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# ingear

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## Worth a week's wages

Clarkson drives the footballer's favourite p10



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# HOLY ROLY, I'M TRACTOR BAIT



Peter Tarry, John Lawrence

The world's smallest car, a big comedian, country lanes — Dom Joly fears he'll end up in the r

**H**ow do you feel about having a go in the smallest production car in the world? The man from *The Sunday Times* was on the phone and clearly thought that this would be a good idea. "We'll send a photographer down and you can burn it round the Cotswolds. Could make a nice piece." I'm not stupid. I knew his game straight away. Big comedian, small car

— would I fit in it? Would it break? All this with a photographer capturing every embarrassing moment.

I'd seen the car in question — the Peel P50 — when Jeremy Clarkson drove it round the BBC building on *Top Gear*. It then popped up on *Dragons' Den*, and James Caan was interested enough to invest in the company (£80,000 for 30% plus two free cars).

The difference with this latest version

was that it was electric. What's not to like? A car that will turn on a sixpence, is agile in city traffic and is easy to park (it's shorter than most cars are wide, so you can drive nose first into a space, and in many urban centres electric cars park free). Best of all, it is exempt from the congestion charge and road tax and costs only £1 for an overnight charge. The novelty value of it is a given. It looks so small and cute, it's a no-brainer that

everyone wants a go. But, costing from £9,600-£16,000, is it anything more than a rich man's toy? I decided to find out.

Three days later a pick-up truck appeared in my Cotswolds courtyard with a dark blue electric Peel P50 in the back. It was quickly offloaded (picked up easily by two people). On the ground, it looked as if somebody had taken a mobility scooter and chainsawed it in half. The battery behind the seat was turned on

("It'll give you about man from Peel) and couldn't — it was j man from Peel leant and removed the st did make getting in a was soon squeezed i mobile punishment hamster.

A lever by the r wheel allowed me to



## The Touareg 4x4. Looks you'll want to look after.

From Borneo to Burton-on-Trent, the Volkswagen Touareg is arguably one of the most stylish 4x4s you're likely to come across. Not to mention its luxurious interior brimming with state-of-the-art technology. Of course, it's also more than capable off-road too. It has a wading depth of almost 60cm and a climbing capability of 45°. All of which is reassuring to know should you ever find yourself in the Amazon basin. But then again, with lines as stunning as the Touareg has, would you really want to get it dirty? And, with a starting price of £38,170\*, it now looks better still.

Model shown: Touareg Altitude 3.0 TDI 204PS (£42,695) plus metallic paint (£700 rrp) and Bi-xenon headlights (£1,330 rrp) minus £2,000 offer, Total price £42,725 rrp. \*Price shown is for the SE incorporate £2,000 off. £2,000 offer applies to Touareg SE, Hybrid and Altitude only, on UK retail orders placed before March 31st, 2012. At participating retailers, subject to availability. Official fuel consumption for the new Touareg ranges in mpg (litres/100km): urban 23.7 (11.9) – 34.4 (8.2); extra urban 35.8 (7.9) – 44.8 (6.3); combined 31.0 (9.1) – 40.4 (7.0). Combined CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 239 – 184g/km.



It's a squeeze to get into the Peel P50, and a sharp left turn topples it. There's no door on the right-hand side, so Dom Joly is well and truly stuck

and gave me the option of low power or the exciting "high power". Two tiny little rubber circles near my feet turned out to be the "accelerator" and the brake. Rather disconcertingly, there were no mirrors, and I was packed in far too tightly to look behind me. I hit the "accelerator" and reassuringly I moved forward. The initial sensation was that this was quite fun.

I drove through my gates and out onto the road and immediately felt incredibly vulnerable. Huge, homicidal tractors roam these rural roads, looking for prey, and if one of them found me in this it would be curtains for sure. I live by the river in the Coln Valley, and to leave my house and go anywhere I have to climb very steep hills. This was going to be a big test for the P50.

I started up towards the pub in "low power", which I assumed would be what you used for hills. I was wrong, and the little bubble wasn't happy. I flicked it into "high power", and it lurched forwards a tad. It picked up a little bit of speed but then died. Just as I started to roll backwards it kicked in again. It did this all the way up the hill, so I looked like a blue M&M with hiccups. Villagers started coming out of their cottages and staring. It's definitely a crowd-pleaser: everyone laughs and points at you. If you enjoy being treated as the village idiot, this is the vehicle for you.

Once we made the village green, where the road flattens out, the car started trundling along at a fairly steady and decent rate (the top speed is claimed to be 40mph). Little potholes that I wouldn't even notice in my normal-sized car loomed like giant abysses. I had to weave in and out to stop myself falling into them. This forced me to pull out into the oncoming lane — a most disconcerting feeling when you can't see behind you.

Then the tractors came — two of them, in hunting mode. Clearly they had received a tip-off. One roared up behind me and started honking. Imagine the shame of going so slowly that you hold up a tractor. I could smell the murderous, cidery breath of the agricultural lumatic behind me. I had to take evasive action. Spotting a little track, I turned sharply off the road and sped towards a copse. It was becoming very clear to me that whatever the P50 was designed for, it was not the countryside. An angry albatross was lounging around the out-buildings of a nearby farm. As soon as it caught the scent of the little blue trespasser, it went berserk, running alongside and frantically trying to snap at me

through the glass. This was not the way I wanted to die — savaged by an angry farm dog in the world's most peculiar coffin.

I headed for the farm buildings in an effort to find the dog's owner. As I reached the first barn I took a sharp turn to the left and my problems really began. There was a screech and a smash and I realised that I had tipped the thing over. To make matters worse, the single door opens to the left and the car and I were now lying on it. I was trapped with nobody about but a rabid dog that now smelt blood from a small cut on my cheek.

I pressed the horn again and again but nobody came. Panic set in. What if nobody found me for weeks? I'd never seen Ray Mears teach you how to deal with this situation. It was 10 minutes before the photographer

finally found me. Being a true professional, he took plenty of photos and then asked politely if I needed rescuing.

I tried to drive the P50 home but it had had enough of the scary Cotswolds

and it refused to go anywhere. I left it on the farm and got a lift home with the photographer, who couldn't stop laughing. Once home, I rang the man who'd delivered it and

apologetically told him where to find the thing before pouring myself a resuscitative whisky. I'm still not sure who this vehicle is for, but it's definitely not me.



Even farm vehicles are held up by the tiny electric vehicle

## FREEWHEELING THREE-WHEELERS



Morgan's three-wheeler, left, resisted rolling over during Clarkson's cornering, unlike the Reliant Robin, right. Tuk tuk taxis, middle, are common in Asia

### RELIANT ROBIN

The classic three-wheeler is no more. An attempt to revive the car failed in 2002, and Reliant Partsworld, which owns the original tooling, has no plans to bring it back. The car was turned over by Jeremy Clarkson in an episode of Top Gear, and its predecessor, the Reliant Regal, had a starring role as Del

Boy's clapped-out yellow van in Only Fools and Horses.

### TUK TUK

Just less than £9,000 will buy a genuine Indian-built tuk tuk from Tukshop, based in Southampton. The company has sold more than 100 in the six years it has been established and says most

buyers want the thrill of hitting a maximum 40mph with the wind in their hair.

### MORGAN THREE-WHEELER

Since the three-wheeler was unveiled last year, Morgan has taken more than 860 orders for its £30,000 baby. Despite Clarkson's best efforts

when he tested it for InGear, it remained resolutely upright.

### GRINNALL SCORPION

The Scorpion uses a BMW motorbike engine to do 0-60mph in four seconds. Its loyal fans will tell you it's engineered like a racing car. It's available in kit form or ready-built from £16,700.