

Chinese takeaway

Tim Barnes-Clay reviews an odd newcomer to motoring

The only Chinese Great Wall most of us have heard of is the famous stone-built fortification.

Well, that may be the best known Great Wall, but there is another. One of China's most successful car manufacturers is also called Great Wall and this year the company became the first Chinese car maker to begin volume vehicle sales in the UK, with the launch of the 2012 Steed pick-up.

On sale through a nationwide network of 40 dealers the Steed is a tough and practical motor, equally adept as a workhorse or a weekend getaway vehicle. It is also one of the most affordable pick-up trucks in Britain – both to buy and run. Prices start at just £13,998 for the S model and its 2.0-litre, 16-valve turbocharged diesel powerplant sips rather than guzzles fuel, giving an average fuel economy of 34 miles per gallon.

The Steed's thickset appearance, enhanced by beefy

wheel-arches and high ground clearance, indicates its resilience as well as its qualifications as a flexible load-carrier, on tarmac and in the rough. Carrying capacity compares well with its pick-up rivals. The roomy cargo bay measures four and a half feet (1,380mm) long, four feet nine inches (1,460mm) wide and one foot seven inches

console, front door pockets with cup holders and front seatback map pockets.

On the road, the Steed is certainly not quick. It takes an absolute age to get from 0-62mph: 17 yawn-inducing seconds in fact. It also has a top speed of just 87mph. That said, when it gets rolling, it does a good enough job getting you

'The Steed is certainly not quick. It takes an absolute age to get from 0-62 mph: 17 yawn-inducing seconds'

(480mm) deep. The 2,314lb (1,050kg) maximum load and an impressive towing capability of 4,409lb (2,000 kg).

Inside, the four-door Steed's double-cab body is well proportioned. Slide behind the wheel and the driving position is good, with easy to use controls. There is ample room for up to four passengers and storage space is decent, including a lockable glove-box, front centre

from A to B. You have to really drive it though, so you may well feel as if you've had a work-out by the end of a long trip.

Nevertheless, when the terrain gets more challenging than asphalt, you can engage the Steed's low-range gearbox, as well as the on demand four-wheel-drive system.

The latter works at speeds up to 12mph. This is when the Steed comes in to its own.

It will work hard and power across rutted tracks and fields with ease. But the Steed isn't a stripped-down, utilitarian tool. It's well appointed, and no similarly priced pick-up on sale in the UK will rival its impressive tally of standard equipment.

The entry-level S model comes with a host of features typically offered as options on competitors, including 16-inch alloy wheels, daytime running lights, remote central locking, a top quality alarm, electric front and rear windows, excellent CD player and radio with Bluetooth connectivity, steering-wheel-mounted audio controls, air-conditioning, heated fronted seats and a leather interior.

The Steed comes with a comprehensive three-year or 60,000-mile mechanical warranty, a six-year anti-perforation warranty, three-year paint warranty, and three years' roadside recovery and assistance. ●



TRUCK STOP | no similarly priced pick-up on sale in the UK will rival the Steed's impressive tally of standard equipment

FACT FILE

MODEL: Great Wall Steed S

TOP SPEED: 87mph

PRICE: Starts from £13,998

FUEL CONSUMPTION: From 34 miles per gallon

FEATURES: on demand four-wheel-drive system