

# *Chevrolet Captiva Road Test*

*by Ian Lamming*



## *Captivating Chevy*



TO BE taken seriously as a motor manufacturer it is necessary to have a serious car; something planned from the ground up by designers for customers, not simply borrowed and rebadged.

That's what Chevrolet has decided, that's what Chevrolet has done and the Captiva is the first of six brand new models destined to hit the UK's roads before 2010.

A recent survey revealed that only 28 per cent of the public

realised that Chevrolets were on sale in Britain but with this particular 4x4 all that is set to change as General Motors hopes to captivate a new and lucrative audience.

Chevy is entering the fray late in the day with vehicles such as Kia's Sorento and Hyundai's Sante Fe already established. Captiva should have been around last September but there were issues with building right hand drive versions which have taken until now to overcome. But if the Captiva is anything to go by the new breed of Chevys is going to be well worth the wait.

So what is Captiva and who is it aimed at? Well, it's a large SUV and the target audience is 35 to 44-year-olds, urban or sub-urban, the majority of whom will have children and grandparents to ferry around. No surprise then that of the three specifications – LS, LT and top of the range LTX – two will be available with seven seats, nicely designed versions that pull out of the boot floor at that.

Power comes from either a 136PS 2.4 litre petrol or a 150PS 2.0 litre diesel with the latter expected to be the most popular, linked to a simply superb automatic transmission, though the five speed manual isn't bad either. The familiar gold foil first aid like badge may not be to everyone's taste but the sheer quality of the vehicle will be.

Even from a distance the Captiva is impressive with excellent proportions and a nice modern, neat shape. It's a big imposing car and will appeal to those who like their vehicles to have some road presence. Well rounded, it's nose is set low climbing to a higher back end. The shape seems to propel the Captiva forward even at rest and overhangs are minimal making it look squat and stable. It really is a good looking car.



Upper spec models get the added bonus of twin chrome tailpipes, Mercedes-stile repeat indicators housed in the wing mirrors and a smattering of chrome adding a touch of class to the appearance.

It's the same story inside. If you were expecting this Chevy to be cheap and cheerful to match the value for money pricetag then you will be surprised. It feels every bit a quality item using excellent materials that are well put together.

The seats are comfortable and supportive, the driving position spot on and the dash board and controls well thought out and placed. That badge is there staring back from the steering wheel like a sticking plaster covering a cut but everything else oozes class.



Chevrolet has entrusted the Captiva with a modestly sized 2.0 litre engine – its first ever diesel – but the way it performs is amazing. It is smooth, powerful and refined with huge depths of power – 320NM at just 2,000rpm to be precise.

Performance is impressive with broad midrange and the ability to accelerate well and cruise quietly. The combined fuel figure of 31.7mpg is also good and for those worried about the environment the CO2 figure of 197g/km is fair.

Handling and ride are every bit as good as anything else in the class and there's no queasiness-inducing cabin roll to speak of. Steering is positive and well-weighted, the brakes powerful and if you do venture off the tarmac there's a hill descent control mechanism to call upon by simply pressing a button on the dash.

On-demand all-wheel-drive means that it will run in a more economical, less wearing, front wheel drive until extra traction is needed. It's all automatic and most drivers will probably never experience the system in force.

Captiva really is a difficult car to fault and is an excellent alternative in a burgeoning market.

It is well built, good looking and great to drive. It's also extremely practical and good value and

if the rest of the forthcoming range is anywhere near as good it will show the world what a serious contender Chevrolet is about to become.



#### Vital Statistics

Engine: 2.0 litre four cylinder turbo diesel

Power: 150PS

Torque: 320Nm at 2,000rpm

0-60mph: 11.5 secs

Top speed: 111mph

Fuel consumption: 31.7mpg combined