

GROUPTEST



Nissan Pulsar

Model: **Tekna 110 dCi**
 Engine: **110bhp 1.5-litre diesel manual six-speed**
 Price: **£21,945**
 CO₂ emissions: **94g/km**
 Combined fuel economy: **78.5mpg**
 0-60: **11.5 seconds**
 Annual road tax: **Nil**

Nissan hasn't build a small family car for nigh on a decade, choosing instead to change the face of the sector with the Qashqai. However, it rarely pays to only build one car on a platform, so the Japanese manufacturer's new rival for the Focus and Astra has finally arrived in the form of the Pulsar.

The current Qashqai is a marvel – Nissan has somehow hit a perfect sweet spot with its packaging, gadgets, comfort and efficiency, and it's much the same story with the Pulsar. It's not amazing to drive, but that's not really the point: it's comfortable, spacious and hi-tech – with all the expected connectivity gadgetry and enough safety kit to shame more expensive cars.

The colour display on the centre console looks the part but it's the array of safety aids that will really impress fleet managers. Safety Shield technology delivers a low-speed collision avoidance system, lane departure warning, blind spot monitoring and a surround view camera set-up. Pulsar makes driving incredibly easy and stress-free – and, with our cramped roads and busy schedules, that's no mean feat.

PROS

- + Class-leading interior space
- + Awesome array of safety aids
- + Incredible fuel economy with diesels

CONS

- Marmite looks may not impress all
- Gadgets will drive up price
- Not as sharp as competitors



Audi A3

Model: **Sportback 1.6 TDI SE Technik 5dr**
 Engine: **110bhp 1.6-litre diesel six-speed manual**
 Price: **£21,195**
 CO₂ emissions: **99g/km**
 Combined fuel economy: **74mpg**
 0-60: **10.7 seconds**
 Annual road tax: **Nil**

Perhaps one of the most advanced cars on the road today in terms of connected car tech, the new A3 offers a MMI technology pack with gadgetry from Apple and Google. These cars can stream data for use across navigation, entertainment and communications.

In reality, that means Google Earth and Street View to aid navigation, music streaming, live traffic and weather information, and the ability to turn the car into a mobile hotspot. CarPlay means the car adopts your iPhone's operating system and can use the apps on your handset. In terms of interfaces, it's easy to see why aping the much tested and refined smartphone operating systems is a huge advantage.

Of course, the A3 is one of the most popular private and business family cars on the road – with good reason. Strong handling, an excellent range of engines, big space and high desirability define the car that's really kicked Audi on in terms of perceived quality, sales and brand position. As a result, it's a very strong package for fleets, business and private users.

PROS

- + Incredible levels of technology from key partners
- + Very strong handling

CONS

- Prices will get steeper with additional options
- Ride comfort may be stiff for some



Ford Mondeo

Model: **Hatchback 1.6 TDCi 115 Titanium 5dr**
 Engine: **115bhp 1.6 manual six-speed**
 Price: **£22,995**
 CO₂ emissions: **95g/km**
 Combined fuel economy: **74.3mpg**
 0-60: **12.1 seconds**
 Annual road tax: **Nil**

At last, a new Mondeo from Ford packed with the latest safety kit and infotainment. It's equipped with some ultra-efficient diesel engines and features the typical balance of Ford's handling and refinement. Sync technology means you can tell the car to make the air cooler, music louder or locate a nearby restaurant by simply saying that you're hungry.

Diesels are the order of the day and, while it may be tempting to go for more power, the smooth 1.6 turbo diesel (TDCi) will offer good pull from low revs, a brisk space and very relaxed cruising. You'll get some incredible fuel consumption and low CO₂ emissions, aiding general running costs that are hard to ignore in such a big car.

Each iteration of the Mondeo has been hard to fault and, while the name may conjure undesirable connotations for some, the new model is equally strong in all areas. For a fleet machine it ticks every box – once again Ford has quietly built a car that goes to the top of the sector.

PROS

- + Lower-spec diesel offers bang for your buck
- + Great ride and handling
- + Plenty of safety kit as standard

CONS

- Mondeo name may elicit a mixed response
- Some materials need more polish
- Better handling on older models