

1 Is it the right car for you?

– marriage guidance



Tall and short drivers

In the front, the seats have good adjustments to suit both shorter and taller drivers (eg, over 1.8m). Even the latter will feel comfortable and not overly cramped, as there is a good deal of distance between driver and passenger seats due to the large centre console. Although the earlier models do not have seat height adjustment, there is plenty of headroom due to the boxy shape.

The shorter driver may feel a little overwhelmed by the open space, however will have no difficulty reaching all controls.

The steering wheel feels rather large and upright, and the column was not adjustable until the first W463 of 1990, but everything is within fingertip control.

Weight of control

Mercedes-Benz is very adept at making any of its vehicles eminently usable throughout their entire lifespan, and although there isn't room in this little book to give you details of every incarnation, suffice to say the G-Wagen got better and better year on year.

As heavy as it was, it was made to feel nimble, agile and stable, whether on or off road. Steering was a little heavy due to the use of the steering box system, but robust.

The engine and gearbox were a little 'agricultural' at first, and the clutch a little heavy, especially when controlling in traffic or feathering while off road. The automatic gearbox was a good deal smoother.

Useability

Power steering was standard after 1987 but it was optional from the beginning, and, although most buyers took up this option, you may find the odd early vehicle without it. Although they felt a little agricultural the early vehicles were easy enough to manoeuvre. Both the petrol and diesel models were a little slow by modern

The author with his 300GD.





The W463 LWB station wagon.



The W463 SWB.



ABS was an option on the first W463 of 1989, but became standard a couple of years later.



Interior much more in keeping with what would be expected of a Mercedes.

though not deleted completely. It was decided to include in the G-Family, a utilitarian version aimed at 'professional' users, public services, and people who wanted their G-Wagen for work, expeditions, or hunting and fishing trips. It was referred to as the W461.

The Mercedes-Benz G-Wagen, later referred to as the G-Class, has been with us now for 40 years, and shows no sign of disappearing into rusting

The most common chassis in the G-Wagen stage is the SWB (short wheelbase), with the LWB (long wheelbase) a much more expensive option.

The Cabriolet, although attractive, is for real enthusiasts only: a pleasure to drive in the summer, but it's a real challenge to open and close the top, especially if in a hurry.

Interior space

One would think that such a large vehicle would have ample room in the interior, but for the 460 and 461 range particularly it's probably truer to say, 'just sufficient.' Wider than normal people may feel a bit close to their door.



Although spartan, the early interior had ample space.



The rear bench seat allowed three passengers to sit side by side.

With enough rear seating and head room for perhaps two 6ft passengers, leg room is once again adequate, but by no means generous. The rear bench seats in the 460s allow three rear passengers to be comfortably accommodated.

The early 463 range was a little more comfortable due to seat design and shape changes, however it now featured a more sculptured, and consequently bulkier, door panel which, although in appearance made it visually in keeping with a Mercedes-Benz interior it encroached on elbow room.

The later 463 range (2018) is even better, with 150mm more rear leg room; 38mm more shoulder room, and 68mm more elbow room.



Luggage space

Capacity in the rear (boot/trunk) area in the LWB version ranged

The later 463 swapped space for comfort.

4 Relative values

– which model for you?



The G-Wagen comes in both LWB and SWB forms, and there were multiple diesel and petrol power units, covering everything from the agriculturally strong OM617 to the M117 V8.



The very special GE500 V8. Only 500 were made; they are sought-after and very rarely come onto the market.

- Code designation 460 was built between 1979 and 1989.
- The 461 – the public services and trade-type version – was built from 1991.
- The 463 was introduced in 1989, and remained in production until 2018, albeit with a number of face-lifts.

The first thing to do is narrow down your options, which will save a lot of

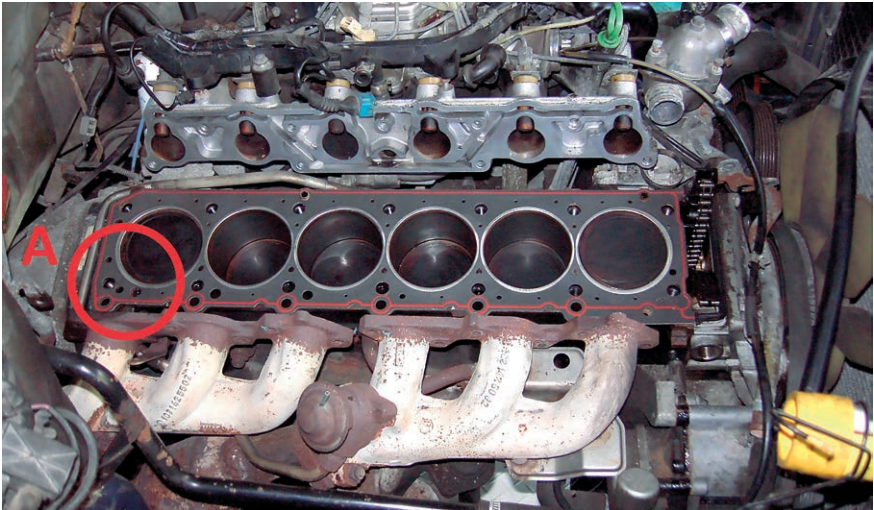
The W460 G-Wagen front: utilitarian it may be but it started a movement that has lasted over 40 years.



The 280GE (M110) in general has no major problems. Occasional oil leaks from the double head casing, and rattling sounds from the valves if not adjusted regularly are the only problems if you don't include the single figure fuel mileage.

The 300GE (M103) is the most robust engine in the later G range. The only weak points may be worn out valve seals or guides on poorly maintained units, leading to high oil consumption.

The GE500 special of 1993 used the M117.965 engine. These were stockpiled specially for this G-Wagen. It was used in the 126 S-Class very successfully and had very few issues, apart of course from the time chain tensioner, chain guides and chain itself which all need changing around the 100K mark.



The M103 had early head gasket/oil leaks, usually from the area indicated above; revised head gaskets remedied this, however.



The OM617 was an extremely robust engine and could deliver high mileage if cared for. It was a bit agricultural and 'lumbering,' however.