

DAIHATSU FOURTRAK

Somewhat overrated as an off-roader, the Fourtrak is nevertheless a strong, rugged machine well suited for a hard working life down on the farm.

Though some were offered as seven-seater estates, don't be fooled into thinking you'd be travelling seven-up in luxury, because the ride quality was never wonderful and the 2.8-litre diesel and turbodiesel engines were hardly the most responsive and refined of power plants.

When buying secondhand remember that many were bought for use on the farm by landowners losing patience with Land Rover unreliability, but since the Fourtrak is neither as capable off-road as a Defender, nor does it have anything like the payload or towing capacity, such examples are likely to have been seriously overworked and may prove very expensive to restore to an acceptable on-road condition.

If your requirement is for a nails-hard off-roader to punish recreationally, you can expect long-term reliability from the Fourtrak but not much more. Low ground clearance, poor axle articulation and moderate engine torque count against it in tortuous conditions.

For a compact family 4x4 you'll need to



accept the low level of performance and refinement, and moderate interior comfort, but if you can live with that and like the car's chunky looks at least seek out one of the more attractive special editions such as the Timberline of '94, now around £5000 for the TDS, or £5500 for the better-equipped TDX with central locking and electric windows. The Riviera of '97 is fine, only 350 each were made in TDS (now £7000) and TDX (£7500).

RATING

PRICE RANGE	£1500-£12,000
ON-ROAD	●●●●●
OFF-ROAD	●●●●●
PRACTICALITY	●●●●●
AVAILABILITY	●●●●●
VALUE FOR MONEY	●●●●●

LAND ROVER DEFENDER

This is pretty much the definitive all-round off-roader, even if only because the modern Defender isn't that much different in character to the very first Land Rover. Built to serve farmers, construction workers and the military the Land Rover has always been a truck rather than a refined road car, but relatively simple in construction so it's fairly easy to maintain and repair in the field.

Yet, despite of taking lots of stick over seemingly shoddy build quality – these cars are still virtually hand-built – Land Rover's engineers have done wonders in civilising the big brute by giving it good on-road cruising refinement and surprisingly compliant ride. Witness the fact that earlier this year we drove a Defender at an easy 90mph all the way to the Alps, took part in the rugged Croisière Blanche off-road adventure, then cruised home again without feeling the least discomfort.

If your Defender is to be a chic on-road fashion statement better buy a well-maintained, unmodified car from a franchised dealer – say £15,000 for an R-plated County Station Wagon. For a working vehicle or recreational toy something older or privately-sourced might suffice, but be aware that many enthusiast owners will



have performed many modifications – make sure you're not buying extras you'll never need. On the other hand, for serious off-road fun, it might be more cost-effective to buy a car that's had all the necessary mods – snorkel, locking diffs etc – fitted rather than perform the mods yourself. How much to pay for such a modified car? The answer is as much as you like – shop around but satisfy yourself the work has been done properly.

RATING

PRICE RANGE	£1500-£18,000
ON-ROAD	●●●●●
OFF-ROAD	●●●●●
PRACTICALITY	●●●●●
AVAILABILITY	●●●●●
VALUE FOR MONEY	●●●●●