

CITROËN C5 3,0i V6

Waft speed

This smoothie is an acquired taste...



"Boomerang" headlights and new double-chevron corporate grille distinguish new C5 from its predecessor. Insets: PSA V6 has peak outputs of 152 kW at 6 000 r/min and 285 N.m at 3 750. Instrumentation is of the analogue type. Seats are comfy, but could do with more side support.

FEW cars in recent years have polarised the opinions of the CAR test team as much as the new, revised, version of Citroën's C5. Which probably means that the world, certainly as far as Citroën is concerned, is back to rights. For, traditionally, the cars bearing the double chevron were always idiosyncratic. With Citroëns such as the classic DS and ID, or even the GS and CX, you either got it... or you didn't.

When Peugeot saved the company back in the early '70s, the products began to become more "ordinary" – still good cars, mind you, but more conventional creations that, in many cases, took their cue from the company's new masters. It was an effective strategy that got the firm's finances into the black for the first time in many years.

But, deep within Citroën, the *avant garde* spirit continued to burn fiercely

becomes one with the grille, is the new (Xsara-replacing) C4, due in South Africa in March. And, to match the new mid-ranger, the C5, which goes on sale here during February, gets similar styling elements to cloak a raft of technical improvements, not least of which is a significantly revised drivetrain.

Although there's still the same dumpy yet low-drag silhouette, the front and rear styling are dramatically different, thanks mainly to boomerang-shaped light units front and rear, and that large chromed double chevron grille. But the new sheetmetal does more than just give the C5 a more dramatic new face. It also helped the new model achieve the highest crash-test scores yet recorded by Euro NCAP. While it is true that a good performance in one specific crash test procedure doesn't necessarily mean that the car

Cars bearing the double chevron were always idiosyncratic

through all the years of rationalisation. The classic hydro-pneumatic suspension was continued on upper-crust models such as the XM and smaller Xantia, and a new, electronically controlled, evolution of the set-up was used on the C5 when that appeared at the turn of the millennium.

Though it was based on a platform shared with the (then) forthcoming Peugeot 407, the original C5 was the first indication that Citroën, now highly profitable, was again to be given the freedom to express itself. Since then, under new design chief Jean-Pierre Ploué, a new "look" has evolved, showcased on a number of concept cars. The culmination of the new style, in which the double chevron badge

will be as good in tests using different parameters, the C5's performance shows that it is a very, very safe motor car by current standards...

Under the skin, the bodyshell and suspension remain much as before. As you'd expect in a big Citroën, the techno-wizardry centres on the suspension, which uses the marque's time-honoured combination of gas- and fluid-filled spheres, a suspension pump and electronic level sensors, in conjunction with MacPherson struts in front and trailing arms at the rear. V6 versions come with Hydractive Plus, in which the BHI (built-in hydroelectronic interface) places the emphasis on comfort, only switching to the firmer setting in extreme manoeuvres. The automatic



Controls for sound system and air-con are fiddly and take a while to work out (left). Airbag-equipped wheel is unchanged, but steering now has electronically-regulated assistance.

Progress and tradition

We've said it before: if any of the French marques has the credibility and tradition to take on the German executives, it is Citroën. Where Renault and Peugeot have recently tried to offer "alternative" styles with the Laguna and 407 – in recognition of the fact that they cannot compete directly with their rivals from across the Rhine – Citroën was traditionally an "off-the-wall" brand that inspired huge loyalty amongst its adherents. Those days are back again, so, even though the majority of the CAR test team have opted for the Mercedes-Benz C240 in this line-up, die-hard Citroën fans – and there are a couple among us – would unequivocally opt for the C5...



Peugeot 407. New-found panache from a previously very conservative marque. Traditional strengths, such as good ride and handling, have been retained. Uses basically the same V6 engine as its two French rivals.



Renault Laguna. Another individualistic French contender using the shared V6. Higher-priced than the Peugeot, but is not quite a match on ride comfort. High spec level, but with acres of grey plastic on the fascia.



Volvo S60. Did well in the recent JD Power report, offers good performance and economy, but the majority of the test team voted it down for stodgy feel and less than leading-edge ride and handling.



Mercedes-Benz C240 Elegance. Superb quality, but more compact than rivals to its left, and not quite a match on performance. Currently in high demand, and there are no problems with resale value. The CAR team's choice.



BMW 325i. Excellent quality, but matching some of the others on spec would push up the price. Good performance and economy. Due for replacement very soon.

Rivals	Citroën C5 3,0i V6	Peugeot 407 3,0 ST Executive	Renault Laguna Privilege 3,0	Volvo S60 2,5T Geartronic	Mercedes-Benz C240 Elegance	BMW 325i
price	R320 000 est	R309 900	R316 000	R308 000	R316 000	R301 000
cyl/capac	V6/2 946	V6/2 946	V6/2 946	5/2 521	V6/2 597	6/2 494
power	152/6 000	155/6 000	152/6 000	154/5 000	125/5 500	141/6 000
torque	285/3 750	290/3 750	285/3 750	320/1 500	240/4 500	245/3 500
power/mass	97	98 est	94 est	98 est	82 est	81 est
engine revs/km	1 319	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
gears/drive	6/F	6/F	5/F	5/F	5/R	5/R
0-100 km/h	9,83	9,8 est	8,9 est	7,4 est	10,2 est	8,3 est
max speed	222	220 est	219 est	224 est	230 est	230 est
fuel index	10,72	10,7 est	11,3 est	9,9 est	10,5 est	9,9 est
boot capac	394-1 098	344-1 056	344-1 144	368-1 072	320	312-976

changeover from one setting to the other depends on five parameters: accelerator position, engine torque, braking, steering angle and body movement. But you can select Sport mode, maintaining the firmer setting, if you prefer. As on the previous C5, ride height and the body's angle of attack to the air are automatically adjusted depending on speed. And the system only requires servicing every five years or 200 000 km, whichever comes first.

The steering features Servotronic speed-sensitive variable power assistance, which has an electronic control unit that adapts pressure by means of a solenoid valve. Brakes are ventilated discs front and rear, and ABS with BAS and EBD, as well as ESP and ASR, are standard. Wheels are 16-inch alloys, shod, in the case of the test unit, with 215/55 R16 Michelin Pilot Premacy tyres.

Power in the top-line model is provided by the same PSA 3,0-litre V6 as before. It's a state-of-the-art engine with oversquare dimensions, twin overhead camshafts per bank, and variable timing (VVT) for its four valves per cylinder. In Citroën tune, peak outputs are 152 kW at 6 000 r/min and 285 N.m at 3 750, both just a fraction lower than the figures quoted for Peugeot's similar-engined 407. It drives the front wheels through a new Aisin AM6 auto-adaptive six-speed automatic gearbox with Tiptronic control. Claimed to be the lightest, most compact, six-speed auto in production, it weighs virtually the same as the old four-speed unit it supersedes. Normal (auto-adaptive), Sport or Winter

modes can be engaged to suit driving conditions.

Unique features in the C5's class include headlamps that swivel with the steering, extra-thick laminated side glass for better insulation, seven airbags, including a special knee bag in the underside of the steering column, and beeping parking sensors. Overseas models also feature a lane-departure warning system that makes the driver's seat vibrate to simulate rumble strips. Sadly, this feature does not work in South Africa because of differences in our road-marking system, so has been deleted for local cars.

Inside, the C5 is luxurious, if a little dour, with its dark grey fascia-laminate, but the shiny black plastic inlays and the stitching of the light grey leather seats are not of Mercedes-Benz quality. The handdown section of the fascia houses a new radio/CD player, with an extra CD magazine under the dash on the driver's side.

Controls for sound and ventilation/climate control on the integrated panel are virtually straight out of the Peugeot 407. They are small, fiddly and take a while to work out, but are reasonably logical once you're familiar with them. Operation of the radio is eased by a stalk-type multifunction volume/mode/band control on the right of the steering column. A display for sound, air-con, park-sensors and the car's computer – as well as navigation, which is not available in SA – is

located atop the fascia.

Although the electrically adjustable front seats are comfy, they lack side support, giving the driver and front passenger a "sit-on" rather than "sit-in" feeling. The back bench is as luxurious as a lounge sofa, and there's a good amount of leg-room for three full-sized passengers.

As before, though it looks like a saloon, the C5 is actually a hatch. The 60:40-split rear backrests fold to extend luggage capacity (measured by the ISO-block method) from 394 to 1098 dm³. The primary load area features a useful net to secure smaller items.

Slide into the plush driver's seat, adjust the squab and backrest to your liking using the electric controls, fasten the pretensioner-equipped seatbelt, adjust the steering wheel angle, and turn the key. The V6 purrs into life, almost inaudible as the suspension whirrs the body into position. Engage Drive, and you're

wafted down the road in a manner that is uniquely Citroën. And, as we commented up top, you'll either love or hate the sensations...

For Citroënpheiles, the magic carpet ride over gentle undulations and the relaxed cruising gait are close to motoring heaven. But some members of the team expected more insulation over sharp ridges, and felt body control was lacking in press-on situations. The same group also found the steering excessively light. Get your mind past that, though, and the C5 is formidable on a twisty road. It is easy to position accurately, grip levels are high and, when the car does let go, it's the front that slides first. In that situation, a throttle-lift is all that's needed to get everything tracking true again.

Another criticism was the sporty gearbox, which tended to change down busily when slowing down. But the responses are related to driving style – opt for more smooth



Likes and dislikes

- DESIGN**
- ✓ Hatch design offers superior loadability
 - ✓ Individual styling
 - ✗ Dumpy looking
- POWERTRAIN**
- ✓ State-of-the-art quad-cam V6
 - ✓ Sporty six-speed gearbox
 - ✗ Jerky downshifts
- COMFORT AND FEATURES**
- ✓ Very well-equipped
 - ✓ Cossetting seats
 - ✗ Squabs lack side support
 - ✗ Dowdy cabin
- PERFORMANCE AND BRAKING**
- ✓ Responsive acceleration
 - ✓ Excellent stopping ability
- FUEL ECONOMY**
- ✓ Good economy for a large six-cylinder saloon
- WHEELS AND TYRES**
- ✓ Smooth and compliant
 - ✓ Handles potholes superbly
 - ✗ Harsh bumps do get through
 - ✗ Floaty feel disconcerting for the uninitiated
- VALUE FOR MONEY**
- ✓ Estimated price good for a car with this level of technical sophistication

progress and the shifts adapt accordingly.

Out on the test strip, the quick performance figures contrasted sharply with the car's relaxed feel. We floated up to 100 km/h in a not-too-shabby 9,83 seconds, and whooshed past the kilometre mark in a fraction over half a minute. No fuss, no drama, just effortless performance...

At 222 km/h (just 2 km/h down on the top speed we recorded with the old four-speed version) we came up against an electronic limiter, though the car had been pulling very strongly up to that point, seemingly with plenty in reserve. And the brakes are well up to the task of stopping the car from these speeds. Our 10-stop emergency routine produced an average stopping time of 2,84 seconds from 100 km/h, which places the C5 near the top of the class. Fuel thirst is also low for a 3,0-litre, our index figure of 10,72 litres/100 km equating to a range of over 600 km on the 66-litre tank.

Test summary

As we said, Citroëns are regaining their quirky character. The C5 will appeal hugely to fans of the marque – it is smooth-riding, adequately quick and fairly frugal, and has an individualistic style. Features such as its unique suspension system, swivelling headlights, a six-speed auto-adaptive gearbox and the roomy cabin and luggage bay offer real added value in its price range.

But, if you are of a more conservative, more conventional bent, you're likely to prefer one of the more popular executive saloons. Which, Citroën fans will tell you, is your loss...

Citroën C5 3,0i V6

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE:
Cylinders 60-degree V6, transverse
Fuel supply electronic multipoint injection
Bore/stroke 87,0/82,6 mm
Cubic capacity 2 946 cm³
Compression ratio 10,9 to 1
Valve gear d-o-h-c, four valves per cylinder
Ignition Bosch Motronic DME7.46 (electronic)
Main bearings five
Fuel requirement unleaded

ENGINE OUTPUT:
Max power ISO (kW) 152
Power peak (r/min) 6 000
Max usable r/min 6 400
Max torque (N.m) 285
Torque peak (r/min) 3 750

TRANSMISSION:
Forward speeds six
Low gear 4,15 to 1
2nd gear 2,37 to 1
3rd gear 1,56 to 1
4th gear 1,15 to 1
5th gear 0,86 to 1
Top gear 0,69 to 1
Reverse gear n/a
Final drive 5/R
Drive wheels front

WHEELS AND TYRES:
Road wheels 16x7J alloy
Tyre make Michelin Pilot
Premacy
Tyre size 215/55 R16
Tyre pressures (front) 250 kPa
Tyre pressures (rear) 220 to 250 kPa

BRAKES:
Front 288 mm ventilated discs
Rear 276 mm ventilated discs
Hydraulics ABS with BAS and EBD

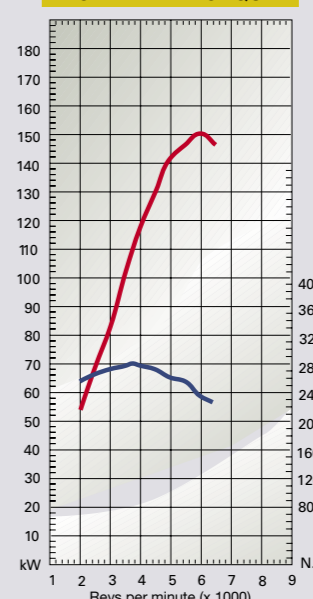
STEERING:
Type rack and pinion, variable power assistance
Lock to lock 2,9 turns
Turning circle 12,46 metres

SUSPENSION
Front hydraulic/pneumatic with MacPherson struts, anti-roll bar, electronic height sensors
Rear hydraulic/pneumatic with trailing arms, anti-roll bar, electronic height sensors

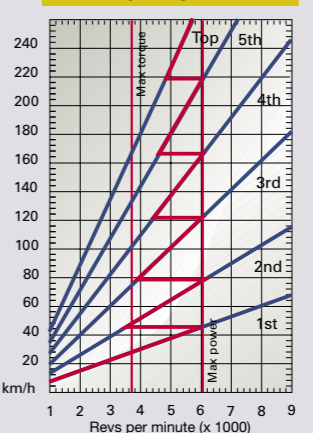
CAPACITIES:
Seating 5
Fuel tank 66 litres
Boot space 394 dm³
Utility space 1 098 dm³

WARRANTY AND SERVICE INTERVALS:
3 years/100 000 km warranty
12 years anti-corrosion

POWER AND TORQUE



ENGINE SPEED



ACCELERATION

