

Rumania to most of the present generation is an Eastern Bloc country bordering the Black Sea, with strong ties with its neighbour, the Soviet Union.

Although it lies behind the Iron Curtain, the bars are more akin to wire netting as trade and tourism between east and west develops year by year.

Formerly the classical Dacia and Scythia Pontica, as those who spent an industrious education will know, Rumania's additional claim to fame, by addicts of the Saturday night horror movies, is also the Transylvanian home of the monster of all monsters, Count Dracula.

Now Rumania has produced another export to the west, this time a prince of engineering achievement in the shape of the aptly named - Dacia Duster.

These four-wheel drive vehicles are without doubt the most competitively priced utility vehicles available on the U.K. market.

Starting with the four-wheel drive open Pick-up at a basic £4,150 (ex VAT) there are five versions in the range through to the 4x4 Duster GLX, a classy five seater estate car, that will take off across the roughest country and still look impressive outside the statliest of homes. All that for a total price of £6,500 including VAT and Car Tax.

Golf Greenkeeping tested the middle of the range truck, the 4x4 Duster Hard-Top, priced at £4,650 (ex VAT). A week's trial on the road as well as the golf course and I am not ashamed to admit I shed a little tear of regret when the seven days passed all too quickly and it had to go back.

The more I drove this little blue coloured beauty, the better I relished it. Not only that, like a beau escorting his belle, there was the additional pleasure of admiring glances. Whether it was the Dacia's good looks or its undoubted substance, but as a mere car driver, for a whole week, I experienced the delight of 'given way' by other motorists, gratefully acknowledged by a touch to the cap or a flick of the headlamps.

Although the Duster is a rugged hard grafting work-horse, driver and passenger comfort is at a premium. The padded seats, with head rests are as comfortable as your favourite lounge chair, a full set of instruments are easily visible, the rear windscreen is heated and the wipers and four jet washers will cope with any amount of muck thrown up from the road.

If I have a criticism it must be the position of the ignition lock. The one way key is a real fiddle to slot into the lock, particularly because there is so little clearance between the ignition, located on the steering column,



Golf Course Test for the Dacia Duster

and the padded dash board. For security another key is provided for the door locks and the petrol tank but as they are together on a key ring it is not too difficult to trap one's fingers, putting it in or pulling it out.

Wetherby Golf Club's Head Greenkeeper John Scott who also tested the Dacia Duster, agreed and he also suggested a rear window wiper would be a useful addition.

As a general purpose golf course truck, the Dacia Hard-Top is ideal for moving equipment around the course or taking machinery for repair. It is just as 'At Home' on rough terrain or on the road. For normal road use it is driven in two-wheel drive, turn a hand operated screw on the front wheels and the mode becomes four-wheel, ready to be engaged in either high or low ratio by a lever, forward of the gear handle.

A tow ball and electrics are standard as is the 'Roo Bar' on the front, not only to brush away kangaroos that might have escaped from local zoos, but more practically to protect the bonnet from bumps and scrapes.

Out on the course, the Duster went everywhere it was asked, including the steepest gradient we could find. Using the high ratio four-wheel drive it climbed from a standing start, a notoriously wet part of the fairway without the vestige of wheel slip, or a mark on the turf.

The 1400cc Renault engine is quiet and adequate for the job, but Dacia Concessionaires have told me a diesel version will be available towards the end of the year.

In addition to the manufacturers standard 12 month warranty, a second year's cover is included free of charge on all Dacia Dusters with the option of a third year also available. The unlimited mileage covers all major mechanical and electrical components.

All Dacia Dusters are treated with Swedish system Dinol anti-corrosion protection. The five year warranty applies to all treated areas including underside, box sections, sills and doors.

The sole importers of the Dacia range are

Dacia Concessionaires Ltd.
Dilton House, Station Road,
Westbury, Wilts.

TECHNICAL 3

There are currently 65 dealers throughout the UK. Further details can be obtained by contacting

The Editor,
Golf Greenkeeping,
P.O. Box 12, WETHERBY,
West Yorks.
Tel: (0937) 63181

| SPECIFICATION | | DACIA DUSTER 4 x 4 HARD-TOP | |
|-----------------------|---|---|--|
| ENGINE | Type Displacement Bore and Stroke Compression Ratio Maximum Power Maximum Torque | 4 CYL. IN LINE OHV 1397 cc 76mm x 77mm 9.5 65 bhp (DIN) at 5250 rpm 105 Nm at 3000 rpm | |
| ELECTRICAL SYSTEM | Alternator Battery | 12v. 3-AMP 45 A | |
| FUEL SYSTEM | Carburettor Fuel Tank Capacity | Single Manual Choke 10 Gallons | |
| TRANSMISSION | Clutch Gearbox | Single Dry Plate Mechanical Operation 4 Speed Synchronesh | |
| | Transfer Box | High & Low Ratio Front Wheel Hubs | |
| STEERING | Type | Worm & Roller | |
| BRAKES | Front Rear | Disc Power Assisted Drums, Leading & Trailing Shoes Assisted | |
| | SUSPENSION | Front | Independent, Wishbones, Coil Spring, Telescopic Shock Absorbers |
| | Rear | Rigid Axle, Semi-Elliptic Leaf, Telescopic Shock Absorbers | |
| TYRES | Front and Rear | 175 x 14 | |
| DIMENSIONS AND WEIGHT | Overall Length | 3777mm | |
| | Overall Width | 1600mm | |
| | Overall Height | 1740mm | |
| | Wheelbase | 2400mm | |
| | Front Track | 1304mm | |
| | Rear Track | 1304mm | |
| | Minimum Ground Clearance | 225mm | |
| | Cargo Bed Length | — | 1130mm (3'9") |
| | Cargo Bed Height | — | 590mm |
| | Maximum Payload | 350 kg (6.87 cwt) | |
| | Kerb Weight | 1180 kg | |