

LIKES	DISLIKES
Well equipped Excellent fuel economy Good handling and ride characteristics	Limited rear leg room PULP fuel requirement Performance of 1.4 litre engine found wanting at times

The Citroen C3 five-door hatchback is a new entry into the crowded small car segment, and one that comes with a big reputation from overseas.

The C3 has won car-of-the-year awards in Europe and was even voted the "world's most beautiful small car".

In Australia, the C3's pricing puts it at the upper end of the small car segment where it competes with recent new (and well regarded) arrivals such as the Honda Jazz, Mazda2 and Renault Clio.

Two versions of the C3 are available, the SX and the Exclusive. Both are powered by a 1.4 litre single overhead camshaft engine that produces a fairly meagre 57 kW. Buyers have the choice of five-speed manual or four speed automatic transmission.

Later this year, a more powerful (82 kW) 1.6 litre version of the C3 will arrive, with the option of a five-speed sequential automatic gearbox.

Prices for the current C3 models start at \$19,990 for an SX, with an Exclusive manual costing \$20,990. Automatic is only available in the Exclusive and its price is \$22,990.

The C3 is well specified in the areas of safety, security and convenience. Safety equipment includes four airbags (dual front and front side), pyrotechnic front seat belt pretensioners and force limiters, three-point belts in all seating positions and automatic fuel shut-off when any of the airbags are deployed.

Also adding to the C3's safety are its superior roadholding and handling characteristics, its reportedly very strong body structure and the raised seating positions that allow for clear vision.

The Exclusive models further enhance the safety equation by including anti-lock brakes with electronic brake force distribution, rain sensing windscreen wipers and front fog lights.

Both models come standard with air conditioning (climate control on the Exclusive), power front windows, electric power steering, a six-speaker sound system with CD player, power exterior mirrors, remote central locking, a "chilled" glovebox, split fold rear seat, height and reach adjustable steering wheel, and height adjustable headlights.

The C3 rates towards the top of its class on vehicle security, with a good quality immobiliser, a HF remote control central locking unit and transponder, and a function that automatically relocks the vehicle if it is left unlocked.

Inside the C3, there's plenty of front seat travel to accommodate long legs, but if all or most of the travel is utilized, rear leg space is

minimal. The front seats are generally comfortable, though they don't provide much in the way of lateral support.

Although it's unlikely that three people would be occupying the rear seat on a regular basis, there are three head restraints and three lap/sash seat belts.

The C3's luggage area is relatively deep but it's not very long. The seat backrest is divided in a 60/40 split but the cushion doesn't fold, leaving a step-up in the load area.

With a tilt and telescopic steering wheel and a height adjustable seat, drivers of various sizes should be able to find a suitable driving position. However, some may find that the manual model's clutch and brake pedals are a bit too close together.

The 1.4 litre engine's meagre power output becomes obvious when you head the manual C3 up a few hills and it soon becomes necessary to change down into the lower gears to maintain momentum.

However in its more natural city and suburban environment, the 1.4 C3 gets along quite satisfactorily.

Judging from our release drive of the C3 range, the automatic version is no ball of fire either, even though in some respects its gearing seemed better suited to the engine's limited performance.

The 1.6 litre version's arrival will be welcome for the performance boost it will bring, however it probably won't be as economical as the frugal 1.4 litre.

Our test results put the 1.4 litre C3 in fifth spot on the list of most economical performers in NRMA tests, and third if the two hybrid vehicles that currently occupy first and third spots are discounted.

For many years, European cars have set benchmarks for their ride and handling qualities and the C3 is no exception. It handles well in all sorts of conditions, steers precisely and still provides a more comfortable ride than many of its small car rivals.

SUMMARY:

Overall, the Citroen C3 is an attractive new entry into the small car market that's easy to drive and handle, and well specified in the areas of safety, security and convenience.

The C3 also rates very well on its roadholding and steering qualities, and with some extra power (such as will be available in the coming 1.6 litre version) would be quite a fun little car to drive. However, no doubt the 1.6 litre model will be dearer and probably not quite so economical as the 1.4 litre car.



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE

Type.... Four cylinder, in-line, SOHC, 8 valves
Capacity in litres..... 1.360
Induction..... Sequential fuel injection
Fuel recommendation PULP
Claimed max. power..... 57 kW at 5400 rpm
Claimed max. torque.... 115 Nm at 3300 rpm
Specific power output 41.9 kW/litre

TRANSMISSION

Type..... Five speed manual
Driving wheels..... Front
Speed per 1000 rpm in top gear 36.5 km/h

WHEELS Steel, 6.0 x 14 inch
Tyres Michelin Energy 165/70 R14
Spare Matching size and type

STEERING

Type..... Power assisted rack and pinion
Turns lock to lock 3.2
Turning circle (measured)..... 10.2 metres

DIMENSIONS

Mass..... 1005 kg
Length..... 3850 mm
Width (incl. mirrors 1912 mm)..... 1667 mm
Height 1519 mm
Ground clearance (measured) 137 mm
Seating capacity 5
Fuel tank capacity 47 litres

TOWING

Max. towed mass (trailer plus load)..... 900 kg
Max. towball download (laden trailer)..... 36 kg

NRMA THEFT RATING

Points on 0-120 scale (high score best) 67

WARRANTY Three years, 60,000 km

MANUFACTURED IN France

TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION

50 - 80 km/h (in 3rd gear) 6.3 sec
60 - 100 km/h (in 3rd gear) 9.2 sec
0 - 80 km/h 9.0 sec
0 - 100 km/h 15.0 sec
0 - 400 metres 19.4 sec

FUEL CONSUMPTION (litres/100 km)

Best recorded during testing 5.8
Worst recorded during testing 6.7
Average on test 6.1

BRAKING

Distance to stop from 80 km/h... 29.4 metres

NOISE

Interior at constant 80 km/h 68 dB(A)

Test vehicle supplied by Ateco
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