



Grand designs

Tim Barnes-Clay



THE FRENCH HAVE ALWAYS built large comfortable cars, and Renault is a brand particularly associated with this, especially “monospace”

designs such as the Espace and the luxurious Vel Satis. The marque is also known for being unconventional, both in looks and technology.

The most recent incarnation of the Renault Grand Scenic is certainly innovative. It has a sporty posture with well-balanced proportions, and is wider than the outgoing model. It also has much larger wheels than most MPVs, measuring 20in in diameter. You might think these would crash and bang over imperfections in the road surface, but they don't. This is a win for Renault because they look fantastic on the all-new Grand Scenic, filling the wheel arches beautifully.

The cabin is where the fresh Renault Grand Scenic really shines. It offers lots of leg and head room – and there is a positive, light atmosphere in the car, thanks to large windows. The materials

throughout the interior feel well-made, and are likely to stand years of professional driving use.

The Grand Scenic is 230mm longer than the standard five-seater Scenic, meaning there is more space to stretch out, and it has a larger boot to fit more passenger paraphernalia in. With all seven seats in place, load space is rather pathetic at 233 litres, but in five-seat formation, you get 596 litres of boot room, which expands to virtually van-like amounts with them all folded down. The load area is square and level with a low-slung loading lip, so you can slide weighty suitcases in and out without twinging your back.

The extra seats in the third row are good for children, or small adults, as they are a bit undersized for larger people. When not in use, they fold away into the boot floor: You don't even have to strain yourself when collapsing the third and second row of seats. The car we had on test allowed us to do this electronically, using a button and via the infotainment system.

The new generation Grand Scenic is 4,634mm long, 1,866mm wide and 1,655mm tall. By comparison, its arch rival, the Citroen Grand

C4 Picasso, is a tad shorter at 4,602mm and, at 1,826mm, it's not as wide as the Renault, or as tall (1,644mm). The Grand Scenic's other nemesis, the Vauxhall Zafira Tourer, is longer at 4,656mm, wider at 1,884mm and is loftier, measuring 1,685 mm in height. Arguably, while the less spacious Citroen offers Scenic-like French flair, the Vauxhall, though larger than both, is dull in comparison.

Kit and technology are abundant within the Grand Scenic. Higher spec models, such as the Dynamique S Nav, on test here, get a large sliding centre console with four USB ports. Having a sliding console is an original touch. For the driver and passenger up front, it provides a large, illuminated, storage area with a sliding cover and armrest. When slid backwards, it becomes a handy partition between the rear seats.

Our test car also came with R-Link 2, the French car-maker's 8.7in portrait-angled touchscreen. Functions, for instance sat-nav, DAB radio, and smartphone connectivity, are all seen and controlled from here. In addition, there are three easy-to-read screens inside the driver's

Renault Grand Scenic
Dynamique S Nav dCi 130

first
drive

binnacle; these display important information, such as speed, engine temperature and fuel range.

The Grand Scenic is a comfortable and relatively pleasing car to drive, with lots of adjustment available on the steering wheel and driver's seat to achieve a contented position. The modern MPV's ride is relaxed, thanks to its forgiving suspension, but this does mean the Grand Scenic leans in corners if you drive the car too hard.

That said, the steering is accurate and well-weighted, meaning you feel confident at the wheel. True, it's not really a vehicle that's designed for twisty rural routes, but it is a good machine for the urban jungle. It does get rather raucous at motorway speeds, due to high levels of wind roar. That said, it will stay planted at 70mph all day.

Its few-and-far-between limitations aside, the Renault Grand Scenic offers a natively designed, passenger-friendly environment. Significantly though, it delivers a level of elegance and kerbside appeal few other MPVs can equal, and that can only be a positive point when it comes to residual values.

Renault has become known for making safe cars and the Grand Scenic is no different, achieving the maximum five-star score in Euro NCAP crash-tests. In Dynamique S Nav trim, it comes stuffed with safety equipment. This includes: six airbags, electronic stability programme (ESP) with understeer control, emergency brake assist (EBA) and lane-departure warning. There is a large options list to choose from as well. For example, blind-spot monitoring, adaptive cruise control and speed-limit warnings

FACTFILE

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|--------------------------|--|
| PRICE | £28,445 |
| ENGINE | 1,600cc 4-cylinder 16 valve, turbodiesel |
| TRANSMISSION | Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive |
| POWER | 128bhp @ 4,000rpm |
| TORQUE | 320Nm @ 1,750rpm |
| 0-62MPH | 11.4sec |
| TOP SPEED | 118mph |
| FUEL ECONOMY | 61.4mpg |
| COMBINED CO ₂ | 119g/km |
| LENGTH | 4,634mm |
| WHEELBASE | 2,804mm |
| WIDTH | 1,866mm |
| HEIGHT | 1,655mm |
| LOADSPACE | 596 litres |
| FUEL TANK CAPACITY | 53 litres |
| WARRANTY | 4 years / 100,000 miles |
| VED BAND | C |

VERDICT



THE RENAULT IS MORE EXPENSIVE COMPARED WITH ITS CITROEN AND Vauxhall challengers. The 1.6-litre Dynamique S Nav dCi 130 version we tested costs £28,445, while Citroen's Grand C4 Picasso in 1.6-litre Flair BlueHdi 120 guise is priced at £27,350. The Vauxhall Zafira Tourer in Design 1.6CDTi 134PS ecoFLEX form comes in significantly cheaper at £21,475.

However, with 6.5 million sold since the car was first introduced in 1996, this fourth-generation Renault Grand Scenic simply moves MPVs to where they should be for 2017. As always, the Grand Scenic makes real sense for people who need to transport up to six passengers.

In other words, this car is not only a top choice for working cabbies, it's an ideal parent taxi, too. With its stand-out design, comfort, five-star safety rating and four year/100,000-mile warranty, this should be up there on your must-buy MPV list.

can be selected when you order a new Scenic.

The Renault Grand Scenic has a range of engines, and the unit we tested was the strong and capable 1.6-litre dCi 130, fitted with a six-speed manual transmission. The gearbox isn't the smoothest, with a bit of a chewy action, but it is no deal-breaker because, in every other respect, the car is a hit.

The engine pulls well, resulting in a top speed of 118 mph and a 0-62mph time of 11.4 seconds. Granted, that doesn't look fast in print, but the car feels powerful enough in the real-world. The Grand Scenic, in this guise, can also return over 60mpg on average, although driving on the M5 and around Gloucestershire's A and B roads, we achieved mid-50s. Still, that's not bad at all.

Renault Grand Scenic Dynamique S Nav dCi 130



Factory favourites

Tim Barnes-Clay

↙ CAR MANUFACTURERS' FINEST used vehicles come with warranties, guarantees, exchange policies and have been meticulously inspected. Largely, they are low-mileage vehicles too.

Each car manufacturer has its own title for these schemes. Most go for something like Used Approved or Approved Used, though some have a more specific name like Approved Pre-Owned or sometimes, they go for something more catchy, such as the well-known Network Q initiative from Vauxhall.

Every scheme offers a full mechanical inspection, and approved used programmes will offer at least a 12-month warranty, while the top ones will offer two years. If you're buying from a manufacturer that has a lengthier warranty, like the seven years from Kia, or the five years offered by Toyota and Hyundai, you will get the remainder of that warranty instead.

All the warranties offered by car producers are fair when it comes to what's included, and Breakdown Cover is typically provided by the RAC or AA, though some car manufacturers manage their own schemes.

Many of the warranties from approved used schemes are unrestricted mileage, but a few put limits on them. Be vigilant, the threshold—for example 60,000 miles—applies to the entire mileage, not the distance you drive. Therefore a 60,000-mile warranty is worth far more on a 30,000-mile vehicle than it is on a 40,000-mile motor.

However good these schemes are, there may be caveats for professional drivers. Some place restrictions on cars sold for hire or reward.



Always check the small print—for example, Hyundai's five-year warranty is unlimited mileage for the public, but is capped at 100,000 miles for private hire or taxi use. A two-year-old car with 20,000 on the clock would effectively carry a three-year 80,000 mile warranty. It's still a good deal, but in all probability you'll not get to the end of the term before you hit the mileage limit.

Even if the warranty doesn't cover hire and reward at all, it doesn't mean a used approved scheme should be discounted. It's certainly a better way of obtaining a reliable car—especially when you consider the vehicle is coming from the manufacturer, and may have been a fleet

demonstrator, a company car for someone at head office, or even one of the press cars we use for our road tests here at *Professional Driver*. And those cars are very well maintained as it would be somewhat embarrassing if one breaks down in the hands of the media!

Automotive brands have a reputation to uphold, so you have the reassurance that you won't get ripped off. As a professional driver, a used approved car is likely to cost you less in the long run too, compared with leasing from third-party resellers. These firms aren't interested in used cars, so concentrate on punting out new cars on weekly rates.

ETHOS FINANCE

■ THERE ARE SOME ALTERNATIVES TO BUYING FROM a manufacturer's used approved scheme. There are companies who will sort it all for you. Take Ethos Finance—it is dedicated to sourcing only the best cars for the chauffeur market.

"We appreciate chauffeurs cover many miles during their working day and having a reliable, comfortable and luxury vehicle is where we are able to help," explained Chris Brown, Ethos Managing Director, [pictured, right].

"We have direct access to, and excellent relationships with, various vehicle manufacturers. Due to these associations, we are able to not only pass on generous discounts, but also give

our customers the confidence that we are working with only trusted sources, securing the best deal possible for them."

Brown added that Ethos does the legwork to locate the vehicle, negotiate terms with the manufacturers and assist with the transaction from start to finish. The company also offers expert financial assistance, often being able to fund vehicles where the customer has not quite met the stringent criteria of the manufacturer.

"Many of our clients use our services time and time again. In fact, most of our business is generated through customer referrals, which can only reflect the consumer satisfaction in using Ethos Asset Finance," said Chris.



VAUXHALL



Derek Wilson

Take the best-known approved used scheme—the already mentioned Network Q. It has been raising the standard of used car retailing for 25 years, but its 12-month warranty doesn't cover hire and reward. That shouldn't be a deal-breaker for you though.

It has one of the most innovative and reliable used vehicle programmes ever created.

Its benefits include:

- **ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE**—Minimum 12 months roadside assistance including roadside rescue, recovery rescue, at home rescue, onward travel and tyre-related incidents provenance checks
 - **30 DAY EXCHANGE**—If the vehicle develops a mechanical or electrical fault (in the first 30 days of ownership) that cannot be repaired to a satisfactory standard, the supplying retailer will exchange it for a Network Q vehicle of equal value.
 - **MULTI-POINT CHECK**—carried out by trained Vauxhall technicians, testing everything from engine performance to paintwork, this service is synonymous with used car quality and integrity, allowing customers to drive off with all the confidence and reassurance you'd get from buying new.
 - **FREE TO GO INSURANCE**—Free five-day insurance policy allows the customer to drive it off the forecourt on the same day.
 - All customers buying a Vauxhall vehicle under Network Q will be offered the opportunity to sign up for Vauxhall Service Club as part of their welcome communication. By joining they will become eligible for a discount on servicing and repairs.
 - In the unfortunate event that a Vauxhall owner is involved in an incident the Vauxhall accident management service will help. They contact the insurer, arrange for vehicle recovery, mend at a Vauxhall approved repairer, organise a courtesy car and the return of the vehicle.
 - Vehicles up to seven years old / 70,000 miles can be sold under the Network Q programme
- Network Q operations director Derek Wilson said: "Our comprehensive range of benefits as standard has evolved over time and, today, drivers can leave the forecourt with total peace of mind. Our used vehicle locator is an

invaluable online feature to help customers search for exactly the car and spec they are looking for—from over 350 retailers nationwide. It helps them find their nearest retailer and the used Vauxhall of their choice, easily and quickly. Over 2.4 million customers will agree."

VOLKSWAGEN

Volkswagen also operates an excellent scheme called Das WeltAuto, where you can buy used approved cars. But again, there is no warranty cover for hire and reward use.

However, Barny Francis, Volkswagen's national used car manager, said: "Volkswagen's award-winning Das WeltAuto used car programme is designed to give buyers the same exceptional level of service as that experienced by a new car customer, thus providing complete confidence."

He explained further: "There are eight elements to Das WeltAuto—including a no quibble 30-day/1,000-mile exchange policy. Volkswagen's trained technicians complete 142 checks on every Das WeltAuto car, and carry out any required repairs using Volkswagen genuine parts. Another key benefit of the programme is the flexible finance options offered via the Solutions personal contract plan."

FORD

The theme runs strong regarding lack of warranty cover for hire and reward purposes—it's the same with Ford. But, according to Anthony Bacon, Ford of Britain pricing and auction manager, the Ford Direct and Ford Approved schemes are the "smart ways" to buy quality used cars.

He said: "Ford Direct involves cars that are 12-18 months old. Then we have the Ford Approved Used cars which are all under five years old. It's a safe and easy way to purchase a nearly new Ford car, with both programmes truly taking the stress out of used car buying."

Ford Direct includes:

- Two-year unlimited mileage warranty (Doesn't cover hire & reward)
- Two-year Ford Assistance—roadside recovery
- 30-day exchange plan
- Comprehensively reconditioned to Ford standards
- Independently inspected and approved by RAC
- Identified by a tamper-proof hologram
- Seven-day driveaway insurance
- National mileage register and HPI checked

Ford Approved Used includes:

- Balance of Manufacturer's warranty
- One year Ford Assistance—roadside recovery
- 30-day exchange plan
- 75-point inspection
- Seven-day driveaway insurance
- National mileage register and finance checked
- Full Service History

Bacon added: "We deliver the same levels of service that you expect as a Ford new car customer. We also provide the widest range of quality Ford used cars from across our dealer network, with an exceptional package of support giving you complete peace of mind."

PEUGEOT



Mark Spray

Peugeot is a familiar sight, especially on airport runs, so the Peugeot Approved Used Car programme is something to consider.

It doesn't offer a warranty that covers hire and reward, but it offers all the important benefits associated with a franchised

dealer network. Peugeot Approved Plus deals with vehicles up to five-years/50,000 miles, while Peugeot Approved Standard offers vehicles up to eight-years/80,000 miles.

Peugeot Approved Plus includes:

- Comprehensive Vehicle, Mechanical and Quality Inspection prior to sale.
- Minimum 12 months' Platinum Class warranty. (Doesn't cover hire and reward)
- History of ownership check incorporating mileage, insurance history, theft and outstanding finance.
- 30 Day Fault return policy.
- MoT Test Warranty.
- Optional roadside assistance.

Peugeot Approved Standard includes:

- Comprehensive vehicle, mechanical and quality inspection prior to sale.
- Six months' Gold Class warranty. (Doesn't cover hire and reward)
- History of ownership check incorporating mileage, insurance history, theft and outstanding finance.

Mark Spray, Peugeot's head of used vehicle sales, said: "The Approved network has access to thousands of high quality used vehicles that can be bought directly from Peugeot UK to meet customer demand. These vehicles range from

nearly new up to four years of age, so there should be something for everyone who is looking across the Peugeot range.”

TOYOTA



Neil Broad

If you buy an Approved Used Toyota, all major components of your vehicle are included in the 12 months Toyota Warranty or an equivalent level of cover. And the good news is that hire and reward vehicles are not excluded from this.

Neil Broad, general

manager, Toyota fleet and remarketing said: “Toyota is already synonymous with vehicle reliability and many of our models are already very popular among private hire drivers. Our hybrid models cover millions of miles a year with professional drivers, which is testimony to the proven dependability of hybrid technology. Buying an Approved Used Toyota just adds further peace of mind to support this sound business decision, not only in terms of reliability but also running costs.”

Benefits when you buy an Approved Used Toyota include:

- **12 MONTHS COMPREHENSIVE WARRANTY**—All major components of your vehicle are included in the 12 months Toyota Warranty or an equivalent level of cover.
- **VEHICLE EXCHANGE PLAN**—Should you

have reasonable cause to not be satisfied with your car, you can return it within 30 days (with no more than 500 miles covered since collection/delivery) and exchange it for another of at least equal value exclusive of any accessories.

- **MY TOYOTA**—All Toyota owners can join MyToyota free of charge allowing you to manage your vehicle online and to gain access to owner offers and discounts through Toyota Rewards.
- **VEHICLE PROVENANCE CHECK**—Checks are carried out on every approved used car either through HPI/NMR or Experian/VMC and a certificate is supplied with every vehicle.
- **TOYOTA ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE**—All Toyota Approved Used cars include 12 months Toyota Roadside Assistance provided by the AA.
- **TOYOTA APPROVED QUALITY CHECK**—Prior to sale, every Toyota approved user car is submitted to a rigorous inspection by an approved technician working to a Toyota approved checklist.

HYUNDAI

The Hyundai approved used programme is called H Promise. Every vehicle offered through H Promise goes through a 100-point safety and condition check. In addition, an independent vehicle history and mileage verification check is also completed. The balance of the South Korean marque’s industry leading five-year manufacturer warranty is included, alongside the remaining five-year

Roadside Assistance package.

Hyundai told Professional Driver that the benefit of H Promise to the customer is the peace of mind given by purchasing a vehicle through a manufacturer backed programme. That means, as with all manufacturer used schemes, that the history of the vehicle has been independently and thoroughly checked. It has also been prepared by trained and accredited technicians, plus there is the additional security offered by a manufacturer warranty.

Hyundai explained that if a customer is not happy with their H-Promise Approved used car, the supplying dealer will exchange it for a vehicle of similar value within 30 days/1000 miles. What’s more, the balance of the manufacturer warranty on vehicles offered through H Promise includes a mileage coverage up to 100,000 for the vehicles used for hire and reward.

Hyundai is keen to point out that every one of its 159-strong dealer network is part of the H Promise programme, with any used vehicle purchase benefitting from the same understanding and personal touch that any new car purchase receives.

A Hyundai spokesman said: “This type of dealer relationship is important for owners using their vehicles for taxi or private hire purposes. For example, our dealers understand that any time a vehicle spends time off the road, it’s also not earning, therefore vehicle downtime must be as minimal as is possible. With this in mind, scheduled maintenance can be organised accordingly and any unexpected repairs are dealt with as timely as possible.”



Chauffeur programmes

OF COURSE, THERE ARE OTHER usual players when it comes to chauffeuring—many of the premium brands have Chauffeur Programmes. But they aren't used approved—they involve new cars.

MERCEDES-BENZ

Nick Andrews, Remarketing Director, Mercedes-Benz Cars says that with Mercedes-Benz Approved Used, chauffeurs can have 100% confidence.

He explained: "Chauffeurs can rest assured that the car they are purchasing has met all of our exacting standards. We offer the added benefits of a full history check, roadside assistance and a network of over 150 Authorised UK retail and service outlets from which to choose the perfect Mercedes-Benz Approved Used car. From the award-winning S-Class to the innovative new E-Class, and the spacious V-Class with its capacity to carry up to seven passengers, chauffeured customers will arrive in the utmost comfort and style."

JAGUAR

With Jaguar, while there's a Jaguar Chauffeur Programme for new cars, there's no chauffeur-focused used scheme. But there is the Jaguar Approved Used programme which, while not aimed at professional drivers, gives the same level of quality, service and customer satisfaction that you would get when buying a new vehicle.

However, a Jaguar spokesman told us: "If a

Chauffeur purchased a used approved Jaguar for chauffeuring purposes they wouldn't be entitled to the two-year unlimited mileage approved warranty—this something the UK team are currently looking at."

A full breakdown of what you would be entitled to as a chauffeur within the Jaguar Approved programme is below:

- Two-year unlimited mileage approved warranty—No
- Two-year UK and European roadside assistance—No
- 165-point inspection—Yes
- Reconditioning by Jaguar technicians using genuine parts—Yes
- Independent mileage and history check—Yes
- Road test by approved technician—Yes
- Part-exchange service regardless of car make or type—Yes
- MoT test warranty—No
- 30 day/1,000-mile conditional car exchange agreement—Yes
- Complimentary seven days Jaguar drive-away insurance—No

AUDI

Audi's Chauffeur Programme is managed by Steve Griffith. He explained that while Audi doesn't run a chauffeur specific used programme, if a chauffeur purchased a used A6, A8 or Q7 then that is still covered by the new car warranty (3-year/ 60k or two-year unlimited mileage).

"We offer the same support as the new model,

so if the vehicle is off road due to a warranty or parts issue then we offer a like for like replacement. Our Audi approved used warranty for cars does not cover hire or reward though."

VOLVO

Moving on to Volvo, while it doesn't offer any chauffeur-specific used-car programmes, any Volvo Selekt approved-used car that is still within the original manufacturer (three-year/60,000-mile) warranty from the date it was sold can have its cover extended to 100,000 miles specifically for the purpose of hire and reward cover.

Bruce Greenwood, used car programme manager, Volvo Car UK explained the advantages: "There are many benefits to buying a Volvo Selekt approved-used car. Only the best used cars are selected to be an approved-used Volvo. Each vehicle has a history and provenance check carried out, and it goes through a rigorous 100-plus-point check and preparation process, including having its software updated to the latest version. A 12-month emergency breakdown and recovery package is also included."

Greenwood added: "Volvo warranties are some of the most comprehensive available, and they cover all key mechanical and electrical components. All new Volvos come with a three-year/60,000-mile warranty, although those financed via our new Chauffeur Programme benefit from cover that lasts for three years or 100,000 miles."

ADDISON LEE CAR SALES

ADDISON LEE IS WORTH considering too, claims Justin Patterson, Head of the company's fleet operations. He makes a good case: "Addison Lee has a 5,000-strong fleet with vehicles being replaced every three years. This means that we have a ready-made supply of PCO registered used vehicles. This is why, in 2003, Addison Lee Car Sales was launched, enabling the public to purchase them.

"We are an authorised Ford service agent and we maintain all of our vehicles in-house. We currently have two operational garages on site, employing 25 full time mechanics. We maintain our vehicles to the highest standard and, on average, our vehicles receive a service every six weeks."

He added: "Owing to the nature of our business and the demands of our clients, all vehicles are kept in an immaculate condition throughout their service lives and when the cars are retired from the fleet, full service histories detailing every element are available with the purchase. We sell more than 1,000 vehicles each year."

