

THE L210



Think back for a minute to the days before catalytic converters, EGR valves, and 5 mph bumpers. Back to the days when you could buy all the gas you wanted for 21¢ a gallon or a brand new 600 Fiat for \$1100. Think back to 1958.

In 1958 tail fins were the rage, Mercedes-Benz was distributed through Studebaker/Packard dealers, and Buicks still had teeth. Imported cars came from Europe in 1958, and Borgwards, Vauxhalls, and Nash Metropolitans roamed America's highways.

The L.A. Imported Automobile Show had long been the U.S. showcase for exotic European machinery, and the 1958 show was no exception. European manufacturers from Alfa Romeo to Volvo were represented. Nestled between Citroen and Ferrari however, was a genuine "foreign" car: the Datsun 1000.

This was the U.S. debut for the little Datsun, which had already achieved a solid reputation for economy and reliability in the orient, where they were used extensively as taxi cabs.

The Datsun 1000, or L210 was basically an Austin A40, redesigned for the poor road conditions common in Pacific countries after the war. It was built on a 2" x 4½" box section frame that featured semi-elliptical leaf springs at all four wheels, a reverse Elliot "I" beam front axle, and sway bars fore and aft. The "C" type 988cc, 34hp, four cylinder engine drove a non-synchronized low gear, four-speed, column shifted transmission through a hydraulically operated clutch. The solid rear axle contained a 5:57 to 1 third member.

Although the interior was spartan, the seats thin, and the dashboard plain, four people could sit

comfortably in the L210. The seats had enough head and leg room for a giant, and the car's four doors opened exceptionally wide. The huge trunk had plenty of room for cargo, and the standard tool kit included a crank for starting the engine. What the L210 lacked in sophistication, it had in strength, durability, and character.

To illustrate the durability of this sturdy little car, it was entered in the 1958 Australian "Mobilgas Trial", the 'round-the-continent rally, and finished as the winner in its class.

In terms of sales, the L210 was mildly successful. Priced around \$1800, it sold about 1400 units between 1958 and 1960. In late 1959, it was replaced by the L211, which was basically the same car fitted with an "E" type 1200cc engine and a 4.88 to 1 rear axle.

The L210 was successful in other ways. It opened the door for a whole line of Datsun cars and trucks, proved to the American people that economy cars do not have to be tiny and fragile, and that Datsun would back up their products with a solid service and parts network.

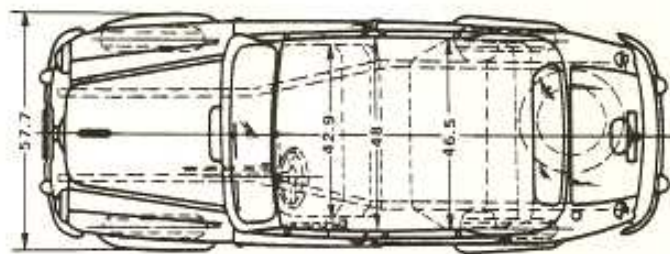
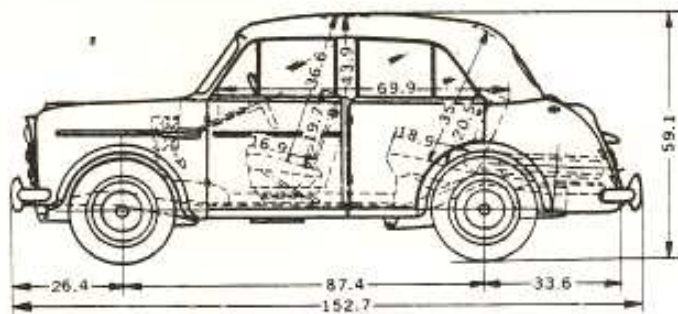


The front suspension was designed for rugged roads — not comfort.



The engine was manufactured under license from Austin, and should be familiar to any BMC fans. The carbon pile voltage regulator is located next to the ever-present "Under Hood Light".

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L210 SPECIFICATIONS

GENERAL DATA

Curb weight	895 kg (1971 lbs.)
Wheelbase	2200mm (87.4 in.)
Track front/rear . . .	1170mm (46.1 in.)/1180mm (46.5 in.)
Road clearance	162mm (6.4 in.)
Length	3880mm (152.7 in.)
Width	1466mm (57.7 in.)
Height	1500mm (59.1 in.)
Seating capacity	4
Fuel capacity	32.5ℓ (8.6 gal.)

ENGINE

Type	"C Type" inline 4 cylinder overhead valve
Bore x stroke	73 x 5.9mm (2.875 x 2.323 in.)
Displacement	988 mm (60.2 in.)
Compression ratio	7.0:1
Bhp @ rpm	34 hp @ 4400 rpm
Torque @ rpm	6.6 kgm (48 ft.lbs.) @ 2,400 rpm
Carburetion	Hitachi Solex 1 barrel down draft w/oil bath air cleaner

TRANSMISSION

Type	Four forward speeds and one reverse. Synchronesh on 2nd, 3rd and top gears
Control system	Remote control, gear shift lever on steering column
Gear ratios:	
1st speed	3.95
2nd speed	2.40
3rd speed	1.49
4th speed	1.00
Reverse	5.16

REAR AXLE

Type	Semi-floating
Final drive ratio	5.57:1 (39T:7T)

CHASSIS

Frame	Pressed steel box section, all welded 110mm (4.33 in.) x 50mm (1.97 in.)
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SUSPENSION

Front	Reverse Elliot "I" beam axle Semi-elliptical leaf springs Telescopic shock absorbers Anti-sway bar
Rear	Semi-elliptical leaf springs Telescopic shock absorbers Anti-sway bar

BRAKES

Lining area	Front & rear 460 sq.cm (71.32 sq. in.)
Drum diameter	254mm (10 in.)

STEERING

Type	Worm & roller
Ratio	19.6:1

TIRES

Front	5.00-15/4 ply
Rear	5.00-15/4 ply

PERFORMANCE

Max. speed	120 km/hr. (75 mph)
Fuel consumption	16.5 km./ltr. (40 mpg) at 60 km/hr. (35 mph)
Grade ability (Sin φ)	0.45
Min. turning radius	5.0 metres. (197 ins.)

Another unique feature of the L210 was its carbon pile voltage regulator. This type of regulator uses a stack of thin carbon discs as a variable resistor. The resistance is controlled by pressure placed on the "carbon pile" with a spring and a solenoid. The greater the pressure on the carbon pile, the less the resistance. The carbon pile is normally "loaded" by the spring and as current from the generator increases, the solenoid reduces spring pressure. Since the carbon pile is wired in series with the generator's field coil, increasing the resistance decreases generator output, effectively regulating the charging system. Of course a "cutout" relay is also necessary to prevent the battery from discharging when the generator is not turning.

Sectional View of Carbon-Pile Regulator

