



auto BIOGRAPHIES

Mazda6 2.2D Estate TS2 163 ps
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MAZDA'S BIG estate car looks nice enough from the outside, but it hardly stands out from the crowd. It even seems a little dated inside; the traditional handbrake, the swathes of black plastic and fairly dull fabric seats don't exactly 'wow' you.

But then you lift the tailgate to see a huge, square, load area, then you strap a couple of kids in the rear seats and you realise there's still room for an adult to sit between them. And it's only at that point that it dawns on you: the Mazda6 Estate is deliberately keeping a low profile because it has nothing to prove. It knows it can deliver what you want from an estate car, and it just gets on with it.

Seriously, the Mazda6's boot can fit just about anything into it, including the kitchen sink. Oh, alright, I'm exaggerating, but it really did help me take my bathroom sink and a massive roll of carpet to the tip this week. And, en route, I found out that the car, in 2.2 TS2 turbo diesel guise, is not only comfortable but it has lots of grunt in virtually any gear you decide to slip into. The 266lb/ft of pulling power makes the estate an ideal towing vehicle too. It'll haul up to 1600kg, which is not bad.

I guess at this point it's probably worth me writing a few basic words of caution on towing. Firstly, it is essential that you always check your vehicle is capable of legally towing a fully laden trailer. If you don't take notice, not only are you putting yourself and other road users at greater risk of accident, but you risk a fine if stopped and found to be contravening the law. In the event of an accident, your insurance will be also invalidated. So, as a guide, the unladen weight of your trailer, plus the weight of, for example, your horse to be towed must not exceed the trailer's maximum authorised mass. This, in turn, should not exceed the car's maximum towing weight. I hope I've made that clear?!

Back inside the Mazda6, the cabin materials all

look durable and give the impression that the car will handle most things any little passengers might throw at it. The shiny surfaces can be wiped clean easily and the dark fabric seats look as though they'll hide most stains. The handy rear seat release levers in the load area make inserting any long items (such as my roll of carpet) an absolute doddle and the seats are just as easy to click back into place again once the boot is emptied of its cargo

Getting a good driving position is easy in the load-lugging Mazda and visibility is excellent thanks to the deep windscreen and good height adjustment range of the driver's seat. The knobs and dials on the dashboard are all laid out in a very simplistic and functional way and, on the road, the car, although not overly exciting, goes where you point it and does what you ask of it without any fuss.

Midway through 2010 the Mazda6 range was refreshed and its engines were all tuned to deliver better economy and lower emissions. With that added knowledge mated to my few days behind the Mazda6's wheel, I'd say the Japanese estate is exceptional value for money for private and corporate buyers alike.



FAST FACTS

Max speed: 131 mph
 0-62 mph: 9.2 secs
 Combined mpg: 52.3
 Engine: 2184 cc 16v turbo diesel
 Max. power (bhp): 161 at 3500 rpm
 Max. torque (lb/ft): 266 at 1800 rpm
 Max. towing weight (braked) 1600 kg
 CO2: 143 g/km
 Price: £22,480 on the road

PROS 'N' CONS

Comfortable ✓

Big load area ✓

Economical ✓

Pulling power ✓

Dated interior ✗