Citroën C1

Published: July 15, 2014
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Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/citroen-c1/



Citroën's happy little C1 city car has been replaced by a brand-new C1, complete with a smiley face. Citroën reckons the new car's front has just that, along with the company's trade-mark 3D rear lights. Tom Scanlan reports…

In Citroën's now-established tradition, the cars also come in a range of new colour combinations, both outside and in, and that will certainly help attract two main customer-groups.

The first will be young drivers, typically under 30, the majority being female. They are looking, says Citroën, for a stylish and affordable city car that is economical to run and fun to drive. The second group is older couples looking to downsize.

Particularly attractive to the younger group will be (on thehigher range versions) a 7-inch Touch Drive interface that groups together all of the car's media functions (radio, telephone, on-board computer). The new C1 is Citroën's first model to feature Mirror Screen technology, which offers an advanced connectivity solution. You can copy your smartphone content onto the 7-inch Touch Drive interface for more practical and safer display and control. However, at present, on the cars that are now on sale, the phones that can be connected are very limited: Only the iPhone 4 and Samsung Androids. So questions need to be asked of your local dealer about how and when this can all be extended. However, it's a great idea in principle, with loads of apps also available for navigation, telephone, address book, music, web radio and any other useful driving-compatible functions.

Depending on your budget, keyless entry and start, and a reversing camera are available.

Stop-start and hill start also feature, with automatic air-con available for the first time in C1.

Airscape models feature a full-length electrically-operated sun-roof. This can be deployed at up to 70 mph, opening or closing in just a few seconds. Buffeting is felt at this speed, though, in spite of a shield at the front of the aperture, but below around 55 mph it's not a problem. When closed, the considerable noise you experience in open cars is drastically reduced, apparently on a par with the hatchback versions of the new C1.

Thanks to a lightweight design and efficient new-generation petrol engines, Citroën claims that the new C1 is among the best-in-class for fuel economy. As usual, however, my drive in three versions: one of the 1.0-litre 3-cylinder cars and two of the 1.2-litre 3-cylinder cars, gave a return well below the official combined cycle figures of, respectively 68.9 and 65.7 mpg – the cars' trip recorders showed consumption from 43 mpg to 45.5 mpg. This is typical of most cars with small 3-cylinder engines that tend to get driven quite hard when good acceleration is needed. On my drives the cars were not generally driven hard, however. These are city cars, though, and one should not expect too much from them when they're out of their natural environment.

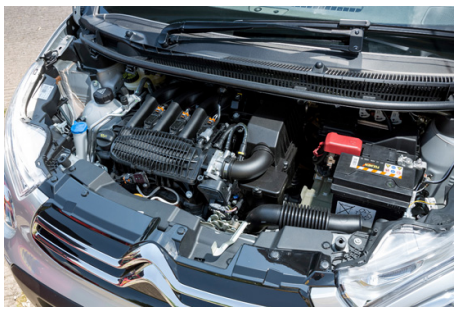
Actually driving them was quite enjoyable. The gear-change felt a bit rubbery and imprecise for changes across the gate from 3 to two or four to five, for example, but, as usual, you get used to it. Other functions were fine with good handling and brakes, nice steering and a comfortable ride. Citroën have put newly-designed seats in and a lighter rear suspension, all of which perhaps helps in this respect.

Neat steering wheel controls and an easy-to-use trip computer are present to help the driver.

The car is spacious enough for driver and front-seat passenger, but the back is cramped for knee-room for the average adult.

The boot is reasonable for this class of car and can easily be extended by simply folding the rear seats…of course. There's a neat arrangement that lifts the boot's luggage cover simultaneously with the tailgate being lifted

A space-saver tyre is optional and would take up a significant amount of the 196 litres' boot's claimed capacity.







Citroën has not yet announced the Euro NCAP safety ratings, but ABS, EBA, ESC, Cornering Stability Control, six airbag and two rear Isofix mounting points are standard equipment.

The new Citroën C1 is on sale now in the UK with prices starting at £8,245. However, few cars will be sold at this price… expect to part with a couple of thousand more to get all the attractive features you can't live without: The three 5-door test cars I sampled ranged from £11,440 to £12,720. There's a good bottom line, though: The new C1 may have its smiley face, but so will all buyers when they find that not one model in the range requires any annual road tax payment.



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Citroën C1 Flair PreTech 82 Manual 5-door

Drivetrain: Front engine, front wheel drive
Engine: 1199cc 3-cylinder transverse fuel injection
Power: 82 bhp @ 5,750 rpm
Torque: 116Nm (86 lb.ft.) @ 2,750 rpm
0–62 mph: 11.0 seconds
Top speed: 106 mph
Fuel consumption, 'official' figures:

'Urban': 52.3 mpg

'Extra urban': 76.3 mpg

'Combined': 65.7 mpg
Actual figure displayed during our road test: 45.3 mpg
CO2 emissions: 99g/km

PRICE ('On The Road'): £11,935

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles
Insurance group: 11E