Citroën Grand C4 Space Tourer – Road Test

Published: September 23, 2019

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Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/citroen-grand-c4-space-tourer-road-test/



MORE SPACE MAKES MORE SENSE – CITROEN C4 AND C4 SPACE TOURER MPV…

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

In the real world of practical motoring requirements are we losing our must-have desire for an SUV or Crossover type of vehicle? New car sales suggest not but in the UK's used car market a recent survey has found that the fastest selling used cars are roomier and more practical MPV people carriers.

Driven by the UK's better summer weather the growth in staycation holidays has risen, no doubt helped by the political chaos and uncertainties caused by Parliament and the chaos

with travel through airports. So perhaps the reality is we just need more carrying space for holiday and other travel requirements from our family vehicles.

Research by Auto Trader, the ‘bible’ for used and new car sales in the UK, shows that the two fastest-selling used cars are both MPVs. The top selling model is the SEAT Alhambra followed by the Volkswagen Sharan, both interestingly diesel automatic versions. In fact in Auto Trader’s top ten fastest selling used car sales chart, six of the models are diesel automatic models and nine models overall were also automatics.

So it is timely that for my well-earned brief family holiday to Cornwall, taken hopefully at this time of the year to avoid the grim traffic congestion which blights the M5/A30 main roads into Cornwall, I returned to using the spacious Citroën Grand C4 SpaceTourer MPV diesel automatic which is a seven-seat MPV. Being only a family of three adults and a youngster in a child seat, previously this year I had done the same holiday trip using a large five-seater SUV which was excellent but load carrying space for the family luggage requirements came up a bit short. Hence my return to an MPV although I didn’t need seven seats but the rear two seats fold away to create are large square load area. The number of SUVs of all sizes with roof mounted load boxes I saw during my trip to Cornwall rather proves the point that SUVs do not measure up when it comes to accommodating passengers and all their luggage.

The current C4 SpaceTourer prices start from £22,780 and run through 13 variants to £31,270. The Grand C4 SpaceTourer models start from £24,880 and also run through 13 derivatives up to £33,070. The even larger SpaceTourer with eight derivatives has prices ranging from £34,920 to £44,160. The top priced versions for all three ranges use the new 161 hp diesel engine and eight speed auto gearbox.



For this new road test report it's the revised 2019.5 model year Grand C4 SpaceTourer with family-friendly seven-seat accommodation we are concentrating on. Like its five-seater stablemate it has the choice of Touch Edition, Feel and Flair spec levels. The revised EU6.2 C & D Temp compliant engine line-up choices are 1.2 litre PureTech 130 petrol manual and auto versions, 1.5 litre BlueHDi 130 turbodiesel also with manual/auto gearbox options and the 2.0 litre BlueHDi 160 eight speed automatic.

The Grand C4 SpaceTourer with the top of the range Flair specification powered by the new 1.5 BlueHDi four cylinder 130 hp turbocharged direct injection diesel engine matched with the latest eight speed automatic gearbox was my family transport for my late summer getaway to Cornwall. And believe me we somehow managed to fill every bit of space in the

vehicle most of the time with all our family ‘clobber’. It is priced at £31,825.

News just in from Citroën says that from October production, even newer C4 Grand SpaceTourer 2020 model year versions have been announced, with higher spec levels priced from £25,935 to £34,560 with revised spec level branding of Touch Plus, Feel Plus and Flair Plus. In addition the revised 1.2 PureTech 130 petrol engine will meet the new EU 6.3 levels which come into force in 2021. This revised engine remains available with six speed manual and eight speed automatic transmission options.

The Grand C4 SpaceTourer is a big vehicle but it still manages to look smart and pretty aerodynamic with its steeply raked-back front windscreen and slightly inclined forward rear high tailgate. The overall length is 4,602 mm (15.10 ft) but it’s the width that is most noticeable when driving. It’s 1,826 mm (5.99 ft) wide which doesn’t sound much different to a normal sized car or SUV but add in the large door mirrors and that goes up to 2,117 mm (6.95 ft) so squeezing into the now modern-day narrow car parking slots needed care although the Flair spec level has the much needed parking sensors and a reversing camera. Missing however was a head-up display which is available widely on other mid to top level spec Citroen and Peugeot models.



The height is 1,644 mm (5.39 ft) and the wheelbase a healthy 2,840 mm (9.32 ft) which lent itself to plenty of legroom for the three individual sliding fore and aft, reclining and fully folding middle row of seats. In the rear are a further two individual seats which spent all their time folded flat to maximise the load area carrying space. With all seven seats in use the boot space is only 165 litres (5.83 cu.ft), but with the rear two seats folded down there was a very good 793 litres (28.00 cu.ft) of space and with the second and third rows of seats folded down the total cargo space goes up to a massive 2,181 litres (77.02 cu.ft) so it would be very usable to carry long items and recreational equipment.





All seats have a high position in the vehicle so visibility is first class to the front and sides. The front two seats have armrests giving them a cabin style appearance and they were very comfortable and supportive on a long journey. On the seat backs of the two front seats are aircraft style foldout trays and there are numerous added storage areas throughout the vehicle, including two underfloor compartments below the feet of the middle row of seats. Incidentally the middle row of individual three seats are full height and full width so there is no issue re. space or legroom for the middle seat passenger and no transmission tunnel to restrict legroom. The fact that all these three seats can recline is another added and well thought out bonus.

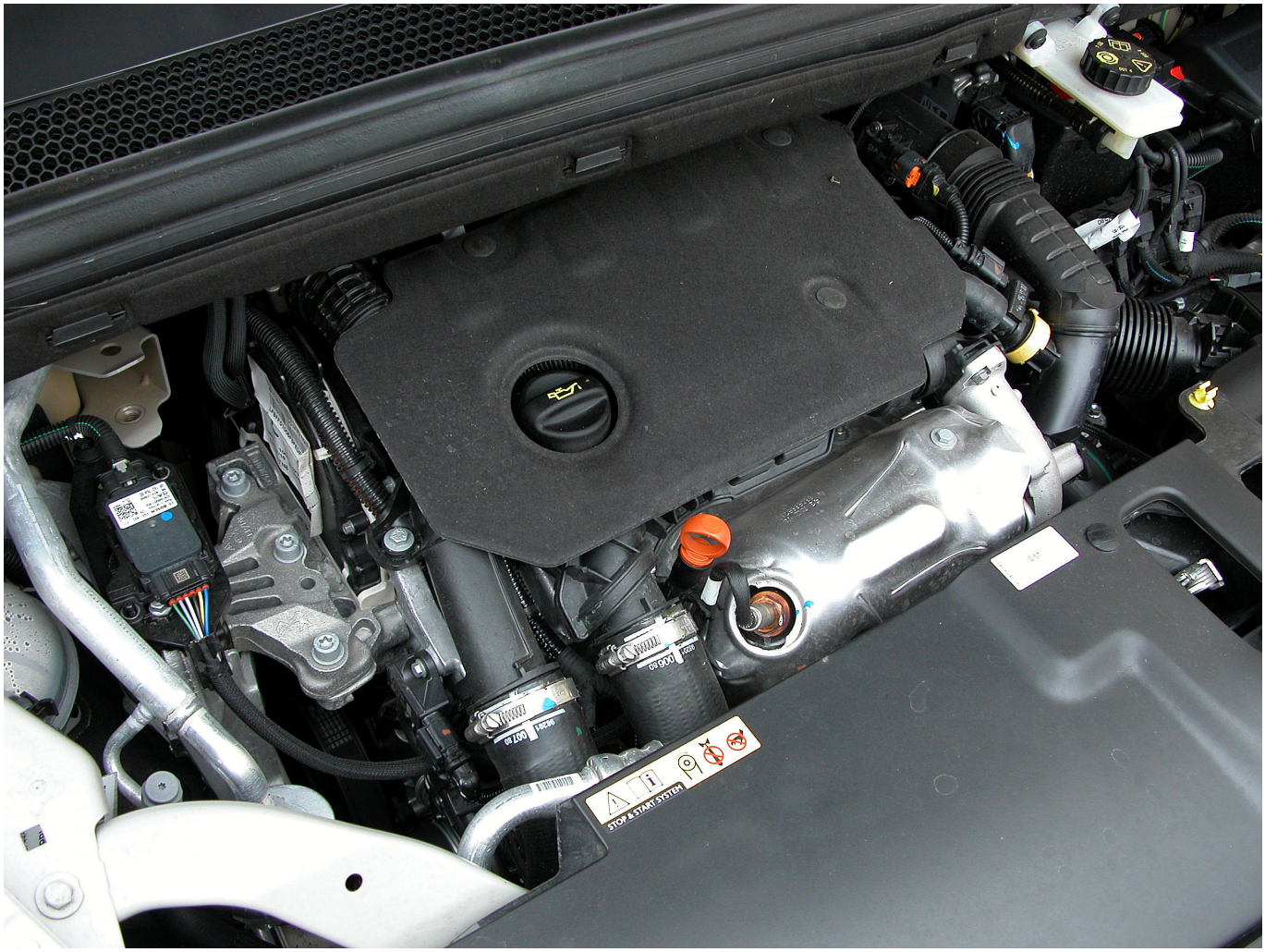
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Up front the full width modern style dashboard has two centrally mounted screens. The upper one is a 12-inch panoramic unit which shows various information and the sat-nav directions. Below that in the upper centre console is a 7-inch touchscreen which controls most of the vehicle functions, not always that user-friendly though having to use it to adjust the heating and ventilation system or air-con, but it does declutter the layout I suppose. Unusually there is no gearchange selector positioned in the centre of the vehicle, that space is used for yet another storage box. The gear selector stalk is positioned behind and to the right of the steering wheel and it took some getting used to and it was fiddly to use. It effectively is where the instrument binnacle would be if there was one. The manual gearchanges if needed are done by gearshift paddle positioned behind the steering wheel. An electronic parking brake with Hill Hold Assist is positioned in the centre console between the seats along with drinks holders and more storage space.

The current Flair spec list is reasonably comprehensive having most of the usual items you would find in a well equipped car or SUV. These included the trip computer, loads of audible warning functions, sat-nav, remote central locking, keyless stop/start, auto door/tailgate locking once on the move, a full range of airbags, front and rear electric windows, DAB radio, Bluetooth, Mirror Link and CarPlay, tinted rear windows, alloy interior trim inserts and scuff plates, ISOFIX child seat mountings for the three middle row of seats, massage function for the front two seats, panoramic front widescreen, auto lights and wipers, cruise control with speed limiter,18-inch alloy wheels plus much more. Pity no head-up display though.

The latest 1.5 litre, four cylinder BlueHDi turbodiesel engine, labelled 130 but with an actual power output of 129 hp, proved to be a willing performer given its cubic capacity and the size of this vehicle and the potential weight it could have to carry in terms of passengers or luggage. With 300 Nm (221 lb.ft) of torque available from 2,000 rpm there was enough ‘grunt’ on hand to meet motoring needs whether it was maintaining high cruising speeds on motorways, going up steep hills or pottering around in stop-start urban traffic. This engine

in my test car was matched with the new PSA Group of brand's eight speed torque converter automatic gearbox which is now widely being offered throughout Citroën, Peugeot and Vauxhall model ranges. The changes were smooth and having eight ratios meant there was no hard changes felt between ratios. However eighth gear is engaged based upon speed not the load demands placed on the engine. It comes into use once a cruising speed of around 65 mph has been reached. Try to engage it manually at lower speeds and the auto box slips back to seventh or even sixth gear. The higher gear ratios seem to be long-legged so it was quite usual to see fifth gear in use for country road driving and it didn't seem to harm the fuel economy to any great extent. Because the engine is so quiet there was really no undue noise intrusion to make me feel I was driving in the wrong gear.



Top speed is 123 mph, quite fast enough for such a large people-carrier so maintaining the legal 70 mph limit felt as though the engine was hardly being worked very hard at all. The zero to 62 mph time is 10.0 seconds so again the performance was workmanlike. The official new WLTP Combined Cycle fuel economy figures are 48.7 to 57.3 mpg. Now during my long journeys the vehicle returned 47 mpg overall and this included 500 miles of motorway and dual carriage way cruising to and from Cornwall. Then 150 miles plus of travelling using Cornish winding, hilly and narrow country roads when the worst figure was 44.7 mpg, which given the load it carried and the driving conditions encountered was very impressive.


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It certainly wasn't a taxing vehicle to drive and the all important tax costs are not prohibitive either. The new WLTP CO2 output is 101 to 108 g/km so the diesel First Year VED rate cost is £170 before the Standard rate of £145 is applied. Company car drivers will pay 29% Benefit-in-Kind tax, insurance is Group 22E and warranty is an ungenerous Three years/60,000 miles.

VERDICT

Overall the current 2019.5 model year Citroën Grand C4 SpaceTourer offers very flexible seating and load carrying combinations, the interior space is cavernous, the ride comfort generally good with only the worst impacts from potholes echoing into the cabin and the

road holding generally good, better when not fully loaded as the extra weight tended to induce cornering body roll due to its Citroën Comfort suspension system. It's a clever and very practical vehicle. Although large MPVs are not as popular as they were, used ones are, so if you are considering dumping the less versatile and now commonplace SUVs, this is the one that deserves serious consideration.

For: Cavernous and clever packaging for a large seven seat MPV both inside and out, high spec, comfortable ride, strong new diesel engine and ideally matched as standard with a new eight speed auto gearbox, good visibility, generally easy to drive, good real-life fuel economy.

Against: Understeer during cornering when fully loaded, fiddly layout for the gear selector, needs larger car parking spaces, heating/ventilation/air-con controls have to be done via the touchscreen, ungenerous warranty.



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

2019.5 model year Citroën Grand C4 SpaceTourer Flair, seven Seat MPV, 130 BlueHDI auto.

Price: £31,825.

Engine/transmission: 1.5 litre, four cylinder, BlueHDi turbodiesel, 129 hp, 300 Nm (221 lb.ft) of torque from 2,000 rpm, eight speed automatic.

Performance: 123 mph, 0–62 mph 10.0 seconds.

Fuel consumption: WLTP Combined Cycle 48.7 to 57.3 mpg (47 mpg overall on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 101 to 108 g/km, VED diesel rate road tax £170/£145, BiK company car tax 29%.

Insurance Group: 22E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,602 mm (15.10 ft), W 1,826 mm (5.99 ft), H 1,644 mm (5.39 ft), wheelbase 2,840 mm (9.32 ft), boot/load space 165 to 2,181 litres (5.83 to 77.02 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,500 kg (3,307 lb), five doors/seven seats.