

Citroën Berlingo Multispace

Featured model: 1.6 16v Forté Modutop



WHY CONSIDER A VAN WITH windows, even if there's lots of space inside at a remarkably keen price? Well, the parcels-to-people conversion isn't a new idea – VW Campers and Caravelles have been successful for a long time. However, this Berlingo is something special in the way it drives, and Citroën was right when it decided to sell it as a people carrier, as well.

It's gradually got better in terms of equipment, with extra doors and now an up-to-the-minute 1.6 16-valve engine – also found in the latest Xsara.

Apart from some vibrancy between 1300 and 1500rpm (though nothing serious), it's a really smooth and quiet performer when cruising; give it some stick and the multi-valve breathing causes it to surge away with a pleasant muted growl.

Both minor and major controls are car-like – smooth and efficient, with a grand view out to front and rear; that slab-back really helps parking manoeuvres, as do the large door mirrors. Don't buy without the £350 Comfort pack, however – the nearside door mirror and sill buttons are a long stretch without it.

For details concerning the Multispace's generous accommodation for five, plus their paraphernalia, see our report R0058 on the diesel version. However, this latest car also came with the optional "Modutop", which enhances its oddments stowage and interior lighting, with extra power sockets, too. Back seat ventilation is also

served by additional roof vents, with a light and airy aura afforded by the glass panel inserts in this roof.

Outside, clever luggage rails and rubber strakes are fitted, the former capable of being mounted across rather than along the roof – for carrying ladders, for example. It's very well done and, as with the rest of the trim, there were no rattles.

However, just like last time, we had faults and irritations in the assembly of our test car. None was serious but it would be wise to buy from a reputable appointed dealer – you may need him and the latest three-year warranty.

Despite this, we remain keen fans of the Multispace – it's so civilised, so accommodating and £2000-3000 cheaper than fully-fledged MPVs, including the Picasso.

VERDICT

Later, it may be possible to buy Multispace with the 2.0HDI direct-injection diesel engine – it's already an option in the Berlingo van. Until then, this 1.6 petrol version represents a real overall improvement in performance, economy and refinement. It offers a very prudent compromise for buyers hovering between an estate car and an MPV and who are more concerned with practicality than image. They certainly won't be disappointed in the way it drives.

AT A GLANCE

considering size, price and rivals

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

SPECIFICATION

engine 1587cc, 4-cylinder, petrol; 110bhp at 5800rpm, 110 lb ft at 4000rpm; belt-driven twin overhead camshafts, 16 valves

transmission 5-speed manual, front-wheel drive; 21.6 mph/1000rpm in 5th, 18.1 in 4th

suspension front: independent damper/struts, integral coil springs. Rear: independent trailing arms, torsion bars

steering hydraulic power assistance; 3.2 turns lock-to-lock; 11.3m diameter turning circle between kerbs (18.0m for one turn of the wheel)

brakes solid discs front drums rear (ABS optional extra)

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

LIKES ...

plethora of oddments spaces
sliding doors a boon in tight parking
roof bars rotate through 90 degrees
deep mirrors – see your rear wheels
rear headrests lower to seat back level
and GRIPES

heater fan won't work without engine
thick B-pillars – bad at junctions
box under nsf seat mars rear footroom

THE MULTISPACE RANGE

type/size five door (budget-priced) MPV style estate car

trim levels Forté

engines petrol: 4 cylinder/1.4 litre/75bhp; 4/1.6/110, diesel: 4/1.9/71

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

OVERTAKING ABILITY ★★★★○					
<i>This 1.6 is faster through the gears than previous 1.8 but not in fifth or fourth. Very smooth above 1500rpm and pleasant gearchange and clutch</i>					
acceleration in seconds	through gears*	④ th gear	⑤ th gear		
20-40mph	3.5	11.4	15.5		
30-50mph	4.3	11.0	15.1		
40-60mph	5.3	11.1	16.2		
50-70mph	7.2	12.3	17.6		
30-70mph	11.5	23.3	32.7		
max speed in each gear (*using 6000rpm for best acceleration)					
gear	①*	②*	③*	④	⑤
speed (mph)	30	55	80	106½	104

SPACE AND PRACTICALITY ★★★★○				
<i>Modutop adds to versatility for oddments/roof stowage; large tailgate protects from rain and back seat has ample stretching space for three – folding but non-removable</i>				
<i>in centimetres (5-door MPV)</i>		inside († with Modutop)		
outside		front - legroom	89-107	
length	411	- headroom	115†	
width - inc mirrors	197	rear - typical leg/	*99/	
- mirrors folded	178	kneeroom	78	
height (inc roof bars)	187	- headroom	110	
load sill height	0/58	- hiproom	147	
<i>(inside/outside)</i>		load space (all seats in use)		
steering		(litres/cu ft)	520/18.3	
turns lock-to-lock	3.2	load length	77-132	
turning circle (metres)	11.3	full length to fascia	No	
easy to park/garage?		load width	119-145	
	★★★★○	load height (to shelf/	53/	
*102 without underseat box		to top of aperture)	107	

CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS ★★★★○	
<i>Few adjustments but excellent driving position with good view and easy reversing. Smooth accelerator, speed-sensitive intermittent wipers but dials hard to read in poor light</i>	



HOW THE MULTISPACE COMPARES	engine cyl/cap/power (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 legr oom - front (cm)	typical leg/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	steering turns (p)/ circle (m)	overall length (cm)
CITRÖEN MULTISPACE 1.6 16v	4/1587/110	3240	11.5	32.7/23.3	37½	31/27	107	99/77	3.2/11.3	411
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 Zafira 1.6 16v	4/1598/100	3630	13.1	27.0/18.8	35½	24½/18*	103	102/75	3.2/11.0	432
Renault Scenic 2.0 16v	4/1998/140	3120	9.7	26.9/17.6	30	24/50*	106	102/76	3.5/10.6	413
Toyota Yaris Verso 1.3	4/1299/85	3700	12.0	25.8/19.0	42	25½/15*	107	98/78	3.2/10.5	386
Renault Kangoo 1.4 8v	4/1390/75	3630	15.4	30.3/20.7	37	30/23*	104	102/71	3.4/10.7	400

SAFETY ★★★○○○	
<i>Disappointing emergency stop but sensible servo helps avoid skidding. Good handbrake. Convenient central locking with "Comfort" pack – an essential option</i>	
braking	
pedal feel	★★★★○
in emergency	★★★○○○
handbrake	★★★★○
dry road stopping distance <i>from 50mph (without ABS)</i>	
pedal load	distance
10kg	46m
27kg	31m <i>best stop</i>
+4kg ie 31kg	34m <i>skidding</i>

EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS
Berlingo Multispace not yet yested

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>Precise and pleasant steering with poised handling and reasonable grip. Totally unruffled by bumps in mid-bend. Better than most MPVs.</i>	



COMFORT ★★★★○	
<i>Does this van think it's a Peugeot 406? Remarkably jolt-free with quiet cruising all the way to the legal limit – and beyond</i>	

FUEL ECONOMY ★★★★○	
<i>Better result in real-life tests than the (slower) 1.4 – a convincing combination of liveliness, refinement and respectable economy that makes it our choice of engine. Good range, too.</i>	

type of use (air conditioning off)	AA test (mpg)
urban (17mph average/heavy traffic)	25½
suburban (27mph average/6.4 miles from cold start)	32
motorway (70mph cruising)	34½
cross-country (brisk driving/20 miles from cold start)	39
rural (gentle driving/20 miles from cold start)	45
typical mpg overall	37½
realistic tank capacity/range	48 litres/400 miles
official mpg (urban/extra urban/combined)	29.7//45.6/38.2
CO ₂ emissions 175 g/km	car tax band C

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*with ABS

(p) all power assisted