

Rover 200/400 Series Buying Guide.

As with all models, Rover 200/400 series cars have their own little problem areas to note before buying one. Of course, some of these points may only apply to older versions, but we will be focusing on the problem-areas that these models are particularly susceptible to: A 216 is quoted as a middle example for performance etc.

1/ Bodywork

Firstly, check the front and rear bumper fixings, and look at them to make sure that these are both secure. The mountings can rust, making a simple repair necessary.

Open the boot lid, and look inside to the left and right sides of the car. Just near to the lights, there may be some rust on the inner rear wings.

Open the rear doors, and look at the wheel arches. These areas are notorious for rusting, and will corrode all the way through, if initial rust is not corrected quickly. However, even if these are too far gone to simply paint, then their shape is such that they can be easily recreated with filler and aluminium mesh.

Under the car, take a sharp object, and prod the outer sills. The lip that runs down both sills also often requires corrective welding. This is a simple repair, and is inexpensive. The sills on these cars are often problematic, and so the use of a corrosion repellent, such as Finnigan's Waxoyl is to be recommended. There are rubber stoppers inside the rear wheel arches, that can be removed to allow the addition of this substance, very easily.

The front doors often seem to show signs of surface rust just along the bottom edge. Again, once corrected, Waxoyl prevents any return of this. The area around the sun-roof seems to quite often show signs of surface rusting, and this can be a problem to stop it re-occurring. Perhaps this is one part of the bodywork that requires professional attention? Rear sun visors on newer models have a tendency to come off' rather easily. Indeed, some car wash centres even display a notice for vehicles fitted with visors, for this very purpose.

2/Engine

Once the bodywork of the car has been examined, it is time to check the engine. Start the car up, and watch the rev counter. (On 1.6's) The car, started from cold should quickly settle at 12-1500 rpm. Once warmed up, it will tickover at 800-1000 rpm. The 1.6 cars will pull very well at all revs, and are very eager. The Efi models should NOT race high up in the revs upon start up. If this happens, then the injection system is in need of careful attention by a suitable specialist.

A high mileage 216 can be forgiven a quick burst of bluish smoke upon initial start up, and it should soon disappear after a couple of minutes, at the most. The Honda-sourced gearbox is noted for its smoothness, and its ability to shrug off high mileage, and so this should be tight and not at all notchy. Replacement gearboxes are quite cheap though, (around £100) and are freely available from commercial outfits,



especially via publications such as Auto Trader.

Unless you are absolutely certain that the cam belt has been changed at some point in it's life, it is money well spent to have a new one fitted. This can save so much money & heart ache compared to the alternative of a broken cam belt.

3/ Suspension

Suspension is very much an objective point of view, what one person loves, another person will loathe. Luckily, help is at hand. If you are not happy with the ride of the standard suspension as fitted by Rover, you can purchase after market items (some reasonably priced, others more expensive). Standard suspension is adequate, nothing more. With age, there is inevitably areas that will suffer and suspension will sag. Check that the vehicle you are buying doesn't bounce around too much when you press down on the body work & then release. Also check that ride height isn't too high. Some people may fit other ranges springs, same model maybe but the suspension set up may differ slightly, resulting in a higher than expected ride. However, do not be completely deterred, changing the suspension isn't a difficult job & if you only want standard items, they are readily available from vehicle dismantlers (just be aware that you may fit parts that are just as bad as the ones you are taking off!).

4/ Brakes

Again, the Rover 200 & 400 series are very adaptable with after market items being available. Unless you have boosted the performance of your engine, you will probably be able to use standard stock items, these are available from all good parts shops & shouldn't break the bank.

5/ Oil Leaks

We haven't found a common area for oil leaks on the 200/400 other than on the 2 litre engine. This is a common fault on the entire Rover range (200-800). The engines develop a leak at the front right-hand side, (as you face the engine with the bonnet open), there is great debate about cause and cure, however most people seem to live with it (assuming it is only a slight leak) and wipe off excess oil when they clean the rest of the vehicle. Replacing the head gasket appears to achieve very little since, in most cases, the leak reappears in a short period of time.

6/ Extras

Finally, check that all those little extras are working. Electric windows, sun roof, remote & central locking, alarm, electric seats, boot lever & petrol cap lever & tyres etc. Also check the hood on convertibles, and the panels on the 'T-bar' Coupe'. Check that they fit properly & do not appear to leak.

Unfortunately, early Rovers were let down on silly cost cutting parts. Exterior door handles regularly fail, they are a one piece moulding with a locator lug, on the inside,

which has a tendency to snap. This results in the door handle no longer operating the door lever link. Easiest option is to source a replacement from a dismantler yard, you can try repairing them yourself, but with mixed results.

The standard radio fitted in the 200/400 range of cars wasn't a bad job & gave a generally pleasing sound, unless you are heavily into disco or house, in which case you may need to upgrade, there are lots of after market audio 'goodies' for making your music sound good & very, very loud (if you so desire).

These areas are those which are worth looking at before buying a 200/400, and if they are all found to be okay, then the chances are that the example will be a good one! Make sure to change the oil/filters/plugs etc at the recommended intervals. Change the oil and filter every 5000 miles, and change the air filter every 10,000.

Once you are happy, pay your cash & drive away, proud in the knowledge that either the car you have bought can be kept on the road, relatively cheaply, or if you really want, you can go mad and modify it to your hearts content. There are parts manufacturers out there who have, at last, realised what a great vehicle the Rover 200/400 really is. Happy Rovering....

Thanks to John Higginbotham for his assistance in compiling this feature.

The 1400cc engine, some cautionary notes for unsuspecting buyers out-there.

The engine

Basically sound as we all know, keep on top of the oil...etc, etc and the engine should be good for 000's of miles, but the infamous head gasket situation needs to be noted, every 214/414 I have seen or heard about has always needed a new head gasket at some point (seems to be at around 50k miles) this included my 214sei, the cost of this varies but budget around £400 (2001)

The clutch

Quite a few 214's seem to have required a new clutch at anything between 20k and 50k miles (this could be a local problem due to no. of hills in my area).

Andrew Goulbourn