

FORD GRAND TOURNEO CONNECT

By Jim Mc Cauley



It may not be the prettiest of people carriers around, but what it lacks in visual appeal it gains in practicality. Ford's Grand Tourneo Connect is a cavernous 7-seater, every inch of its bodywork pushed out to a rectangular section that benefits the interior packaging. While most people carriers require a step up to enter, the Grand Tourneo Connect is accessed at normal car height with the sliding rear doors and fold-flat middle row seats making access to the rear seats extremely easy. Using five seats, the boot floor provides a flat square area of 1.2 metres in width and length while overall height will just clear 1.0 metre.

A tailgate spanning the entire rear end of the vehicle rises to a 90 degree opening and provides a temporary roof as well as unrestricted access to the load area. With all seven seats in use, a small boot space is retained, further justifying the vehicle's overall length of just short of five metres.

While the vehicle is offered with a 1.0 litre engine, the test vehicle looked the more sensible choice with the highest output 1.6 litre turbo-diesel. Available in three power outputs, this top mover of 115 PS takes it from rest to 62 mph in 14.1 seconds. However, maximum torque of 285 Nm and a well-spaced 6-speed manual gearbox maintains a lively response within its usable power band and the Tourneo is capable of keeping excellent pace.

With the low-set body, and a new torsion beam rear suspension replacing the former leaf springs, handling is more car-like than expected of an MPV, but with the potential to carry seven adults, ride is firm although seating for all occupants provides a good degree of comfort.

For the driver, there is a full range of seat and steering adjustments, although I feel that the instrument pod has been transferred directly from the left hand drive models with the speedometer just too far offset to the right hand side of the binnacle and a section of it obscured by the cowl over the central information panel between it and the rev counter.





Competition-wise, the new Grand Tourneo Connect with the optional pair of rear seats at £240 just crosses the £20,000 mark which makes it a very attractive buy for anyone in the market for a 7-seater. On top of this, the test vehicle in top Titanium trim is exceptionally well equipped with 16-inch alloys, all-round electric windows, rear parking sensors, Active City Stop, dual zone air conditioning and panoramic glass roof with privacy side glass among the comprehensive list. On top of this, running costs are also kept in check with a combined fuel consumption figure of 58.9 mpg and a lowly

insurance rating of 9E. With a CO2 emissions of 130 gms/km, the vehicle is in Band D for annual car tax of £95. Extras on the test vehicle included metallic paint at £360 and rear view camera at £240.