

Vauxhall Insignia BiTurbo SRi Sports Tourer

By Tim Barnes-Clay Twitter: @carwriteups Visit: www.carwriteups.co.uk.

THERE ARE many things I like about this car and just a couple of tiny things I don't. Let's get the grumbles out of the way first.

The Vauxhall Insignia needs better wing mirrors. They're just too small and narrow to give you a confident view - especially when changing lanes on motorways. The other small niggle is the steering wheel. It's big enough to belong in a bus. But these minor issues are eclipsed by the motor's merits.

For a start, the Insignia is a good looking estate (Sports Tourer in today's parlance). It comes loaded with equipment; it's practical; it's comfortable, and it's satisfying to drive. But the model on test here - the BiTurbo SRi Sports Tourer - is not just the usual griffin labelled, load-lugging, mile-muncher. Why? Because under the bonnet, Vauxhall has shoehorned

in its most commanding diesel engine ever. It produces 192 bhp and 295 lb/ft of torque, and yet CO2 emissions are only 134 g/km.

The heady, twin-sequential turbocharged oil-burner is based on the existing 1956 cc unit that powers key models in the Insignia, Astra and Zafira Tourer range. However, in BiTurbo form it delivers an extra 34.5 bhp and a significant 37 lb/ft of further 'get-up-and-go'. The result for the Sports Tourer is 0-60 mph in 8.4 seconds. It's the sort of acceleration that gives you that perceptible 'pulled back into your seat' feeling.

Complementing this power gain, Vauxhall's FlexRide adaptive damping is standard on all Insignia BiTurbos (normally a £790 option on front-wheel drive models). The system can 'learn' how you drive the car and adapts

the dampers accordingly. You can also select Tour and Sport buttons, and configure the throttle, steering and damper settings in Sport mode separately. The result is a car which is more rewarding to drive than many other large turbo diesel motors on the market. In Sport mode it's taut, quick, and it takes corners on rails. In Tour mode it's a gracious and unflappable vehicle, and one which will give you a magic carpet ride to work. In normal mode, it's simply a good estate car with poke.

Unsurprisingly, the Sports Tourer has a big area for loading, and cleverly, under the powered tailgate (which incorporates the rear light clusters), there is an additional set of rear lights, making the car highly visible to other road users if you need to sort out your luggage after the sun has gone down.

Finally, thanks to a package of eco features - including standard Start/Stop across the range - the Insignia BiTurbo Sports Tourer manages to achieve a combined 55.4 mpg. This is the last piece of the jigsaw to make the car a great all-rounder. It's economical and spacious enough to be the main family car; its emissions are

low enough to make it an affordable yet very smart business motor, and, of course, the potency of its engine will bring out the devil in you when you feel the need for speed.

PROS

- Powerful
- Comfortable
- Economical
- Good-looking
- Practical

CONS

- Small wing mirrors
- Large steering wheel

FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 140 mph
- 0-60 mph: 8.4 secs
- Combined mpg: 55.4
- Engine: 1956 cc 4 cylinder 16 valve twin-turbo diesel
- Max. power (bhp): 192 at 4000 rpm
- Max. torque (lb/ft): 295 at 1750-2500 rpm
- CO2: 134 g/km
- Price: £28,615 on the road

