

Down in the Mine with the new Mercedes-Benz GLA-Class

One of the busiest sectors of the market is for compact SUVs and the latest to join the list is the new Mercedes-Benz GLA-Class and recently I had the opportunity to take my first drive in a very different location 550 feet beneath the surface!

The location the Winsford Salt Mine and a network of underground roads in excess of 137 miles and it is the UK's largest salt mine.

It was ideal for trying the new Merc in the rough with 23 million cubic metres of void space and the product mined is more than 90% pure sodium chloride with the remaining insolubles consisting of Keuper mar.

I do not suggest that this newcomer is just for the rough and tumble rather it is a very attractive all rounder, a soft off roader best describes the latest offering from the premium German car builder.

Once again Mercedes-Benz has come up with a vehicle that is clearly targeting the younger driver; the GLA would be perfectly at ease in the centre of any of our towns or cities or on a weekend expedition to the Fermanagh Lakes.

The formula is right and with looks that give it a lot of street cred this is another sure fire winner following on from the successful new A-Class and the CLA.

The GLA enters the fast growing compact SUV sector and prices start at £25,850 and with CO2 emissions as low as 119g/km.

Engine choice, a trio to choose from, two diesels and one petrol, the 200 CDI manual or automatic, the 220 CDI with 4MATIC and the 250 4 MATIC and two trim levels, SE and AMG Line, the latter adds £1,000 to the cost.

The new GLA comes with an impressive array of standard equipment which includes reversing camera with guidelines, an Audio 20 radio/single CD with DAB and Media interface, rain sensing wipers etc.

The 4MATIC package includes a Downhill Speed Regulator and if metallic paint finish is not to your liking, you can choose from Jupiter Red or Cirrus White.

Keeping all onboard safe and secure a raft of equipment, Attention Assist, radar based Collision Prevention Assist with Adaptive Brake Assist, this now helps to



protect against collisions from a speed of just 4mph. This features combines with the optional Distronic Plus to become Collision Prevention Assist Plus with an additional function. When a danger of a collision persists and you fail to respond, the system carries out autonomous braking at speeds up to 124mph.

The system also brakes in response to stationary vehicles at speeds up to 18mph and is able to prevent rear end collisions up to 12mph.



I had the opportunity to complete most of my test driving behind the wheel of the petrol version which delivered GT like performance, brisk acceleration with 62mph from rest reached in 7.1 seconds and looking at the official economy figures, 42.8mpg on the combined cycle.

There will be at least one more chapter to the GLA story, in June the GLA 45 AMG will be available. This model will be powered by a two litre turbo engine, the most powerful series production four cylinder turbo engine in the world with a

power output of 360bhp, quite a step up from the 211bhp of the petrol version I tried.

Looking at the performance figures for this top of the range model, rest to 62mph in 4.8 seconds with an electronically governed top speed of 155mph.

Ian Lynas