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Renault Captur E-TECH – First Impressions

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Renault's Captur Tech Plug-in Hybrid assessed in a first drive by George Loveridge.

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In recent years, the 'Compact SUV' has become more of a common sight on Britain's roads; with the SUV being a lifestyle choice and statement vehicle for most, the smaller variant sitting between a hatchback and an SUV appeals to those who need a 'small' car with added practicality.

The Renault Captur fits into this bracket, being closely matched to the Vauxhall Crossland and Suzuki Ignis, Renault have recently updated and electrified the Captur - here I give my initial thoughts after a short drive.

The face lift has really benefited this Captur, making it look a bit more serious with some harsher more angular lines, rather than its previous softer look. The newer car benefits



from specially designed wind deflectors throughout the front end to improve stability and to enhance aerodynamic performance, thus reducing the amount of fuel used. This of course being the main goal of this specific model being at the same time a self-charging and plug-in hybrid, another existing car electrified in some way shape or form in an effort to reduce emissions. It incorporates a recharging point on one side of the car, to top up battery power from the mains, and a conventional petrol filler on the other side of the vehicle.

To clarify... The Captur is available in two hybrid forms, one being a self-charging hybrid, the other, as tested here, is also self-charging but in addition can be plugged into a mains supply for on-board battery recharging. The plug-in version (as tested) features the same technology as the self-charging model, but incorporates a bigger battery for longer distances on pure electric power, and potentially lower running costs. With this version, up to 30 miles can be covered in 'pure electric' running. Recharging from the mains takes up to four and a quarter hours from a normal mains socket, or three hours if using a dedicated wallbox supply (or the car can be recharged from public charging points).

LED headlights are a standard feature across all Captur models; however, this car features the S line two tone paintwork, a rather fetching shade of Celadon Blue with a contrasting black roof, C shape daytime running lights, and pronounced 3D elements giving the car more SUV status on the road whilst being that bit more petite.



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The flying centre console has been carried over from the Clio and is initially rather daunting due to the rather large screen size of 9.3 inches; usability is not compromised though due to a small selection of menus and thoughtfully laid out digital buttons. This set-up is accompanied by real switches and dials for the climate control. Furthermore, Renault's 'Easy Link' assists with the overall user interface and creates a nice blend of having the technology, without taking your attention away from the road.

After you have been greeted with the smart interior, the cloth seats are nice and supportive and are positioned quite high up in the cabin, making you feel as if you are in a bigger vehicle.

Unlike in the Clio, the back seats in this car can be used for adults as well as children! With two USB outlets at the passengers' disposal, you would be comfortable in the back of this car during a longer drive.



Practicality is essential with this car, being the sort of vehicle that would arguably be used for the school run or local shopping trips. The boot is appropriately long enough and is completely flat which allows for easy loading. Additionally, the boot floor lifts to reveal the storage facility for the charging cables, leaving more room for the beach towels and picnic baskets.



On the road, especially driving around town, the Captur feels light and sophisticated. Selecting 'B' on the E-Shifter puts the car into fully electric mode with regenerative braking which makes stop start traffic that bit more relaxing; once you are used to regenerative braking that is, as on this Captur it is rather firm when coming off the throttle.

Unfortunately, when not in fully electric mode and you're in pure and simple drive, the car changes between electric power and its petrol engine, therefore a hybrid. My 'beef' with this is that unlike on other hybrid cars, there is an uncomfortable amount of inertia when the car changes between propulsion systems. Sadly, there is a noticeable jerk from the car as it switches and to make matters worse, at around 30 mph it cannot decide whether it wants to be in electric or petrol mode. As first impressions go, this was somewhat disappointing.

Once the powerplant has made its mind up, you can indeed enjoy the open road with the knowledge that the electrical gubbins have been engineered with the Alpine Formula One



team. One is reminded of such sporty underpinnings when selecting 'sport' mode on the touch screen, where the instrument cluster turns red, and presents an illustration of the car on a racetrack rather than on a green hillside road. This doesn't make you feel like Fernando Alonso, the change in mode just allows you to select different steering feedback and mood lighting. Exciting.

Unlike its rivals such as the aforementioned Vauxhall Crossland, the front pillars are an agreeable size and don't block your view of the road ahead. But when turning your head to see behind the car, such as at a 45-degree junction, the improved visibility ends. The smart and updated exterior lines of the Captur do compromise rear visibility; thankfully as standard the car is equipped with a 360-degree colour reversing camera.



VERDICT

As an EV, the Captur is an ideal car for a small family, and with the reassuring petrol engine accompanying the electric motors there will be no range anxiety. I liked the high driving



position as it did make you feel as though you were in a larger car and at the same time, the car felt small and nimble. Bravo Renault.

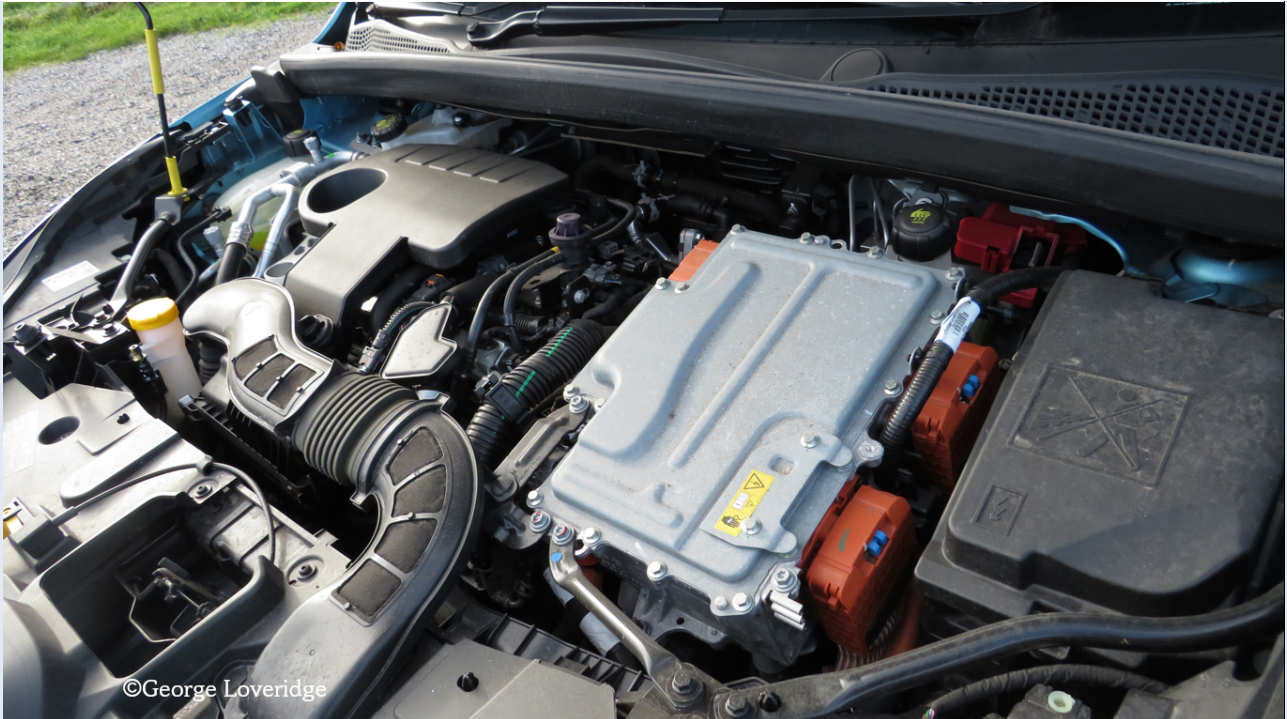
This vehicle was supplied to me for assessment by Arnold Clark, and should you want to purchase or just look into acquiring a new or used car, their team are very friendly and have a wealth of knowledge to point you in the right direction.

Wheels- Alive Tech. Spec. In Brief:

Renault Captur S Edition E-Tech P

Starting at £24,500 for the entry level hybrid, the S edition starts at £26,000. The range topping RS Line retails at £27,500.

The Captur E-Tech Hybrid has a 1.6 litre petrol engine combined with a 1.2 kWh battery and two electric motors, driven via a 6-speed automatic gearbox sending power to the front wheels on the new CMF-B platform.



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Power: 142 hp at 5,600 rpm, 160 hp combined with the electric motors.

Max. Torque: Petrol: 148 Nm (109 lb.ft)

Electric: 250 Nm (184 lb.ft)

Top Speed: 106 mph

0 - 62 mph: 10.6 seconds

Fuel Economy: 56.5 mpg