Citroën C3 Flair (1.2 PureTech) – Road Test

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Starting off in the right way with the Citroën C3.

David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) explains...

Citroën's best selling model range, the C3 five door 'supermini' sized hatchback line-up, has been awarded the title of 'Driving Instructor Car of the Year' in the 2018 FirstCar Awards.

FirstCar is the dedicated resource for learner and newly qualified drivers in the UK. FirstCar says as well as being an ideal learning environment for their students, a driving

instructor's vehicle must often double as a practical everyday drive. Citroën's C3 was praised for being reliable, safe, easy to drive, affordable to run and easy to live with.



So I thought I'd step back in my driving time and see if the C3 lives up to those requirements. I got behind the wheel of the 1.2 litre PureTech petrol, Engine of the Year winner again, with its three-cylinder layout producing 110 hp and mated with a five-speed manual gearbox. With the Flair level of specification it was priced at £16,950 but other models with a 68 hp version of the same engine start from £11,560. There is also an 82 hp PureTech petrol engine option as well as a 1.6 litre BlueHDi turbodiesel engine with 75 or 100 hp, but the demand now for diesel power in any small family car is minimal. Depending on the engine chosen there is the choice of Touch, Feel, ELLE, Flair and Flair Nav Edition

spec levels.

Just as important as the purchase price are running costs, insurance group ratings and the CO2 emissions which regulate how much VED road tax we all pay, and company car driver's Benefit-in-Kind tax. The diesel engines offer the lowest CO2 figure from 93 g/km to 95 g/km with the VED First Year diesel rate costing £145. The petrol units start from 103 and run up to 110 g/km so they also incur £145 First Year VED rate. All versions then revert to the Standard rate of £140 for Year Two onwards. The BiK rates are from 25% for diesels and petrols from 21%. Insurance groups are an affordable 8E to 16E for petrol models and 16E to 20A for diesels.

Perhaps just as important for young 'learners' and would-be buyers of any age is the vehicle's street-cred. Having what is fashionable seems to be all-important whether it's the choice of mobile phone, clothes or the set of wheels they drive. There are nine body colours and four roof colour options plus three signature Airbump colours for the exterior door patches and any combination of all these. Inside there are just as many colour combinations plus a wide range of personalisation and extra cost options.

My Flair test drive model came with the £495 Soft Sand metallic exterior body colour with a no cost White Roof plus Urban Red trim inserts, a £100 Blind Spot monitoring system – ideal for all experienced or learner-drivers, and the desirable Digital Nav 7 touchscreen with Citroen Connect Box connectivity functions, giving my test car a total on-the-road price of £18,195. It gets expensive to be en-trend!

At a shade under four metres (about 13.1 ft) in length and a compact 1,749 mm (5.74 ft) wide, the rounded shape of the C3 with its smart paintwork and 16-inch alloy wheels looked eyecatching and fit-for-purpose not only as a Driving Instruction mobile but also potentially ideal as a compact run-around for daily use by young-at-heart 'oldies' or those of the younger generation.

Inside it's logically laid out, simple to use controls, no visibility blindspots so I can see its

appeal for driving instruction duties. The specification is good with air con, electric windows, rear parking sensors, parking camera, alarm, auto lights and wipers, LED daytime running lights, electric door mirrors, Bluetooth, Mirror Link and Apple Carplay connectivity, multi-function computer, lane departure warning and speed limit sign recognition and warning. All new technologies which should be part of the process of learning to drive a modern-day car. The ride was comfortable, the steering reasonably sharp and not too light and perhaps most important for learners – the clutch pedal and gear change controls were vice-free.

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As for performance, for a driver under instruction these are not the most important figures but for the record the top speed is 117 mph and zero to 62 mph takes 9.3 seconds. Now that learner drivers are allowed to use motorways whilst under instruction there is ample enough performance to get the car up to speed when joining fast moving traffic. With 110 hp and a healthy 205 Nm (151 lb.ft) of torque from only 1,500 rpm, the engine is ideally responsive and forgiving should not enough accelerator be used during pulling away from stationary or during gear-changes, or travelling at low revs by mistake in a high gear ratio, generally this didn't stall the engine so it's quite forgiving. For more experienced users it's a 'doddle' to use and it cruises happily at 70 mph on motorways.

The official Combined Cycle fuel economy figure is 61.4 mpg but my week of driving, using mainly urban and rural roads, returned 43.4 mpg which I think is realistic. On a longer run you might get more but most of the time the car seemed to return around the 44 mpg mark whether it was pottering along or cruising at higher speeds.

VERDICT

So whether you are a 'learner' or an 'old-hand' at driving, the latest Citroën C3 supermini sized five door hatchback provides stress-free motoring and it has that all-important street-cred kerb appeal with its smart paintwork and trim combinations. But if size matters it comes up a bit short for family use so its best left to 'learners' and old 'empty nesters' as the

core users.

For: Size, low running costs, easy to drive and park, loads of colour trim and equipment options for optimum trendy personalisation, tax efficient.

Against: A bit of a squeeze for space as a family vehicle, adding options gets expensive in this budget motoring sector, real-life fuel economy well short of the official figure, ungenerous warranty.



Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Citroën C3 Flair, 1.2, 110 hp petrol five door small hatchback.

Price: £16,950 (£18,195 as tested with options).

Engine/transmission: 1.2 litre, three cylinder, turbo petrol, 110 hp, 205 Nm (151 lb.ft) of torque from 1,500 rpm, five speed manual with Stop&Start.

Performance: 117 mph, 0–62 mph 9.3 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 61.4 mpg (43.4 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 103 g/km, VED first Year rate £145 then Standard rate of £140, BiK company car tax 21%.

Insurance Group: 16E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000-miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 3,996 mm (13.11 ft), W 1,749 mm (5.74 ft), H 1,474 mm (4.84 ft), boot/load space 300 to 922 litres (10.59 to 32.56 cu.ft), five doors; four/five seats.