



# Practicality and flair

Tim Barnes-Clay explains why the well-equipped Renault Kadjar outscores the Qashqai

**T**he French-made Renault Kadjar is one rung higher up the greasy pole than many of its competitors. You see, there are lots of Qashqai clones on the market, but the Kadjar genuinely shares the popular Nissan's platform and power units. What's more, the car is cheaper to buy than the fashionable Qashqai and has that extra sprinkling of French flair.

The front-wheel-drive 1.6 dCi 130 Signature Nav, on test here, is impressive. The turbo-charged oil-burner starts out fairly meekly, but then things under the bonnet hot up, resulting in plenty of mid-range pull. This is satisfying because it means you don't need to work the gears hard to utilise the clout on tap. Push the Renault into twisty country lanes and the car stays bonded to the tarmac. There's a little bit of body roll noticeable, but it never disturbs ride comfort. In fact, the Kadjar arouses confidence in this sort of driving environment due to its consistently well-weighted steering.

The brakes are excellent, although their urgency takes you by surprise on occasion. However, a capacity for

quickly scrubbing-off-speed is no bad thing. The gearshift-action is a little heavy, and some diesel-din sneaks into the interior when the whip is cracked, but this Renault is not the sort of car bought by out-and-out driving enthusiasts. It is a vehicle that will spend the majority of its time in town, on the school run or on family outings.

Unsurprisingly then, the Kadjar is comfy for a family-of-four and handles scarred, urban road surfaces well, due to its nicely-cushioned suspension set-up. The boot is better than the Qashqai's, in terms of load space, and it has the same ingenious flooring that can be elevated, dropped, or used as a partition to keep your possessions from tumbling about. Indeed, the Kadjar is a pleasant place to be, due, in no small part, to it having one of the finest cabins in its class. From a

#### Renault Kadjar 1.6 dCi 130 Signature Nav

- Max speed: 118 mph
- 0-62 mph: 9.9 secs
- Combined mpg: 57.6
- Engine layout: 1598cc 4-cylinder 16v turbo diesel
- Max. power (bhp): 129
- CO2: 117 g/km
- Price: £24,795

tech point of view, the glass is just as full. The sat-nav system is a doddle and – in this flagship model – the car comes fully loaded with a top-quality Bose sound system, Bluetooth, faux leather upholstery, and a panoramic sunroof. Definitely more important than cabin toys is a car's safety prowess. And the Kadjar has layer upon layer of kit to keep you protected. Equipment includes traffic sign recognition, lane-departure assist and even parking sensors at the front and the rear of the car.

As mentioned, the Signature Nav is the top of the tree model, so unless you really need all the trimmings, you'll enjoy the Kadjar just as much in its slightly lower-down-the ladder 'Dynamique' guise. The car is still well-appointed and represents excellent value for money, whether bought outright or on a PCP finance deal.

To be honest, it's hard to justify buying a Nissan Qashqai now that the Kadjar is on the scene. The car is just as good-looking, it's great to drive, it has a bigger boot and its price-tag is lower. Unless you're desperate to have the Qashqai moniker ornamenting your drive, save yourself some cash and go for the French marque instead.