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Citroën DS5 Hybrid 200 DSport

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Tom Scanlan tries Citroën's range-topping diesel-electric executive express...

In its white pearlescent paint, with polished metal blade-like embellishments, this big Citroën certainly cuts a dash.

Then you get inside and it's 'Blimey! I need a Private Pilot's Licence to operate this thing!' There are so many controls, switches, knobs, levers and buttons around and above you that the proper thing is to get out again and read the handbook; as this is the best part of 400



pages long, give yourself plenty of time.

Not all DS5s have so much on offer, with the range starting at less than £22,000. My test car came out at £34,685, as it was the top-of-the-range Hybrid4 DSport.

The 2-litre, 163 hp, diesel engine works in tandem with a 37 hp electric motor. In an emergency, you could drive the car on only the electric motor at up to 37 mph. There's also 4WD, if you need it, with the Diesel powering the front wheels and electricity the rear wheels.

Other than that, there is a 'sport' mode. This makes a big difference to the performance. Although it doesn't alter the suspension or handling, it makes this machine become a very different car than when driving in the plain 'Auto' mode.

I drove the vast majority of the several hundred miles overall in Auto. The impressive thing about this was that the fuel consumption figure, as displayed by the trip computer, never dropped below 51 mpg (official combined cycle 74.3 mpg, urban cycle 72.4 mpg). However, the car felt sluggish on acceleration and it's a nuisance having to keep selecting anything other than the auto mode that is the default setting, simply to get away from traffic lights more quickly, or to be able to overtake more safely. It was like having two different cars.

So, if you like to have all that potential immediately available (0-62mph in 8.3 seconds), then stay in 'sport', but expect a significant cost in fuel consumption. A particular characteristic was that the automatic gearbox was more 'active' than most in the way that, on decelerating, engine braking was so strong that, even downhill, the car slowed appreciably without any use of the brakes; and on the approach to a red light, I found I had slowed down so much that I had to accelerate a little so as not to lag too far behind any car in front of me.

I have to admit some disappointment in the DSport's ride on poor surfaces - yes, surfaces are indeed particularly bad at the moment, but the big Citroëns of 2013 did not deal with them as some Citroëns of several decades past would have. There was some suspension noise, too, and, if you were pressing the engine quite hard, noise in that department made



the car seem less refined than you should expect for the money you've spent.

Having said that, the DS5 Hybrid is very quiet indeed at low speed, because electric motors are virtually silent, but there was a noticeable hum when the car was at a standstill.

In most other respects, this DS5 is a very impressive and comfortable car. The amount of technology on board is probably enough to put a man on Mars, from the colour head-up display and colour sat-nav and live traffic information and very attractive night-time ambient and instrument lighting to all the hidden safety and convenience features that have inevitably added to the cost. Among the many sophisticated standard on the DSport is the award-winning 'eTouch Emergency and Assistance' system; this automatically calls for rapid local help in the event of an accident or other form of immobilisation.

The interior of the test car was sumptuously furnished in leather and is spacious for four adults; a fifth can be squeezed in; many manufacturers claim that their cars are full five-seaters when, quite simply, they're not, usually because they're too narrow and/or have a transmission tunnel that leaves only a minute amount of foot room. However, the DS5 is better than most in this respect. The excellent heating system was a boon in cold weather

The rear seats are very easy to fold if you need to extend the boot, but what's left is a two-tiered floor at the back; there is a useful extra compartment under the floor.

From the safety point-of-view, this car has achieved five stars in the EuroNCAP tests. From a driving point-of-view, visibility to the sides was a little restricted by the head-rests and B-pillars.

Financially, the low emission rating means exemption from the annual road tax, but the insurance group is 28E.

VERDICT

The top DS5 offers a huge amount, but doesn't quite deliver on all of it. Nonetheless, it's an



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impressive car and in keeping with Citroën's historic ability to produce something completely different.

