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X COMPACT • excellent fun at a bargain price – ideal starter 4x4s



XIV CROSSOVER • a compromise between off-road agility and style



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XXIV EXTREME • extreme by name, extreme by nature, and superb fun



XXVI MID-SIZE • smart and stylish, perfect for about-town fashionistas



XXXII LARGE • perfect family cruisers, ideal for those young at heart



XXXVIII FULL-SIZE • the daddies of the bunch, designed to impress



XLIV OVERALL WINNER • the ultimate off-roader, the 4x4 king

FASHIONABLE 4X4



There was a time, not that long ago, when 4x4s were basically utilitarian workhorses with only a few upmarket passenger-carrying models to be had. That's all changed now as a glance to the left at the contents of this supplement will show. Not only is there now a 4x4 for every occasion but there's a choice of 4x4s for every occasion.

To help you decide what's best for you and your budget we collected the top 48 4x4s on sale in Britain together and tried all of them out within the space of a week. Clearly it's no good comparing a Daihatsu Terios with a Range Rover so the 48 4x4s were divided into seven categories. Some of these, such as full-size, large, mid-size and compact, are self-explanatory. The others may require a word of elaboration: crossover contains normal cars that offer 4x4 capability while extreme covers the hardcore 4x4s designed for serious terrain. 4x4 pick-ups are the blue jeans of the test – originally designed for hard work they have recently become the lifestyle choice for many owners. As a result, for this booming sector of the 4x4 market, several importers and manufacturers are offering upmarket pick-up truck 4x4s with specification levels that wouldn't disgrace luxury cars.

There are different numbers of 4x4s in each group as you might expect. Another noticeable trend in the market is that despite the boom in 4x4 manufacture and the introduction of the Santana PS10 the extreme group remains resolutely the smallest because the SWB Nissan Patrol is no longer in British showrooms. There's a certain irony in the fact that the group that contains the current versions of the utilitarian workhorses that launched 4x4s on the road to unprecedented popularity is now the smallest.

The largest group by far is that of the mid-size 4x4s. This should come as no surprise, after all these 4x4s are large enough to be family 4x4s, small enough to be practical around town and smart enough to be fashionable. Fashion plays a big part in which vehicles people buy.

We chose the lush green estate of Weston Park in Staffordshire as the venue for this massive 4x4 fest. Here, among the magnificent trees, we dodged spring showers and photographed 4x4s from dawn until dusk. You wouldn't believe me if I said it was hard work. Good luck with your 4x4 purchase – hope we have helped.