

# MIDDLEWEIGHT USED 4x4

## FORD MAVERICK



It doesn't have rugged off-roader looks and the interior is as bland as your average Japanese saloon car, but the Maverick has a lot going for it as a practical and easy-driving family estate because it has an airy, uncluttered interior, big boot area and easy access all round.

Forget it if you want something for real off-roading fun because the Maverick lacks low range, though the auto-engaging four-wheel drive, which can also be selected manually for additional off-roading security, gives it quite enough traction to cope with muddy tracks and slippery fields as long as the mud isn't too deep or the gradients too steep.

The Maverick works a lot better on the road, because it drives like an ordinary car with accurate steering, compliant suspension, thoroughly stable handling and lively performance, especially when powered by the lusty 3.0-litre V6 engine. The 2.0-litre Zetec-powered variants will be more common second-hand, but as ever the thirstier V6 models will have suffered heavier depreciation and so will be better value.

Reliability is unlikely to be an issue, since the Maverick – mechanically identical to the Mazda Tribute – has been on sale as the Escape for many years in the US, where it has proved impressively durable.

All versions are well equipped, including air conditioning, electric windows and electric sunroof, plus central locking, alloy wheels, side airbags and anti-lock brakes, while the V6 boasts leather upholstery and a CD autochanger. The Maverick will still be rather rare second-hand, but it will be well worth checking Ford dealerships for year-old trade-ins or returns from rental companies.

## HYUNDAI SANTA FE



The styling is of little consequence when you consider the value for money offered by this well-equipped Discovery-sized vehicle priced to compete with the Freelander.

This is even more so second-hand because, as so often happens with keenly-priced offerings from lesser-known Far Eastern companies, the Santa Fe has tended to suffer from heavier than average depreciation, particularly the powerful V6 version, one of which could be yours now for £13,000 in tip-top condition a year after selling for £18,000.

The Hyundai makes an ideal cut-price alternative to a Freelander or Cherokee because it has enough off-road image plus excellent equipment. The V6 has leather upholstery and a CD autochanger, though even the more mundane 2.4-litre petrol and 2.0-litre turbodiesel models have air conditioning, electric windows, electric sunroof and a CD player. The 2.7 V6 comes with automatic transmission and is definitely the vehicle of choice, since the four-cylinder petrol engine is a little on the rough side and the turbodiesel sluggish.

Road behaviour isn't bad, the suspension a little unrefined over rougher surfaces but not uncomfortable, and body roll is reasonably well controlled in fast corners. The steering is a little on the light side and consequently quite vague at speed, but stability remains acceptably good.

Four-wheel drive is permanent, a road-biased arrangement with 60 per cent of the drive to the front wheels, and since there's no low range off-roading should be limited to gentle trail driving. A relative newcomer, the Santa Fe remains rare second-hand, but check the dealers nationwide for trade-ins.

## ISUZU TROOPER



Even a relatively new Trooper won't give you levels of refinement you'd get from a Grand Cherokee or a Shogun, but the long-running Trooper has a sound reputation for durability and versatility, apart from being a favourite towcar for big caravans and boat trailers.

The best buys are the 3.0-litre turbodiesels from the current range which first appeared in 1998, the engine being flexible and powerful and reasonably economical with 26mpg easily achievable. On the other hand a used V6 will be much better on-paper value for money, because it will have taken a bigger initial depreciation hit. A top-spec Insignia 5-door on a 2000 X-plate, originally priced at almost £32,000, could be yours now for £18,000 in good shape, which is less than you'll pay for a good turbodiesel of the same age, originally priced at under £30,000.

Troopers come in Standard, Duty, Citation and Insignia trim levels – pick a Duty if you're planning to use it in difficult off-road conditions because that has a limited-slip rear diff as standard, and you should be able to find an early three-door version in good condition for under £10,000.

All models have electric windows, but only the Citation gets air conditioning, heated seats and cruise control. Family users should look out for the seven-seater variants, a third row of seats being an option on long wheelbase Duty and Citation models. The Trooper has independent front suspension and a live rear axle, a rugged system that copes impressively with quite serious off-roading. Four-wheel drive is selectable on the fly at up to 40mph, the front hubs lock automatically and the transfer box includes low-range gearing.

### RATING

PRICE RANGE	£12,000-£19,000
ON-ROAD	●●●●●
OFF-ROAD	●●●●●
PRACTICALITY	●●●●●
AVAILABILITY	●●●●●
VALUE FOR MONEY	●●●●●

### RATING

PRICE RANGE	£11,000-£13,000
ON-ROAD	●●●●●
OFF-ROAD	●●●●●
PRACTICALITY	●●●●●
AVAILABILITY	●●●●●
VALUE FOR MONEY	●●●●●

### RATING

PRICE RANGE	£3000-£22,000
ON-ROAD	●●●●●
OFF-ROAD	●●●●●
PRACTICALITY	●●●●●
AVAILABILITY	●●●●●
VALUE FOR MONEY	●●●●●