

Switch to LPG!

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Greener Cleaner Cheaper

2004/2005



Why Richard Hammond drives on LPG

Why should you get a vehicle that runs on LPG?

Well, here are three good reasons...

It's Cheaper...

Imagine paying around 39p for a litre of petrol. You'd have to take a time machine back to 1987 for that. Incredibly, LPG (also known as 'autogas') currently averages *half* the price of unleaded petrol or diesel. You do not need to be Carol Vorderman to work out that converting to LPG could pay for itself very quickly. You could also make savings which include:

- 100% discount for some vehicles on the congestion charge in London

It's Cleaner...

LPG is regarded as one of the cleanest fuels in the market because its simple chemical composition means it is a very clean burning fuel.

This is important for the quality of the air you breathe. Particulates accumulate in your lungs and an LPG engine was shown in recent European tests to emit substantially fewer particulates than a diesel one. And the emission of nitrogen oxide – which can damage your lungs and health – was demonstrated to be 20 times less in an LPG vehicle than in a diesel.

It's Greener...

Not only can you save money, you may even help to save the planet by converting. The main pollutant linked to the greenhouse effect is carbon dioxide (CO₂) and recent extensive tests showed that CO₂ emissions are 20% less when compared to petrol and nearly 2% less than diesel.

Plus an LPG-fuelled engine is about 50% quieter than a diesel one.



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Richard Hammond says convert to LPG... he did!



Richard Hammond: TV presenter and motoring journalist

What is LPG?

LPG stands for 'liquefied petroleum gas' and is also known as 'autogas'. It is a mixture of propane and butane and comes from the oil refining process, but it also occurs naturally in gas fields. At room temperature it's a gas, but when pressurised it turns into a liquid. Although in the past LPG was considered a waste product and burnt off, it is now produced in vast quantities – the UK produced 6.4 million tonnes in 2001 of which around half was exported.

Boost LPG is a campaign to boost the number of LPG drivers in the UK by increasing the availability of information and promoting the benefits and opportunities associated with using LPG-fuelled vehicles.

Right, so converting your car to run on LPG is going to be expensive, complicated and dangerous. Well, er... no. It's not even a new thing. The Scandinavians have been running LPG-powered buses for years, and in Japan you will almost certainly be conveyed to your paper-walled hotel courtesy of an LPG cab.

You see, running your car on LPG is not only going to mean motoring at about 37p per litre, it's greener than petrol. As for dangerous, many experts reckon a properly installed LPG tank is more impact resistant than a conventional steel petrol tank.

How do I know? I was recently faced with the common dilemma of needing a family car. Obviously I know all about running costs and the need for a simple, basic family car. So I bought an eleven-year-old Range Rover Vogue SE with everything on it, for just four grand. It's a ridiculous car – huge, complicated and somewhat expensive to run. But how could I possibly afford to fuel such a thing?

Well, as it happened, the list of features included LPG conversion and it was this that made it all possible.

A 3.9-litre V8 engine is a wonderful thing; it sounds marvellous and can transport a small army. Convert it to LPG and this can still be done, for a fraction of the cost, and with no noticeable loss of power and no change in the lusty bellow. And it's not just old 4x4s and thirsty luxury cars that can benefit. Even an average family car, covering around 20,000 miles a year, could save its owner the best part of £800 a year if run on LPG. There's no shame in it – the Queen has one, although hers is, admittedly, a Roller.

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Four LPG drivers gas about gas

We've told you about the benefits of converting your car to gas, but what's it really like running your car on LPG? We interview four drivers to find out their experiences



Vauxhall Omega

Name David Marriott
Lodge
Age 33
Profession IT Consultant
Main use of car Business
Miles per year 35,000
Favourite car BMW M3
How long have you been using LPG? Two years.
How did you find an authorised converter?

Through the Internet, I went onto the LPGA website, www.lpga.co.uk.

How many places did you contact? Just one. I went to my local dealer, had a chat with him, and got some references from other people who had had conversions.

How easy is it to use? Absolutely fine, it's like driving a normal car, except filling it up with gas rather than petrol, but that's the only difference.

What are the advantages? Cost! Conversion overall was about £1,800 and break even on my car was 20,000 miles.

Did you get a grant? No, my car didn't qualify.

How long to recoup the cost of conversion? Probably about eight months. I do 35,000 miles per year and because the break even was 20,000, it paid for itself within a year.

Had you any concerns? Yes, about the performance. I'd heard that performance could be affected if you didn't get the right conversion. There are two types of conversion: there's an injection conversion and a mixer conversion. Injection is the more modern technique, which is what I had done.

Any difference after? No. My car is a big 2.5 litre, and you don't use all the power, so you only really notice if you are pushing it hard, which isn't that often.

Is it easy finding a place to refuel? Yes, I found a website called LPGmap [www.lpgmap.co.uk]. You can download, free of charge, overlays for Autoroute. When I plan my normal route it pops up and tells you all the gas stations on the route.

The cheapest you've paid? About 29p per litre.
What have you saved? Over two years I've done around 70,000 miles, so I've saved in the region of £4-5,000.

How often do you use petrol? Occasionally, but it's rare. I put £5 of petrol a month in because it always starts on petrol and then changes across when it reaches about 30°C in the engine.

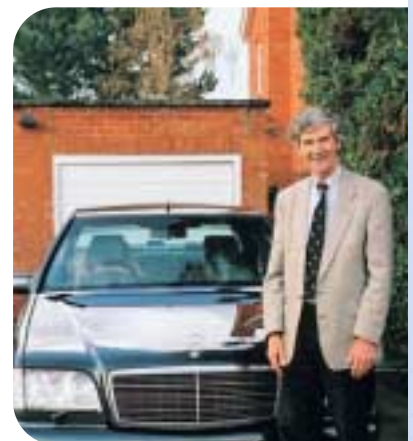
Would you ever use petrol again? It wouldn't be my first choice. I'm looking for another car to change to later in the year, so it's always a consideration as to whether it can be converted. I'm not going to buy a car I can't convert.

Are you aware of the environmental benefits? Obviously I've got cost benefits, but it's nice to know that I'm not creating as much pollution. I'm a high mileage driver in a big car that would be top end of the carbon scale on petrol, so I'm helping the environment in that way.

One sentence to sell LPG? To give it serious consideration because it's not as difficult or complicated to convert as you might think, and once you've converted you'll never look back.

Mercedes S500

Name Brian Marlow
Age 64
Profession Company Chairman
Main use of car Personal use
Miles per year 8,000-10,000
Favourite car Ferrari or Mercedes
How long have you been using LPG? Four to five years.



Did you get a grant? No, I didn't apply.

How long to recoup the cost of conversion? Three years to pay the conversion cost by saving on the price of petrol.

How did you find an authorised converter? I got the name from my local dealer, and we were very impressed with his kit.

How easy is it to use? Initially there were a few teething problems with the valve on the thermostat, but I wasn't charged for the repair, and there hasn't been a problem since.

What are the advantages? It's half the price. I'm very cautious about the amount of money I spend, and because it's half the price, I'm able to use my car a lot more.

Had you any concerns? Initially, safety.

Why didn't that stop you converting? Because after talking to people about it, I realised it was perfectly safe.

Is it easy finding a place to refuel? Yes, and there are quite a few around me.

The cheapest you've paid? 33.9p per litre.

What have you saved? Around £700 per year.

Are you aware of the environmental benefits? Yes.

One sentence to sell LPG? Turn your car into a great car that's also cheap to run.

Renault Scenic 1.6, and Daihatsu Hijet van

Name Steven

Woodcock

Age 51

Profession Carpet Upholstery Cleaner

Main use of car The van is for my business and the car for personal use.

Miles per year With the van about 20,000 miles.

Favourite car The one I have at the moment, the Renault Scenic.



Range Rover

Name Tony

Slade

Age 62

Profession

Solicitor

Main use of car

Work and pleasure

Miles per year

20,000

Favourite car

Range Rover

How long have you been using

LPG? One year.

Did you get a grant? No, the car was too old.

How long to recoup the cost of conversion? About nine months.

How did you find an authorised converter? I got a list from the Internet and went round all of them, until I found one I wanted to use.

How easy is it to use? It's been very simple, and I've never had any problems.

What are the advantages? The price, it's so cheap.

Had you any concerns? Yes, I'd rung Land Rover, and asked whether they could recommend a system but they wouldn't recommend or fit one.

Why didn't that stop you converting? Because I'd read about it, and after talking to professionals it's clearly a good fuel to use.

Is it easy finding a place to refuel? Yes, I pass at least one every day.

The cheapest you've paid? 37p, but I've seen it for 32p, although at the time I had a full tank.

Are you aware of the environmental benefits? Yes, it's good to know that you can help the environment as well.

Would you ever use petrol again? No.

One sentence to sell LPG? Half price motoring.

Quentin Willson says...

"LPG is fantastic. When I leave home, I can choose between a Merc E 55, Lexus LS400 or gas-powered Jeep. And I nearly always take the Jeep, because I know the run to London is going to cost me only seven quid... this is a no brainer people"

Taken from Quentin's column quoted at www.mirror.co.uk.

How long have you been using autogas? The van for two and a half years and the car for three months.

Did you get a grant? No, my vehicles don't qualify.

How long to recoup the cost of conversion? Two years

How easy is it to use? I had one or two teething

problems with the van which were easily fixed by changing the feedback system. The Renault is a Romano sequential system and I haven't had any troubles with it.

What are the advantages? The money saving aspect. It means more profit for the business.

Had you any concerns? I had heard that it can cause valve wear on the top of the cylinder, but my converter made adjustments so that it couldn't occur.

Any difference in performance? None at all.

Is it easy finding a place to refuel? Very easy.

How often do you refuel? With the van every 200 miles, and the car every 250 miles.

The cheapest you've paid? 34.9p per litre.

What have you saved? On the van, £700 per year.

Are you aware of the environmental benefits? It's an added bonus to know you're not choking everyone behind you to death. As for the business it looks good to say you're clean and green.

Would you ever use petrol again? Not if I could avoid it.

One sentence to sell LPG? With current technology, save money without losing performance.

What does it feel like to drive a gas-powered car?

Natalia Michault, 29, had never driven an LPG car before – which of course made her the perfect road tester for Volvo’s flagship bi-fuel V70.



VOLVO V70

On-the-road price £24,523
Length/height 4710/1465 mm
Engine/capacity 5 cyl/2435 cc
Peak power 140/5100 bhp/rpm
Peak torque 214/4500 Nm/rpm
Transmission 6-spd manual
Fuel tank capacity LPG 50/petrol 29 gallons
Boot capacity (seats up/folded) 485/745 cu ft
Kerbweight/payload 1550/600 kg
Turning circle/drag coefficient 11.9 metres/0.03Cd
Insurance group 13
Basic warranty 3 years (60,000 miles)
Basic recovery 1 year RAC cover
0–62 mph 11.4 sec
Top speed 127 mph
Govt urban/extra/combined 17.2/28.8/23.2 mpg

A car that runs on gas... to say I had my doubts was an understatement.

I half expected the grandson of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang to pull up. Yet no. The V70 – though no silver bullet – had graceful and arching modern lines. Indeed the road-test car was loaded with electronic goodies yet the only clue that it was gas powered were six ultra-discreet letters on the rear tailgate – Bi-Fuel.

Still, I had my concerns. What if I pressed the button to switch to LPG at the wrong time, what if I put petrol in the LPG tank, what if I needed a cigarette... what if...?

The man from Volvo said, with Scandinavian simplicity, that there was nothing to it: “Press the petrol button down for a few seconds until the red light starts flashing then let go, and when the red light turns off, you’re driving on LPG.” That was it, and there I was expecting the space shuttle’s handbook.

On my first attempt to switch to gas, I started the car on petrol (you always do this), and while driving I did as I was told and held the button down for a few

seconds. The little red light flashed for a few seconds, but nothing happened. So I did it again and again and then again, until I finally realised that the car had in fact been changing back and forth without me.

I’m not sure what I was expecting, if not the earth to move, but I hoped to feel some sort of change; something like you would feel while changing gears. When that didn’t happen, I realised just how easy the gas malarkey was.

In performance terms I’m sure Jeremy Clarkson would tell me that torque between 1000–2000 rpm was down but I couldn’t feel the slightest lag or slowing even when flooring it.

Refuelling the car was equally as simple, just a different hose and a different hole. There was a second or so delay as the gas went in and a satisfying hiss when disconnecting.

But the biggest hiss was audible at the checkout when I paid 37p per litre.

