Updated Renault Clio First Impressions

Published: February 25, 2017

Author: David Miles

Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/updated-renault-clio-first-impressions/



Renault carries on with the Clio...

David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) tells all...

The Clio supermini range – covering 27 years and 13 million global sales through four generations and updates – has until recently in the UK been Renault's most popular model range. But as fashion dictates it was recently overtaken in popularity by the similar sized but taller Captur compact crossover.

It’s still good news overall for Renault though, with consistently increasing sales in the UK over the last five years and in 2016 over 85,000 new Renaults were sold in this country – a rise of 12.5% and far out-performing the UK’s overall new car market where sales increased by 2.2%.

This growth has been driven by the introduction of new models like the Twizy oddball City Car, the small Twingo, the Captur and Kadjar SUV/Crossovers and more recently the new Megane C-segment family of mid-sized models, plus the Scenic and Grand Scenic MPVs and now the refreshed and updated Clio five door hatchback range. And there are more new models in the offing this year, which include the Koleos large SUV, the Alaskan one-tonne double cab pick-up plus Kangoo and Master Z.E. electric powered commercial vehicles. In addition, being shown at the forthcoming Geneva Motor Show is the new Alpine sports car which will arrive in the UK in 2017.

In the latest core Clio range there are 20 versions priced from £11,915 to £20,415 but over and above these are the ‘hot’ Clio Renault Sport Nav 1.6 litre turbocharged 200 hp petrol auto priced at £19,725 and the 220 hp auto version at £22,425.

The mainstay models are available with a choice of three petrol and two diesel engines. The petrol units are a cleaner and more fuel frugal 1.2 litre four cylinder 75 hp unit, a new three cylinder 898cc TCe 90 hp turbo petrol and a four cylinder 1.2 TCe 120 hp direct injection petrol unit. The diesels are both 1.5 litre four cylinder units with 90 or 110 hp power outputs.

Depending on the engine chosen there is the choice of Expression, Play, Dynamique Nav and Dynamique S Nav specification levels, and all are covered by a four-year 100,000-mile warranty.



The latest revised Clio is based on the fourth generation models and the changes include revised front and rear styling in the form of a new grille with a bold Renault logo, full LED lighting and a stronger-looking rear bumper. New colours are available as are new designs for wheels and of course that must-have range of personalisation options.



Inside, there has been a general upgrading of the trim material, new upholstery and more equipment – all aimed, says Renault, at giving it a 'bigger car' appeal. As standard the Clio gets a full set of airbags, electronic stability control, electronic traction control, ABS braking and emergency brake assist – which, coupled with the latest seatbelt technology contributes to the car's five star safety rating. Standard equipment includes electric front windows and door mirrors, Bluetooth, radio, hill start assist plus keycard entry and ignition.

Going up the spec ladder brings a seven-inch tablet style screen fitted into the centre of the fascia rather than the entry level version which only gets a smartphone mount so the phone can be used for navigation and so on.

Our test drive car at the recent Renault media day was the new 898cc TCe three cylinder turbo 90 hp petrol engine in a Dynamique S Nav level of specification and it costs £16,265.

The Clio has a five door supermini sized hatchback body with a steeply raked windscreen coupled with a sleek coupé style side profile and hidden rear door handles.

Inside, the interior quality and design has improved but some of the plastics are still hard and feel scratchy although of course they will be durable. The dashboard does have soft touch material with gloss black air vent surrounds. This level of specification at the hefty price wants for nothing with such features as 17-inch alloy wheels, cruise control, automatic lights and wipers, front fog lights, black gloss rear diffuser and side door protection panels, leather steering wheel, 60/40 split folding rear seats, central door locking, automatic climate control, sat-nav of course, and an upgraded sound system but not a spare wheel – although there is one as a £100 option.

Generally it is roomy enough and similar in its class to the Ford Fiesta or VW Polo, and roomier in the rear than the Vauxhall Corsa. The handling sets no new standards in this competitive class; it's generally comfortable with a dependable amount of front end grip during cornering. It felt agile, or docile, as the driving mood takes you but impacts from potholes will disturb the peace sending shudders through the car.

A good addition to the latest range is the 898cc, three cylinder 90 hp turbocharged petrol engine, another case of down-sizing which is very evident throughout the industry. The revvy little unit is nippy enough yet docile in urban stop-start traffic. The 135 Nm (100 lb.ft) of torque from 2,500 rpm gives it good mid-range acceleration response, limiting the number of gearchanges needed from the five speed manual gearbox and making the car easy to drive. Top speed is a healthy 113 mph with zero to 62 mph taking modest 12.2 seconds. Fuel consumption is a major feature with an official 60.1 mpg in the Combined Cycle and on our short test drive around some winding Cotswold roads with some in-town driving, the real-life figure was exactly 50 mpg. With CO2 emissions of just 105 g/km, VED road tax is £0 First Year rate and currently £20 for Year Two onwards. Another plus point is the low insurance cost with a 7E Band rating.



VERDICT

There’s lots to like about the latest Clio, perhaps it’s lost its original Clio Va Va Voom fun driving appeal because the competition has moved on at a rapid rate, so perhaps it’s no longer the class leader but it is still competitive and deserves consideration.

For: Sharp styling with good looks, wide range of models to choose from, good equipment levels plus personalisation choices, brisk new 90 hp petrol engine, low running costs.

Against: Outshone in the fun driving stakes, no better than reasonable handling, some cheap-feel interior plastic trim.



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

Renault Clio Dynamique S Nav TCe 90.

Price: £16,265.

Engine/transmission: 898cc, three cylinder, direct injection turbocharged petrol 90 hp, 135 Nm (100 lb.ft) of torque from 2,250 rpm, five speed manual.

Performance: 113 mph, 0–62 mph 12.2 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 60.1 mpg (50 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 105 g/km, VED £0/£20, Benefit-in-Kind company car tax 18%.

Insurance Group: 7E.

Warranty: Four years/100,000-miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,062 mm (13.33.ft), W 1,732 mm (5.68 ft), H 1,448 mm (4.75 ft), boot/load space 300 to 1,146 litres (10.59 to 40.47 cu.ft), five doors; four/five seats.