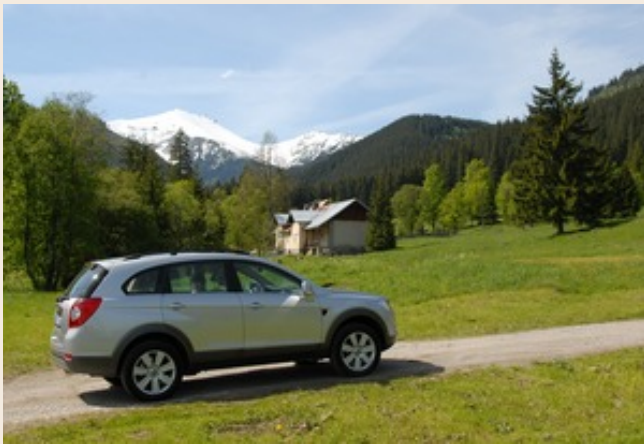
The Captiva is smaller than its competitors, but still offers the same amount of space. Even the seven-seat configuration offers more space on all seats than average.

The interior is as modern and as immaculate as that of the Epica. Following Chevrolet tradition, the trim level exceeds

the customer's expectation. Air conditioning, radio/CD player, parking assistant and ESP (electronic stability control) are all standard.

Road handling

The Captiva has proved itself a comfortable car. Still the suspension is not so soft that the driver has no feeling with the road or tyres. When cornering the Captiva is easy to control. Also, road handling is exceptionally good for an SUV.



Despite the height of the car, the Captiva hardly rolls or pitches. That gives a reassuring and safe feeling from the start, something certainly not all SUV's succeed in.

Chevrolet tried to make the car feel smaller than it actually is. This is why the car doesn't handle like an impossibly large SUV in small villages and that's why the driver doesn't have to look down to see other traffic.

Performance

Chevrolet offers a choice of three engines for the Captiva: a 2.4 litre four cylinder petrol engine, a 3.2 litre six cylinder petrol engine and a 2.0 litre four cylinder diesel engine. Buyers who choose the base engine will be confronted with their choice on every single drive. Performance is poor, on hills even insufficient.



Often second gear has to be engaged, meaning that the engine has to work very hard to keep this heavy car moving at all. Because of a big gap between second and third gear, speed drops almost instantly when shifting to third gear.



To avoid this tedious base engine most of the test drive was done with the Captiva diesel. This is the first ever diesel engine by Chevrolet and it makes the Captiva a much more pleasant car on the whole. The diesel powered Chevrolet is quicker, more fuel efficient and cleaner (a particle filter is standard) than the petrol engine. This engine is certainly not the most refined diesel on the market, but overall performance is good.

Off road

The best is kept for last: the Captiva can actually leave the tarmac and drive off road. This car is about more than rough looks alone. Only the base model with base trim level offers two wheel drive.

All other versions have four wheel drive. Depending on the situation all power is sent to the front wheels (normal on road driving) or power is distributed over the front and rear wheels (off road driving). This fully automatic system saves fuel, but makes the Captiva less suitable for heavy off road use.



While off road the first limitation is the limited ground clearance. The automatic four wheel drive system distributes the power very well, making light and medium off road driving possible. Again the Captiva is easy to control, making it easy to fully utilise its capabilities. In deep tracks or mud it is easy to keep the optimum balance between slip and grip.

The Captiva does not come with low gearing or special mud tyres. This car is meant as an every day versatile vehicle, not as a heavy duty work horse. As an alternative for low gearing an electronic hill decent control is available. At the push of a button the Captiva descends at no more than 15 km/h. This causes ominous sounds from the drive train, but it functions very well. The electronic system does offer an alternative for descending, but ascending is still a problem without low gear.



In the Tatra-mountains the Captiva gets to places that are so incredibly beautiful that the landscape looks like a living postcard. This is what an SUV is meant for: travelling places where the average tourists never comes.

Conclusion

It is a good recipe: Korean efficiency combined with American design and know how. The concept of the Captiva is very well thought out. This makes the Chevrolet Captive suitable for every day traffic, but whenever time permits the destination may be a bit more adventurous. The basic 2.4 model is not recommendable, the diesel version performs very well.

Despite the low price, the trim level is above average. Build quality is good and in no way the Captiva feels like a budget car. The journey to Poprad as a success, the Captiva proved itself very well. ■



Specifications

Chevrolet Captiva 2.0VCDi LTX 7 Seat

Size and weight

Length	464 cm
Width	185 cm
Height	176 cm
Wheelbase	271 cm
Kerb weight	1820 kg
Trailer	750 kg
Trailer - braked	2000 kg
Fuel capacity	65 l
Luggage space	465/930 l

Engine and performance

Capacity	1991 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	150 bhp @ 4000 rpm
Max torque	320 Nm @ 2000 rpm
Drive	vierwielaandrijving
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	10.6 secs
Top speed	186 km/h
Average mileage	7.4 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	9 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	6.5 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	197 gr / km



Price

Price	£ 23,695
Price base model	£ 16,995