

Citroën Berlingo Multispace

Featured model: 1.9D Forte 5 door



THERE HAVE BEEN VAN versions of hatchbacks and estates for years, but with the Berlingo Multispace the adaptation has been the other way round.

Unlike the stylish Picasso, Multispace isn't going to woo buyers with its looks; instead, the latest conversion to a five-door has been accompanied by other interior improvements plus a £1650 price reduction, in the case of this diesel.

The resulting price means that one can tolerate signs of commercial van quality about the interior trim, although our test car also had eight faults and maladjustments, which, with only a twelve-month warranty, is of some concern.

Incongruously, however, all tends to be forgiven when you stop looking and start motoring, because the Multispace's ride, handling, steering and NVH (noise, vibration, harshness) control are all incredibly good. The driving position, gearshift – even the van-style door mirrors – all feel fundamentally well sorted, so you don't need a lot of adjustments to get comfortable.

Clever back seat modifications (with a higher cushion) enhance legroom and kneeroom – this is one of those rare cars in which there's plenty of both behind the average-sized driver. Footspace under the front seat is curtailed, however, by a sliding oddments drawer, when it's shut. There's generous room for three wide and/or tall rear passengers, with lots of luggage space below a sturdy roller blind, or pantechicon possibilities with the back seat folded.

With dismal overtaking ability and overall mpg that's 20 per cent heavier than the Picasso's, some may feel that this diesel is a let-down. It's indirect injection design may mean that its days are numbered but in fact, its quietness, once under way, and its ability to pull from low revs without the dreaded vibes and tremors that afflict so many direct-injection diesels, left us feeling very nostalgic.

We strongly recommend the "Comfort" option pack, because the nearside, mirror adjuster and doors are a long stretch away; our ABS option significantly improved urgent braking behaviour, as well, compared with our previous test car.

VERDICT

The Multispace's two extra doors, like most of its features, are there to ensure that it does a good job. Emotional involvement won't be the reason for contemplating buying one, yet with familiarity, the Multispace proves as endearing as it is practical.

Why? Because a 70bhp diesel van conversion has no right to proceed along any road, rough or smooth, fast or slow, with such aplomb. If you can make use of gargantuan interior space, with easy entry, it's all available here for the price of a petrol 206 – with the same fuel economy, as well

AT A GLANCE

considering size, price and rivals

Overtaking ability	☆☆○○○
Space/practicality	☆☆☆☆○
Controls/displays	☆☆☆☆○
Safety	☆☆○○○
Handling/steering	☆☆☆☆○
Comfort	☆☆☆☆○
Fuel economy	☆☆☆☆○

SPECIFICATION

engine 1868cc, 4-cylinder, indirect injection diesel; 69bhp at 4600rpm, 92 lb ft at 2500rpm; belt-driven single overhead camshaft, 8 valves

transmission 5-speed manual, front-wheel drive; 22.3 mph/1000rpm in 5th, 17.4 in 4th

suspension front: independent damper/struts, with integral coil springs.

Rear: independent trailing arms, torsion bars

steering hydraulic power assistance; 3.3 turns lock-to-lock; 11.1m diameter turning circle between kerbs (17.7m for one turn of the wheel)

brakes solid discs front, drums rear, with optional electronic ABS anti-skid control on test car

wheels/tyres 5½in steel with 175/70R14T tyres (Michelin Energy XTI on test car); full-size spare

LIKES AND GRIPES

rear roof speakers out of the way
sliding doors a boon in tight parking
auto and intermittent rear wiper
handy shelf full width above screen

thick B pillars - bad on angled junctions
no heater/vent when engine off
poor ventilation and heat in rear

THE MULTISPACE RANGE

body five door MPV-cum-estate car
trim levels Forté

engines petrol: 4 cylinder/1.4 litre/75bhp; 4/1.8/90bhp diesel: 4/1.9/69bhp

drive front-wheel drive, 5-speed manual; (no automatic available)

OVERTAKING ABILITY				☆☆○○○	
Old-fashioned diesel refinement can't disguise lack of puff. Jerky accelerator progression due to tortuous cable run					
acceleration in seconds	through gears*	④ th gear		⑤ th gear	
20-40mph	6.0	12.8		18.4	
30-50mph	8.1	13.0		19.0	
40-60mph	11.2	14.5		20.8	
50-70mph	17.4	18.2		28.0	
30-70mph	25.5	31.2		47.1	
max speed in each gear (*using 4600rpm for best acceleration)					
gear	①*	②*	③*	④*	⑤
speed (mph)	22	41	59½	80	86

SPACE AND PRACTICALITY ★★☆☆☆				
<i>Box-like build gives remarkable room. Back seat behaves like an estate's, with easy split/fold and three uncluttered seatbelts</i>				
<i>in centimetres (5-door mini-MPV)</i>				
outside	inside (†with optional sunroof)			
length	411	front	- legroom	89-107
width - inc mirrors	197		- headroom	110†
- mirrors folded	178	rear	- typical leg/	102/
height (no roof bars)	180		kneeroom	79
load sill height			- headroom	108
(inside/outside)	0/58		- hiproom	147
steering		load space (all seats in use)		
turns lock-to-lock	3.3		(litres/cu ft)	510/18.0
turning circle (metres)	11.1	load length		74/132
easy to park/garage?		full length to fascia		No
	★★★☆☆	load width		119-145
		load height (to shelf/		53/
		to top of aperture)		113

CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS ★★☆☆☆				
<i>Few adjustments, but surprisingly comfortable seat; good, commanding view. Dials hard to read at times – lighting dim fixed level</i>				
				

SAFETY ★★☆☆☆				
<i>Not quite as lavish in injury prevention as Picasso. ABS option improves stopping ability and no heat fade. Central locking a must – works well</i>				
braking	★★★☆☆			
pedal feel	★★★☆☆			
in emergency	★★★☆☆			
handbrake	★★★☆☆			
		dry road stopping distance		
		<i>from 50mph (with optional ABS)</i>		
		pedal load	distance	
		10kg	46m	
		18kg	26½ best stop	
		+4kg ie 22kg	27½m ABS on	

EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS	
Multispace not yet tested	

SECURITY FEATURES			
central locking	0	alarm	×
remote control	0	immobiliser	✓
auto window closure	×	luggage security	★★★☆☆
deadlocks	×		
✓ standard	0 factory option	×	not available

HANDLING AND STEERING ★★☆☆☆				
<i>Poised and unruffled by bumps in mid-bend and pleasant steering. Almost as impressive as the ride</i>				
				
COMFORT ★★☆☆☆				
<i>Does this van think it's a Peugeot 406? Totally free from jolts, rattles or row at any speed. More comfortable than we ever expected.</i>				

FUEL ECONOMY ★★☆☆☆				
<i>More frugal than fast. A very user-friendly diesel of the older sort - so not as abstemious as a direct injection Picasso. Easy filler and good range</i>				
type of use (air conditioning off)		AA test (mpg)		
urban (17mph average/heavy traffic)		28		
suburban (27mph average/6.4 miles from cold start)		37½		
motorway (70mph cruising)		37		
cross-country (brisk driving/20 miles from cold start)		41		
rural (gentle driving/20 miles from cold start)		51½		
typical mpg overall		41		
realistic tank capacity/range		48 litres/435 miles		
official mpg (urban/extra urban/combined)		32.8/52.3/42.8		
CO ₂ emissions 178g/km		car tax band C		

HOW THE MULTISPACE COMPARES		engine cap/power (cyl/no/cc/bhp)	revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	fuel economy (mpg)	brakes - best stop from 50mph (m/kg)	maximum legroom - front (cm)	typical leg/kneerom - rear (cm)	steering turns/ (p) circle (m)	overall length (cm)
CITROËN MULTISPACE 1.9D		4/1868/69	3140	25.5	47.0/31.2	41	26½/18*	107	102/79	3.3/11.1	411
VW Caddy Kombi 1.9Di		4/1896/64	3400	20.0°	NA/25.0	52	—	105	93/68	NA	421
Mitsubishi Space Star 1.8GDT†		4/1834/121	3150	10.6	27.1/20.4	38	27½/18*	109	103/75	3.1/10.0	403
Fiat Multipla 1.6†		4/1581/103	3800	12.7	29.2/20.6	29	27½/20*	106	114/83	2.8/11.1	399
Vauxhall Agila 1.2†		4/1199/75	3720	14.7	34.2/24.7	42	28/27	107	98/68	3.3/10.35	350
Citroën Picasso 2.0HDI		4/1997/90	2470	14.0	27.0/18.6	50	26/16*	106	95/72	3.3/11.95	428
† petrol		° approx		* with abs							