



Opel Zafira Tourer

Flexible friend

Review | Transportation is available in all shapes and sizes. An airplane is the most suitable for long distances. A train is ideally fitted to travel the same route at the same time every day. A bicycle or moped is meant for use in the city. A car offers the most flexible means of transportation and can be used for just about everything. Vauxhall now introduces the Zafira Tourer which calls itself the "versatility king". Rightfully so?

A car is the most flexible method of transportation because it goes from door to door, runs at any time of day and offers space for one or more people. It is the latter where the Zafira Tourer takes things one step further than most other cars.

Space

That's because the Zafira Tourer has a cabin that can be adapted to accommodate everything between two people (and lots of freight) to seven people (but hardly any boot space at all).

Access to the cabin is by regular, pivoting doors. This space miracle doesn't feature child-friendly sliding doors or Vauxhall's smart "flex doors" which open against the driving direction of the vehicle (and make entry much easier). The boot lid doesn't open high enough, so tall adults have to bend over to reach into the boot.

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Flex all around

Ever since the introduction of the first generation of the Zafira in 1999, the rear seats do not have to be taken out of the car to make extra space. Thanks to "Flex7", the seats simply fold up and neatly disappear into the floor when not in use. This third generation of the Zafira is no different, yet it does offer even more possibilities.



As of now the back seat consists of three separate seats. They are fitted on rails, so they can be moved to create either more legroom or more space for luggage.

Completely new for the Zafira Tourer is the so-called "Lounge Seating". This means the middle seat can be folded up, after which it serves as a big armrest. The remaining outer seats can then be moved further backwards and slid to the side. This creates even more space around the remaining seats. Thanks to the Lounge Seats, the Zafira Tourer offers more space in the back than any other car in this segment.

To reach the seats in the third row some climbing is required. Even when the second row of seats is slid all the way forward, the legroom in the third row is minimal. This means the third row is the exclusive domain of (small) children. When the third row of seats is in use, the remaining boot space is slim to non-existent (this applies to all cars in this segment).

Even on the outside the Zafira Tourer offers flexibility: the optional "FlexFix" is an extendable bicycle rack (no assembling or disassembling required!). The latest generation of FlexFix is now strong enough to carry electric bikes. Even when carrying bicycles, it can partly be folded away to give (limited) access to the boot.



Spec levels

The flexibility of the cabin isn't limited to sliding and swivelling chairs. A rail between the front seat,

appropriately named "FlexRail", holds storage boxes which can be moved away to give access to even more storage space underneath. It is not possible to exchange units on the rails, like with other brands.

The Zafira Tourer has two glove compartments. The top one seems small, but in fact extends all the way to the windshield, so it still offers lots of space. Also very smart is the separate panel under the centre console, in which an AUX and USB connector can be found.



Passenger car

Despite all space-saving gadgetry, the driver experiences the Zafira Tourer as a regular car. That is a huge compliment, because many competing MPV's (Multi Purpose Vehicles) have the look and feel of a nursery on wheels. Instead the Zafira Tourer has the same build quality as Vauxhall's luxury car: the Insignia.

The Zafira Tourer can be fitted with all the creature comforts of a modern company car. The eye-catcher is the front facing camera. This is a camera that looks ahead and reads traffic signs. By adding a radar the computer can now also warn about approaching hazards. When an accident seems unavoidable, the computer brakes to decrease damage. Although this certainly is a good thing, other brands are able to bring the car to a complete stop, which is even better.

The "AGR" seats are highly recommendable. They have been developed together with the German institute for healthy backs and are exceptionally comfortable.



Handling

Just like with all other modern Vauxhalls, its character can be changed by simply pushing a button ("FlexRide"). In "Sport" mode both the reaction of the throttle and steering wheel are more direct. The "Tour" mode offers noticeably more comfort, which is nice on bad road surfaces.

No matter what mode is engaged, handling is less than average. When keeping to the ideal line, the Zafira can corner very quickly. However, when making one false move (for example to avoid a pedestrian!) the tyres lose grip much more easily than normal. In this case the Zafira Tourer glides forward, despite the fact that the wheels are pointing in the desired direction. Luckily this behaviour is effectively corrected by the electronic stability programme ("ESP"). For safety (and peace of mind) it would be better if the limits were much further.



Engines

A versatile car comes with a versatility of engines. In due time the Zafira Tourer will be available with two petrol engines, two diesels, an LPG version and a power-train running on NCG (naturally compressed gas). At this moment only one engine was available: the 165 PS / 360 Nm strong 2.0 litre diesel.

Despite the fact that both a gear shift indicator and stop/start mechanism come as standard, the Zafira Tourer isn't as frugal as promised.

Even this strongest diesel engine on the price list is aimed at comfort, just like the rest of the car. When firmly pressing the accelerator, no immediate action follows. Instead the "2.0 CDTI" will always accelerate calmly, with dignity. This isn't a euphemism to say the Zafira Tourer is slow, because this strongest diesel easily cruises at speeds over 180 km/h (while 150 km/h is just 2,500 rpm). Even better: at high speeds like this it remains quiet in the cabin.



Despite the high comfort levels and fair performance, an airplane is still faster, so the journey back home was still through the air. But the best way to reach the airport was by... car!

Conclusion

The car is still the most flexible method of transportation at the moment. Vauxhall now claims the Zafira Tourer is the most flexible car in its class. A road test confirms that this is indeed true.

As to handling, the Zafira passes the test, but barely. The diesel engine is strong and quiet, but it isn't as efficient as advertised by Vauxhall.

When it comes to luxury, looks and practical use the Vauxhall Zafira Tourer is indeed unique in its class. Of all cars in its class the Zafira offers the most space, while that space can be arranged in a multitude of ways. Thanks to the excellent build quality and modern equipment the Zafira can even compete with many luxury cars. ■



Specifications

Opel Zafira Tourer 2.0 CDTI (165 PS) SE

Size and weight



Length x width x height	466 x 188 x 169 cm
Wheelbase	276 cm
weight	1.582 kg
Trailer	750 kg
Trailer - braked	1.450 kg
Fuel capacity	58 l
Luggage space	710/1860 l
Tyre size	225/50R17

Engine and performance



Capacity	1956 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/
Max power	165 PS @ 4000 rpm
Max torque	360 Nm @ 1750 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	9.8 secs
topspeed	208 km/h
Average mileage	5.2 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	6.2 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	4.6 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	137 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 25,915
Price base model	Â£ 22,315