

Practically Perfect

Ian Lamming assesses the new Renault Grand Scenic in an everyday story of motoring folk

PICTURE the scene, it will sound familiar. Party pick-up time and five nine-year-olds climb into the people carrier, riding high on sugar and endorphins.

Drunk on a combination of abject tiredness, party pizzas and sugary birthday cake, they are close to feral, laughing at their own jokes and observations, ranging from the composition of a bogey to the top 10 Dr Who monsters.

As the volume grows louder, to migraine inducing pitch, it suddenly halts as the theme tune begins of the world's favourite radio soap opera, The Archers. Da, da, da, da, da, da, daa...

Silence, respite, peace. Oh bless you Radio 4. Who would have thought it? Who cares? It works. Never underestimate the soporific effect of an everyday story of country folk.

Fifteen minutes of bliss pass before the onslaught begins again from the rear two rows of seats in Renault's new Grand Scenic, proper full sized seats by the way in what is a very comfortable way to travel.

Distraction therapy works a treat so when The Archers is over it is time to surrender my iPhone to my nine-year-old who becomes a Spotify DJ playing the latest hip and happening

sounds through the iPhone and via the Grand Scenic's excellent infotainment unit. It will be worth the flat battery at journey's end.

Once in the car park the gaggle of boys spill from every orifice for a good Nerf gunning before bed. Bed? Yeh right, sometime around midnight then.

Such is life as the parents of a nine-year-old whose birthday seems to last several week-ends.

Following day, the hungover bunch pile back into the Grand Scenic for a trip to Tree Top Trek. They may have swapped seats and have more room to spread their wings now their luggage has been left behind (the boot is sacrificed for the rear row of seats), but the chatter is constant, though they have noticed the superb view of trees and sky through the full length glass roof.

A couple of the boys are into cars and admire the Scenic's futuristic looks, one even spots the gargantuan 20in alloys that give it concept-car aesthetics.

It is hot and sunny so when the MPV is left in the car park a blind can be drawn electrically to try and keep the sun's rays at bay. Clearing the oven-like atmosphere on our return is easier

enough with the climate control, operated via an iPad-esque touch screen control panel on the dashboard. It's just the thing to cool down five sweaty boys who have literally been swinging from the trees, nets and each other for hours. Shattered to the point exhaustion they slump into the Grand Scenic's comfortable seats lapsing into light comas for the ride home to Teesdale.

The Renault's willing diesel makes short shrift of leaden people, luggage galore and Pennine gradients, while returning somewhere in the mid-50s to the gallon, an excellent and welcome feat.

It's a large vehicle but is manageable and enjoyable to drive, parking made easier still thanks to hi-res rear view camera.

Decent steering, clutch and accurate six speed gearbox, coupled with compliant ride, offer excellent driving dynamics, while the Renault bristles with the latest safety devices to keep the precious cargo free from harm.

Grand Scenic is the perfect vehicle for the perfect birthday weekend, for an everyday voyage into the countryside with the boys (and one mum).



Fact File

- Renault Grand Scenic
- Engine: 1.6 turbo diesel
- Power: 130HP
- 0-62mph: 11.4 secs
- Top speed: 118mph
- Combined MPG: 61.4
- Transmission: six-speed manual
- CO2 g/km: 119