

# DACIA SANDERO STEPWAY

By Jim Mc Cauley

It might not be the Marrakesh Express, but the Moroccan built Dacia Sandero Stepway could comfortably get you there. The model, first introduced to the money-conscious motorist in 2013,



sees a fresh face and specification updates for 2017. Among these styling changes are a new grille and front-end, new wheel designs and a range of new colour options.

Inside, and the important changes here are height adjustment to the driver's seat, steering wheel and front seatbelts, while the air conditioning and DAB digital radio are now standard on all models.

Power choice is between a pair of well proven engines from Groupe Renault – one petrol and one diesel, with the test choice featuring the

90bhp petrol unit. Badged TCe90 this 900cc turbocharged engine returns a 0-62mph time of 11.1 seconds with the potential to cross into three figures in top speed. Driving the front wheels through its standard 5-speed manual gearbox, progression is smooth and the sub-one litre engine surprisingly responsive. For those lingering too long in any gear, a reminder arrow appears in the instrument cluster, helping drivers to stretch economy as well as maintaining ultimate pace. Economy can be further pursued towards the official combined 55.4mpg by pressing the 'Eco' button which also introduces the stop / start technology for heavy traffic situations.

Overall ride is refined with good road insulation from the suspension and the model delivers a more satisfying driving experience than its price tag might suggest. Supporting driving technologies include Electronic Stability Control, Traction Control and Hill Start Assist, while LED daytime running lights further contribute to the vehicle's safety package.

For the driver, there is the convenience of newly introduced adjustments mentioned above for improved positioning while a new steering wheel design provides improved grip



and is thankfully devoid of any switchgear, with the Renault-style pod mounted on the steering pcolumn for infotainment functions.

Overall interior could best be described as functional rather than luxurious, but there are no shortcomings other than manual adjustment on the door mirrors, but once again what you get is above expectations for the price.



In terms of passenger needs, the Sandero Stepway offers spacious 5-seater accommodation with split folding rear seats to add to the versatility of the rear luggage area which extends from 320 litres to 1200 litres with the 60:40 rear seats folded. However, these do not fold flat, limiting load carrying options.

In terms of running costs, the petrol version of the Sandero Stepway has an official combined fuel consumption of 55.4mpg and with a CO2 emissions of 115gms/km is in Band C for VED. A lowly insurance rating of 8E further contributes to the vehicle's affordability while for business users it has a BIK rating of 20%.

Overall the Dacia Sandero looks good and benefits from proven Renault technology. While the model tested in 'Ambience' specification – the lower of the two on offer – is listed at £8,795, it offers quality and performance well beyond what the price tag might suggest. Options fitted to the test vehicle added to the standard price and included metallic paint at £495 and an emergency spare wheel in lieu of a puncture repair kit at £100. The model is covered by a 3-year / 60,000 mile warranty, plus 2-year paintwork warranty and 6-years' anti-corrosion cover as standard.

(Driven February 2017)