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Citroën C5 Aircross Flair (diesel) – Road Test

Published: November 22, 2019

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Online version: <https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/citroen-c5-aircross-flair-diesel-road-test/>



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The Citroën C5 Aircross Flair 1.5 litre BlueHDi 150hp automatic, large SUV...

...Assessed by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

Family life endures a lot and so must their choice of car.

The Citroën C5 Aircross SUV replaced the smaller C4 and was designed, engineered and is marketed as a more sophisticated model for today's market. That seems to have clicked with buyers.

Just six months after its UK launch the C5 Aircross passed 50,000 unit sales, a remarkable achievement in a tough British market. In September 2019 when the British market contracted 2.5% over the first nine months, Citroën saw registrations improve 2.6% and



98% of models ordered were the higher two specification levels which helped the C5 Aircross to become Citroën's second best seller in Britain.

How it has achieved this rate of growth is open to debate but what is not disputed is the very wide choice of colours and packs to personalise together with a reasonable selection of interior colours and materials. It is, compared to many rivals, a highly personable package for any owner or driver to specify.

On today's busy roads and streets a wide range of safety systems and driver aids will have strong appeal to families. It has secured 4 and 5 stars in Euro NCAP tests depending on the fitted features.

Equipped with a 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster and the latest 8-inch HD touchscreen as standard, New C5 Aircross SUV also features ConnectedCAM Citroën and Wireless Smartphone Charging.

There is an array of 20 safety and driver assistance technologies, including Advanced Active Safety Brake, Active Lane Departure Warning and Active Blind Spot Monitoring, all of which are standard equipment.

New Citroën C5 Aircross SUV is available with Grip Control and Hill Descent Assist for off-road adventures in complete safety. New C5 Aircross will be the first Citroën model with PHEV Plug-In Hybrid technology, arriving in early 2020.

There are about a dozen derivatives of the C5 Aircross, based on 1.2 litre 130 hp or 1.6 litre 180 hp PureTech petrol and 1.5 litre 130 hp and 2.0 litre 180 hp BlueHDi diesel engines with manual or automatic transmissions and in three trim levels.



Our Flair specification diesel test car is the mid-range choice for those who want useful long range economy on journeys, plus a good level of equipment and is comparatively cheap to run. Petrol engines are steadily gaining popularity over the diesel equivalents but serious high mileage or long life users are still probably better off with a compression ignition diesel engine, and it helps if you are regularly running with a load or lot of people as the diesel's flexibility smooths away the miles.

You can go for the slightly peppier but more expensive 180 hp version if you prefer to improve acceleration but the 130 hp unit is really no slouch.

The test car was fitted with the meticulously engineered and developed eight-speed automatic transmission and that's perfect for the 130 hp diesel engine to utilise the torque



and for the driver to enjoy. Changes up and down the ratios are almost imperceptible, quick and quiet and there always seems to be something in reserve.

I would have however liked stronger acceleration from the engine which took a few moments to get going but in traffic, but running mid-range it provided reasonably good acceleration for overtaking and it covered motorway miles without fuss or noise.

The steering was fine on main roads but lacked feedback on twisting sections or country roads and this contributed to a soft edge to the handling most of the time. Brakes were good at all times.

I would have been happier with a smoother ride when I read the C5 Aircross was the first Citroën to be fitted with their Progressive Hydraulic Cushions but I think that was down to the 205/55R 19V tyres fitted more than anything else, but there may be room to fine tune the system's responses.

Secondary controls were all very good, well placed, silent and identifiable at a glance and it must be said the massive 12.3-inch customizable TFT instruments display was eye-catching as well as very practical and easy to use and matched with a central 8-inch touchscreen for infotainment, but that soon showed finger marks.

Temperature controls, via the touchscreen, were slightly fiddly to use but the system had a wide range, good distribution spread and strong output, backed up by powered windows and a massive glass sunroof, so it will be popular with families.



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Another favourite will be the oddments room inside and bootspace rising from a generous 580 litres (20.48 cu.ft), through 720 litres (25.43 cu.ft) to maximum 1,630 litres (57.56 cu.ft) thanks to the multi-split rear seats. The C5 Aircross has a maximum of five seats unlike some of its competitor large SUVs which have seven.



You could easily load items from the back with its high-lift fifth door or the sides and their wide opening doors, and that is not always possible with some shorter SUVs and MPVs. Once inside, the seats really wrap around you and cushion you with only the tallest occupants possibly finding thigh support on the short side.

The C5 Aircross offers a good riding position to see what's ahead or over hedges and it came with some of the brightest lights I have seen on a modern car, big wipers and



powerful wash system.

You feel very much in command behind the C5 Aircross wheel so long as you remember this is not a hard edged SUV.

It generally coped well with a variety of road surfaces but struggled over some bumpy sections and you could hear the system working away and occasionally felt the bumps and ridges.

The test car easily returned good economy and sometimes edged just over 50 mpg but a few quick journeys and some busy traffic took down the overall figure, although it's still respectable.



VERDICT

Considering everything, I think the Citroën C5 Aircross is really a good all-round modern MPV rather than marketers promoting it as a SUV. My advice is to go for the most suitable options you want to meet your individual requirements and you'll have a friend of the family you'll find difficult to ditch.

For: Smooth gearchanges, good fuel economy potential, roomy and versatile, excellent seats.



Against: Road noise intrusion and slightly bumpy ride, spongy handling, vague steering, modest acceleration, ungenerous warranty.



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

Citroën C5 Aircross Flair 1.5 BlueHDi 130hp, automatic, SUV.

Price: £30,355 as tested.

Mechanical: 130 hp, 300 Nm (221 lb.ft), four cylinder, 1.5 litre, turbodiesel, eight speed automatic, 2WD.



Performance: 117 mph, 0-62 mph 11.8 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 55 mpg (45.5 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 108 g/km, diesel rate First Year VED roads tax £170, Standard rate £145, BiK company car tax 29%.

Insurance Group: 17E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Sizes: L 4.500 mm (14.76 ft), W 1,859 mm (6.10 ft), H 1.670 mm (5.48 ft), boot/load space 580 - 1,630 litres (20.48 - 57.56 cu.ft), five doors/five seats.