Citroën C4 Coupé SUV– Road Test

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THE LATEST CITROËN C4 – THREE BODY STYLES IN ONE NEW MODEL…

…assessed by David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

Combine mid-sized hatchback dimensions with 5-doors in a coupe styled bodyshell then add

in must-have SUV styling cues and that mix should make the new Citroën C4 highly desirable. For good measure Citroën has also thrown in attractive pricing and high specification.

The C4 and its predecessor models have been around in various forms in their mid-sized segment over 93 years with 12,500,000 sold globally. The family started with the original C4 then Ami 6/Ami 8, GS/GSA, BX, ZX, Xsara, C4, C4 Cactus and Space Tourer and Grand C4 Space Tourer MPVs and now it's back to the latest C4 Coupé SUV.

The new C4 arrived in February in C4 and e-C4 forms and comes with the brand's latest marketing Fair Price Policy. Under this initiative Citroën UK has just reduced the price of the all-electric versions to comply with our Government's Plug-In Car Grant latest about turn reducing the grant to £2,500 from £3,500 and now all-electric cars must cost under £35k, so the latest C4/e-C4 models have more than just good looks going for them.

To appeal to the widest buying audience the new C4 comes with the choice of a 100% all electric powertrain option plus the choice of petrol and diesel engines with Sense, Sense Plus, Shine and Shine Plus spec levels.

Prices for the combustion engine models are £21,005 to £28,255, the e-C4 all-electric models in their new lower pricing structure are £30,395 to £32,545 after the plug-in grant has been applied. The sweet-spot combustion engine model in the range, my test car version, is expected to be the 1.2 litre, 130 hp turbo-petrol manual with Sense Plus specification and priced at £23,005. I have to say from the outset this model looks really good value for money given its size, spec and in-demand SUV styling cues. However the coupé roofline might be a bit restrictive for some taller passengers.

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The 1.2 litre, 3-cylinder PureTech petrol engine options are 100 hp manual, 130 hp turbo 6-speed manual and 8-speed auto and 155 hp turbo auto. The turbodiesels are BlueHDi 1.5 litre with 110 hp 6-speed manual or 130 hp 8-speed automatic. The e-C4 100% electric

powertrain has a 100 kWh electric motor with 136 hp and provides a WLTP official 217-mile driving range when fully charged. Although more expensive to buy the e-C4 versions incur no VED road tax costs and Benefit-in-Kind company car tax is rated as 0%. By comparison combustion engine models now have the new from 1 April First Year VED costs of £180 to £220 and BiK company cart tax rates of 28-32%.

The Coupé SUV market segment is becoming less of a niche market with premium brand models of a similar size being the Audi Q3 Sportback and BMW X2/X4 plus lots of lesser priced versions such as the new Ford Puma which has that sloping coupé style tailgate area as does the Toyota C-HR, Honda HR-V, Mazda CX-30 and Kia XCeed compact SUVs. I suppose it was the BMW X6 which started off the SUV Coupé fashion but having a modern car with 4-doors and a coupé rear end can be attributed to Mercedes and their CLS luxury saloon and now also the Merc GLC SUV coupé follows that similar blurring of styling lines.

Despite the ever-growing number of SUV/Coupés the new Citroën C4 and e-C4 certainly stand out from the crowd in its designated C-segment. It looks really sharp and ‘expensive’ but value for money will be a big draw for customers in this C-segment and for those customers having aspirations to move towards a fashionable SUV.

It has the dynamic looks of a well proportioned family hatchback apart from the lower roof-line which might be an issue for taller users or those with growing families. The overall length is 4,360 mm (14.30 ft), it’s 1,800 mm (5,91 ft) wide with a low height for a pure SUV of just 1,525 mm (5.00 ft) and the 2,670 mm (8.76 ft) long wheelbase provides ample leg and knee room for rear seat passengers. Its rear seat headroom can be an issue for adults and even the headroom getting through the front door frames was difficult for me being a six footer. Even with the driver’s seat in its lowest position entry/exit headroom was sparse for me.

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The boot has 380 litres (13.42 cu.ft) of space with the folding rear seats in place and that

increases to 1,250 litres (44.14 cu.ft) which are mainly below the waistline towards the rear as above that the steeply raked forward rear tailgate window restricts stowing space for taller items.



Giving it the SUV looks are large bolder wheelarches, large alloy wheels and protection moulding around the wheelarches, along the sills and on the lower sections of the front and rear bumpers. At the front is the latest familiar Citroën family face with the new V-shaped LED lighting and the sides with their high waistline and aerodynamic low coupé roof line descends to the steeply forward raked tailgate's twin windows with their central horizontal glazing bar. This restricts rear visibility and there is no rear window wiper because of the split glass design. There is also a roof spoiler which accentuates the coupé's aerodynamic and athletic styling.

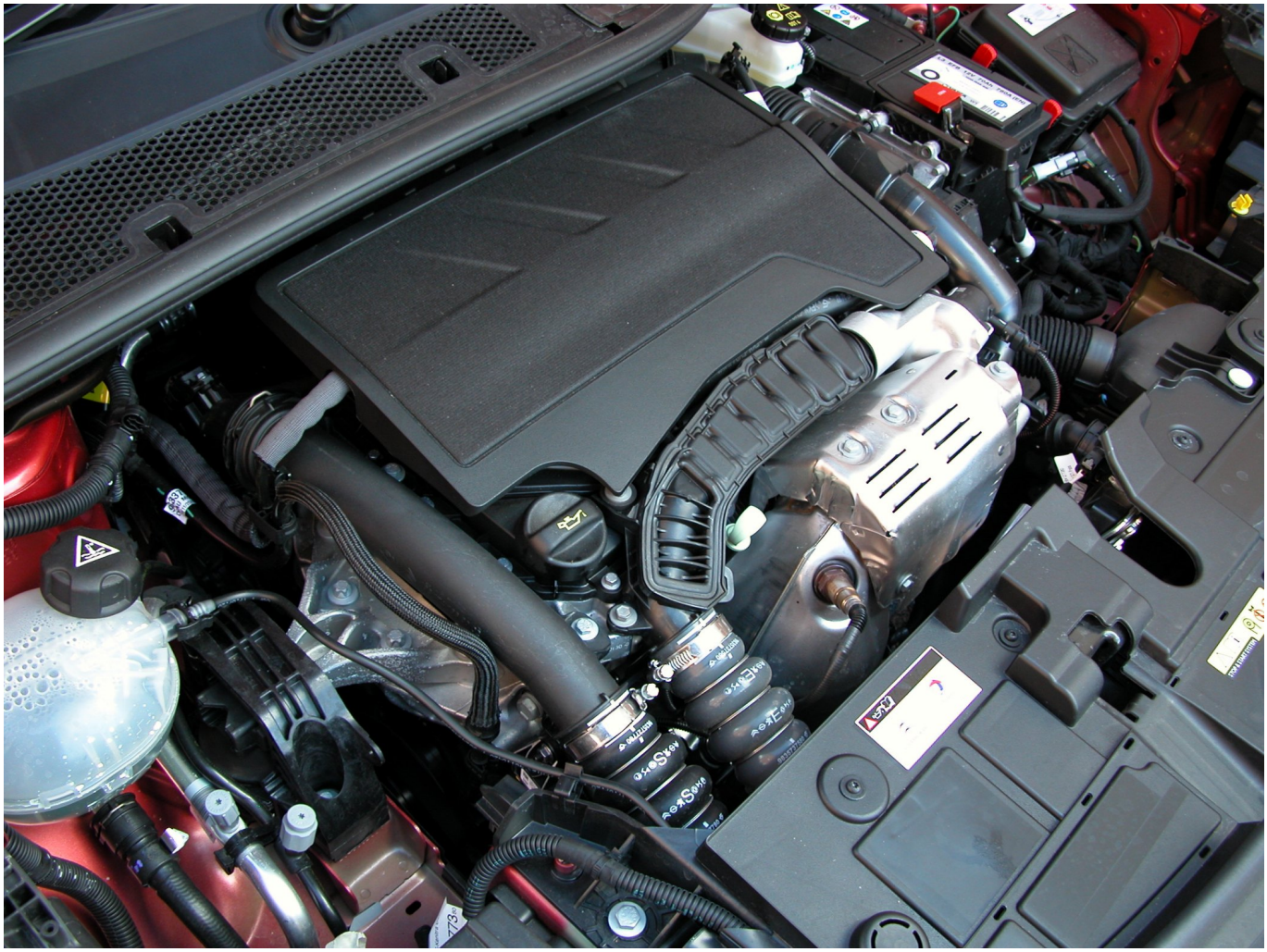
Inside, drivers and passengers benefit from the latest version of Citroën's Advanced Comfort programme as ride comfort is again one of the brand's main selling points. One of the key features is the suspension system with Progressive Hydraulic Cushions fitted as standard specification across the range. The suspension uses hydraulic bump stops to better control compression and rebound rates on uneven surfaces. This allows the suspension travel to be more progressive and in many ways 'calmer' than some competitor cars. The ride comfort is first class; the handling is a little less controlled during faster cornering motoring conditions with some body roll. But the progressive rate suspension travel does slow the pitch and roll handling giving a larger car luxury ride rather than cut and thrust agility.

Another cornerstone of Citroën Advanced Comfort on the latest C4 and new e-C4 is the use as standard of luxurious looking Advanced Comfort seats. With broad cushions and seat backs they combine high-density foam at the core of each seat to keep occupants comfortable and relaxed on longer drives. There is a further thick 15 mm (0.59 in) layer of extra textured foam just under the upholstery surface for added spongy comfort. The only downside for me and my height was the well padded driver's seat further restricted headroom through the door frames. Once inside, and for all occupants, the roof lining has sculptured-out areas above each seating position to improve headroom despite its exterior coupé styling.

The clever interior design with sculptured panels in the roof and door cards and backs of the front seats allows more interior space than you normally get from these C-segment cars, Hatchbacks, Saloons or the ever more in demand SUVs. As an example the dashboard has a large central touchscreen with separate climate, heating and ventilation controls but in addition several well positioned clever storage compartments. One of these is a slide-out tray above the glovebox which provides what Citroen calls a Smart Pad Support which allows the front passenger to securely attach their tablet computer to a dedicated dashboard mounted support.

The 1.2 litre 130 hp, 3-cylinder engine we know very well throughout the Stellantis Group

ranges of Citroën, Peugeot, DS and Vauxhall models, and potentially Fiat, Chrysler Jeep models in the future.



Suffice to say with that power and 230 Nm (170 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm mated with the 6-speed manual gearbox, the C4 130 hp turbo petrol model is responsive and easy to live with. Top speed is 130 mph with zero to 62 mph taking 8.9 seconds. The WLTP Combined Cycle figures are 47.3 to 54.7mpg and my week of driving, mainly short journeys at low speeds due to South Coast holiday traffic the figure was 45.5 mpg which was somewhat disappointing but 50 mpg plus should be possible for longer journeys.

‘Sense’ models come as standard with LED headlights, ‘V’ signature daytime running lights, fog lights, and 18-inch alloy wheels. Also standard is a 10-inch high-resolution touchscreen

with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, alongside DAB radio. ‘Sense’ models also feature Citroën’s Standard Safety Pack with video assisted Active Safety Brake, Speed Limit Information, Lane Keeping Assist and Driver Attention Alert and Forward Collision Warning. Additional standard specification includes an electric parking brake, rear parking sensors, dual-zone climate control and Citroën Connect Box Emergency and Assistance System. For improved comfort, all ‘Sense’ models come with Progressive Hydraulic Cushions suspension system and Advanced Comfort seats.

‘Sense Plus’ models gain a head-up display, Citroën Connect Nav with TomTom Live Services, these services include live traffic and destination information, fuel pricing, weather information as well as speed camera and danger zone alerts. Additional interior equipment on ‘Sense Plus’ includes the brand’s innovative Smart Pad Support Citroen tablet computer holder for front seat passengers, LED interior lighting and two USB sockets. To assist with manoeuvring tight spots, ‘Sense Plus’ also benefits from a rear parking camera and electrically folding door mirrors as standard fitment.

Moving up to the ‘Shine’ trim level, all versions feature dark tinted rear windows, Safety Pack Plus (Active Safety Brake with video and radar technology), Speed Limit Information and Extended Traffic Sign Recognition, Adaptive Cruise Control and Active Blind Spot Detection. For additional comfort, Keyless Entry & Start, automatic high beam headlights and front and rear parking sensors are standard-fit.

At the top of the range, ‘Shine Plus’ trim provides audiophiles with a premium HiFi system featuring uprated speakers and the addition of a subwoofer. The feeling of opulence is enhanced with black ‘Siena’ leather and textile upholstery with ‘Zephyr Grey’ stitching, driver’s seat electric adjustment and heated front seats. For added driving refinement there is Highway Driver Assist that uses camera technology to adapt the speed and direction of the vehicle under certain driving conditions, part of early autonomous driving use. Other spec includes four USB sockets and a wireless smartphone charging pad.

VERDICT

Overall styling, ride comfort and honest value for money, high equipment levels are very good reasons to look at and try the new Citroën C4. Only us tall people will find it has a drawback.

For: High spec, good looks, good value for money in its SUV sector, very comfortable seats and ride, clever storage and equipment layout.

Against: Agility and handling will be too soft for some people, restricted headroom for tall people through the doorframes, ungenerous warranty, no tailgate wash/wipe, restricted rear visibility, test drive fuel economy not close enough to the official figure.



MILESTONES AND WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC. IN BRIEF:

Citroën New C4 1.2 PureTech 130 S&S, 6-speed manual, Sense Plus, Coupé SUV.



Price: £23,005 (£23,705 as tested).

Engine/transmission: 1.2 litre, 3-cylinder direct injection turbo-petrol, 130 hp, 230 Nm (170 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm, 6-speed manual.

Performance: 130 mph, 0 – 62 mph 8.9 seconds, WLTP Combined Cycle 47.3 to 54.7 mpg, CO2 122 g/km, VED First Year rate £180, Standard rate £155, BiK company car tax 28%.

Insurance Group: 19.

Warranty: 3 years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,360 mm (14.30 ft), W 1,800 (5.91 ft) mm, H 1,525 mm (5.00 ft), wheelbase 2,670 mm (8.76 ft), boot/load space 380 to 1,250 litres (13.42 to 44.14 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,200 kg (2,646 lb), 5-doors/5-seats.