

The X Factor



Ian Lamming experiences the SEAT Leon X-Perience

TO those folk who dwell in town and city the very thought of having a car with all wheel drive must seem over the top, gimmicky, a sledgehammer to crack a nut.

Surely to goodness, for the odd day of the year when snow covers the asphalt, you can phone in and plead to work from home.

But there are many who inhabit the countryside where extra grip is essential all year round not just on the snowy days.

Take a typical day, in any season, the roads are wet, the lanes are narrow and the verges slippery and boggy. Passing spaces are few and far between and there's a white van man playing Mexican stand off.

The grass is wet and soggy, the gateways muddy and furrowed; venturing onto and into these is going to have dire consequences. It's times like these that you need four wheel drive, it's times like these you need Seat's X-Perience.

In the brown stuff, let the delivery driver get by and the car moves back onto the asphalt without so much as a heartbeat missed – that's what all wheel drive is about townies.

It was just the same in the national park car park; room was at a premium and the only space available involves sticking the front end at an acute angle, on a gravelly incline. Once again, absolutely no problem.

X-Perience is based on a Leon ST but is then jacked up with bigger wheels and fitted with some off road appendages.

It fits a growing niche for those people who need a little bit more than a conventional car but might be embarrassed or intimidated by a big old SUV.

Is it any good? No – it's great. It looks the part and drives incredibly well.

SEATS are like that; the second you get behind the wheel they just feel right.

The TDI is strong, refined and very powerful. It is also economical and has an amazing spread of power.

A six-speed box is slick and well geared to complement perfectly the cracking motor and the steering is well weighted and precise.

The interior is typical of the marque, well thought through, made and intuitive to use, especially the touch screen infotainment centre.

Being an estate it is spacious and practical, in fact, what's not to like about the whole package?

X-Perience is at home in the town and city too with sharp responses and electronic aids galore to help you park. But it is in the countryside that this car excels or should that be X-cels? X-cellent!

Fact File

SEAT Leon X-Perience

Engine: 2.0 TDI

Power: 150PS

0-62mph: 8.7 secs

Top speed: 129mph

Combined miles per gallon: 57.6

Transmission: six-speed manual

Insurance: 25E

CO2 g/km: 129