

Rover 100

Featuring 114SLi (manual and auto)




NOT SO MUCH A NEW MODEL, MORE A change of moniker, sums up this latest and smallest Rover. With the demise of the Maestro and Montego, Metro was the only model left with a name rather than a number. A new front, including the Rover-style grille, plus other detailed revisions to exterior and interior, have given the model's tired image a bit of a fillip, but basically it's the same story as before.

That's not to say that it's yesterday's car – in fact, coming back to this 1.4 version reminded us that in matters mechanical, most of the competition has only just recently managed to catch up.

The 75bhp K-Series engine is delightfully eager, yet, like the 1.1 version, it's wonderfully smooth and refined in the low-to-mid-range. The manual is low geared – unnecessary we think in a little car of this power; the resultant busy sounds past 60mph could be avoided (as they are on the Automatic) by giving it a higher fifth gear. It would undoubtedly further improve fuel economy as well, although 42mpg overall, rising to

over 50mpg when touring gently, is perfectly respectable and no worse than for the 1.1 version.

The Automatic uses the CVT (continuously variable) principle and this Dutch-sourced 'box is one of the smoothest and most responsive of its ilk. Mechanical losses are much less than in a Corsa or a Clio automatic, for instance, with the 30–70mph time just 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ sec longer than the manual's 11.9 recorded time, and just a 3mpg loss in fuel economy.

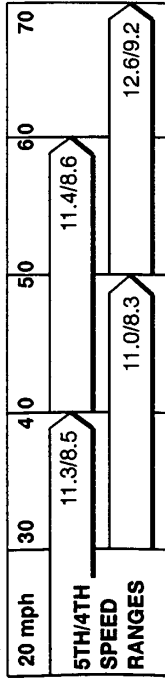
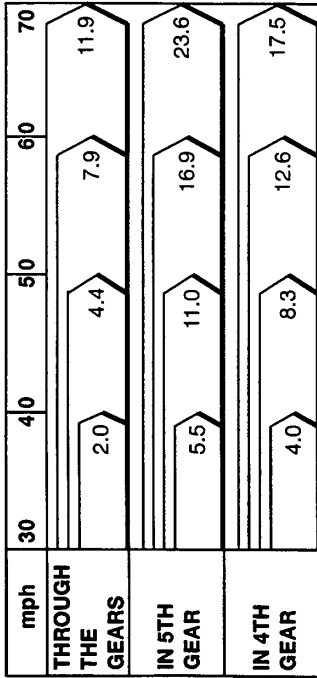
Current models make a much smoother take-up from rest (jerkiness was an earlier CVT complaint), but unlike the Nissan Micra, a Rover 100 CVT will still "creep" on the level at tickover – or stay put  on the average up-gradient, just like a bigger automatic. In fact, the 100 Auto isn't an easy car to push into the garage because the inertia in the 'box remains even in neutral. But this also means that it's less ready to roll as you sit waiting in a traffic queue, so you tend to resort to the handbrake less often.

On the open road, this Automatic is the epitome of unobtrusive efficiency, once you've retrained your

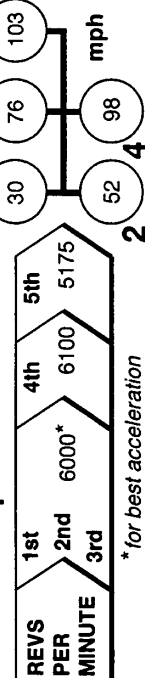
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PERFORMANCE : 114 Manual

Acceleration time in seconds



Maximum speeds



FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade for tests: unladen Premium, 95 octane

Normal range	mpg
Hard driving, heavy traffic	32 1/2
Short journeys in the suburbs	35
Motorway - 70mph cruising	39 1/2
Brisk driving, mixed roads	43
Gentle driving, rural roads	52
Typical mpg overall	42

Realistic tank range* (3-door) 25 litres/230miles

* based on fuel gauge and filling station experience

SAFETY AND SECURITY FEATURES

Assessed on their effectiveness and convenience (the more black blobs the better)

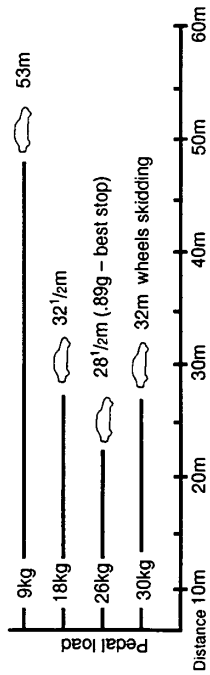
Seatbelts	front ●●●●○	rear ●●●●○	Door locking	central locking? ●●●●○
Head restraints	front ●●●●○	rear ●●●●○	remote control? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	auto window closure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Interior	safety padding ●●●●○	driver's airbag? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	deadlocks? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	secure from interior/hidden from view ●●●●○
Fuel anti-spillage	side impact protection ●●●●○	engine immobilised? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Luggage	Alarm ●●●●○

standard on test car factory fitted option not available

BRAKES

Pedal feel ●●●●○ Behaviour in an emergency ●●●●○ Handbrake ●●●●○

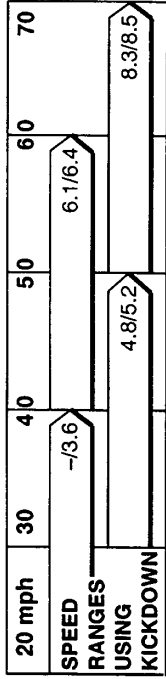
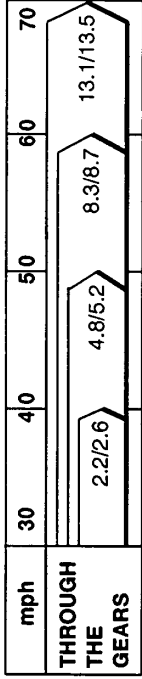
Dry road stopping distance from 50mph (no ABS)
(A good-to-average best stop is about 28m at 20-30kg pedal load)



Fade test: pedal load required for a moderate (34ml/75g) stop: 17kg at start of test, 32kg at end of test. (Ideal brakes show no change)

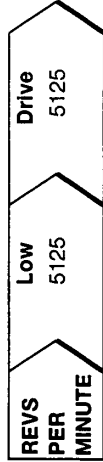
PERFORMANCE: 114 Automatic

Acceleration in Low/Drive time in seconds



Maximum speeds

using accelerator kickdown



FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade for tests: unleaded Premium, 95 octane

Normal range	mpg
Hard driving, heavy traffic	29 1/2
Short journeys in the suburbs	32 1/2
Motorway - 70mph cruising	37 1/2
Brisk driving, mixed roads	41
Gentle driving, rural roads	46
Typical mpg overall	39

Realistic tank range* (5-door) 28 litres/240miles

* based on fuel gauge and filling station experience

brain to the notion of gearing that varies to produce a steady engine speed, rather than engine speed having to vary to suit a fixed gear ratio. CVT makes overwhelming sense and produces effortless, seamless progress, but it takes time to get used to it.

The five-speed manual has a really slick gear-change, but its smooth clutch is a shade weighty. In terms of steering effort when parking, however, it scores heavily over the Auto. Its parking effort can be cumbersome and a power steering option isn't on offer. The manual (with a 35kg weight saving) still needs some reasonable effort when manoeuvring, but is ideal once under way, with an accuracy and agility of handling response that has still to be surpassed in this class. The ride comfort is also very good unless the road surface faults are sharp-edged or if there's approaching a full load aboard.

The brakes are sensibly servoed to produce a respectable best stop at rather higher pressures than is currently fashionable; however, arduous repeated use results in heat fade.

Inside the Rover 100, Metro owners will notice revised (Honda-sourced?) stalks, mildly reshaped front seats, revised trim (including wood inserts) and an improved fascia-shelf mat on the SLi. Inside the doors, there are reinforcement beams and the redesigned, tactile steering wheel has the option of an airbag.

The new headlamps have lost their easy beam trimmers, we're sorry to see, and their rubber surrounds had come adrift on one of our test cars. We like the new lower door sill plastic protectors, but nothing has been done about the vulnerable rear wheelarch lips and all Rover 100s (except the basic Knightsbridge 1.1) are now bedecked with fully painted bumpers – just waiting to be scored by careless parking.

Nothing has been attempted to improve the model's poor rear accommodation – indeed, the new front seats seem to have eroded rear legroom a bit more and these seats are prone to sagging, if they're treated badly – the driver's seat on our test car was definitely the worse for wear. Don't overlook the fact that the seats can be raised (or the cushion tilt-adjusted) by adding spacing washers to their runners – a valuable adjustment for shorter drivers.

The 100 isn't easy to enter and leave, due to its prominent door sills, and the way that the seats fold on the three-door isn't much help, either. The boot space isn't too bad and oddments room is generous – especially on the three-door with its useful side cubbies and under-seat storage.

Despite that optional airbag and the new door beams, interior injury-prevention features remain deficient; security is quite good, however, with an up-graded handset-controlled alarm/immobiliser and boot contents that aren't readily accessible from inside the car. Heating works well up front and this Rover retains its warm-feet/cool faces advantage, to avoid stuffiness.

VERDICT

Its slightly lower asking prices are in line with the fact that this Rover is now smaller than other more seriously up-dated counterparts we list in our rivals table. You may not get an up-to-the-minute image, or as much room inside, but the Metro-cum-100's technicalities remain a match for the best of them.

Altogether smaller new cars, from Ford to Mercedes-Benz, are in the offing and the Fiat Cinquecento has already established itself. Viewed as a precursor to these, the Rover 100 makes an awful lot of sense.

Likes ... and gripes

New stalks work with precision	... but variable intermittent wipe is lost
Rear wash/wipe now on stalk	... but front blades still noisy
Locks work with handset alarm engagement	... but alarm sounds if you then unlock by key
Easy fuel filler	... but small tank, pessimistic gauge means poor range
Super non-slip fascia shelf	• • Door mirrors very stiff
Lots of oddments room	• • Too much untrimmed metal on view



For those with special needs



Automatic has lots of left footroom	... but it's easy to press accelerator when braking
Back seat supports small adults well	... but it's hard to get to it
Good rear view for parking	... but steering heavy on auto at such times

HOW THE ROVER 114 COMPARES

	Engine cap/power (cc/bhp)	Revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel economy (mpg)	Brakes best stop (m/kg)	Maximum legroom – front (cm)	Typical leg/kneeroom – rear (cm)	Steering turns/ circle (m)	Overall length (cm)
ROVER 114SLi	1396/75	3525	11.9	23.6/17.5	42	28½/26	104	93/61	3.7/9.8	357
Ford Fiesta 1.25LX	1242/75	3650	14.4	27.1/18.8	39	26/18*	108	92/66	2.8/10.1 (p)	383
VW Polo 1.6L	1598/75	3275	11.7	22.4/16.4	39	27½/22	107	95/67	3.8/10.1	372
Renault Clio 1.4RN	1390/80	3500	11.7	28.0/19.3	41½	34½/17	100	93/64	3.4/10.4 (p)	371
Nissan Micra 1.3GX Automatic	1275/75	3000	12.3	NA	42½	30/15	102	94/66	3.7/9.7	370
ROVER 114SLi AUTOMATIC	1396/75	3025	13.1	NA	39	28½/26	104	93/61	3.7/9.8	357

* with ABS option (p) with power steering option



FOR THE TECHNICAL

ENGINE

Type transverse four cylinder, with alloy block and head; five main bearings

Size 75 x 79mm = 1396cc

Power 75bhp at 5500rpm

Torque 86 lb ft at 4000rpm

Valves belt-driven overhead camshaft actuating two valves per cylinder via hydraulic tappets

Fuel/ignition electronic single-point injection with integrated programmed spark timing with coil and distributor. Three-way exhaust catalyser with lambda sensor. 33-litre fuel tank; no low-level lamp

TRANSMISSION

Type five-speed manual standard; optional CVT automatic with steel-element pusher belt and pulleys under

pressurised hydraulic control. Front-wheel drive

Mph per 1000rpm

Manual: 19.9 in 5th, 16.1 in 4th. Automatic: 23.6 (theoretical)

CHASSIS

Suspension front: independent by wishbones with Hydragas displacers (interconnected with rear). Rear: independent trailing arms and Hydragas displacers. Dampers: telescopic all round

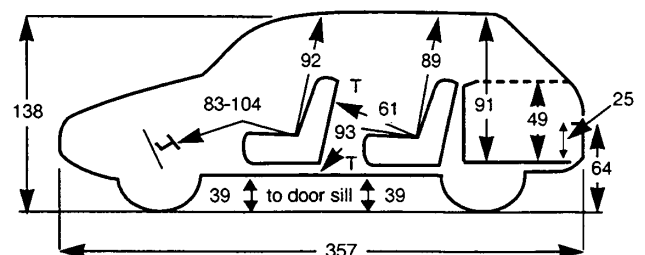
Steering unassisted rack and pinion with 3.7 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 9.8m between kerbs, with 17.7m circle for one turn of the wheel

Wheels 4½J steel with 155/65R13 tyres (Goodyear GT65)

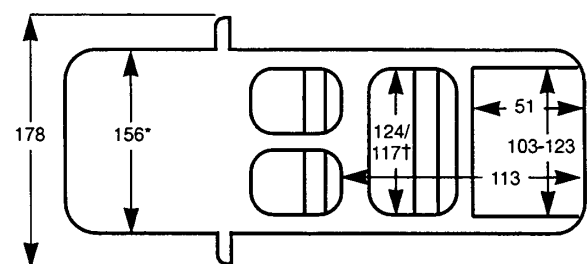
Brakes solid discs front, drums rear with vacuum servo; no ABS option

MEASUREMENTS

Centimetres



T: typical back seat space behind medium-sized front occupants



* with mirrors folded
† 3/5 door