

Citroen XM 2.0Si



THE XM, winner of the prestigious European 'Car of the Year' Award for 1990, is Citroen's contender for top honours in the large executive-car class.

For this our first full test of the XM, we chose the version most likely to be the biggest seller here in the UK, the mid-range 2 litre Si.

Replacing the ageing CX model, the XM houses fairly conventional (for a Citroen, anyway) front-wheel drive running gear within a superbly stylish hatchback body penned by Bertone. There are three trim levels and, currently, four power units to choose from, with more to come.

At present there's a carburettored 2 litre producing 115bhp (130bhp in fuel-injected form, also available with a catalytic converter), and a 3-litre V6 for top models. For diesel fans, there's a 2.1-litre turbo-diesel. Automatic transmission is available on all 2 litre versions with fuel-injection, while the five-speed manual gearbox is a no-cost option on the V6.

Citroen fits advanced 'Hydractive' suspension to all XM models. Computer-controlled, this instantly adjusts both spring and damper rates to either firm or soft settings, according to sensors and control maps held in its memory. It works well, providing an absorbent ride whenever conditions allow, without it deteriorating into wallowy progress if the road (or

the driver) demands more of the car. There's also a Sport setting, which allows the suspension to be locked in the firm state.

The engine is a little coarser and more audible than the stylish looks and plush interior might lead you to expect, but the XM performs quite well considering that it's a big, heavy car with only a moderately powerful engine. Similarly, our overall fuel consumption of 30mpg (about class average) is pretty good, thanks partly to the way the car slips smoothly through the air. No marks for the awful, awkward foot-operated parking brake, though.

Sumptuous, almost palatial, the well-heated and ventilated interior is a real home-from-home, although there isn't over-generous headroom for tall passengers in the back.

Boot space is deep, wide and totally uncluttered by wheelarches. Its huge tailgate makes loading easy, and we like the second (inner) rear window that keeps rain and draughts out of the car when the tailgate is open.

All in all, the XM is a most impressive car. In style alone it's a cut above all the Granadas and Carltons in the company car park. But the XM is not just a pretty face; it's comfortable, refined, well equipped and, fortunately, retains a strong measure of Citroen's unique innovative flair.

Living with the XM . . .

At the Wheel

Performance

The XM engine's 128bhp is respectable enough, but peak torque occurs quite high up the rev range – hardly ideal, given the car's size and weight.

However, anyone who tows a caravan will be impressed by the fact that 90 per cent of peak torque is available between 2600 and 5700rpm. Also, the XM's sportily 'short' gearing helps to offset the relative lack of low-speed urge, and gives the big car a lively feel. The fourth-to-top gap seems large by comparison, however.

Fortunately, gearchanging is not too much of a chore, but the shift is rather notchy and it takes a hefty (40 lb) tread to disengage the sharply engaging clutch.

Driving position

The driver wants for little, with large, well-shaped seats (with three-way electric adjustment), reach- and rake-adjustable steering, and generally well laid-out minor controls. There's a lot of unseen bonnet out in front, but this presents problems only when parking space is tight.

Controls and displays

Most of the XM's switches and dials are more or less where you would expect to find them. Remote control push-buttons for the radio/cassette player (set into the steering wheel's single spoke) are a useful – and safety-minded – touch, and there's a 24-message electronic warning display panel which monitors fluid levels and so on.

Vision

A Citroen with two windscreen wipers is rather unusual, but then the XM does have a large screen to clear. Vision to the rear isn't helped by the high boot-line and the tailgate-mounted, body-coloured spoiler. The additional rear window (designed to keep rain

and draughts out when the tailgate is open) is very effective.

Space & Comfort

Seating

With the exception of rear headroom the XM is roomy and comfortable wherever you sit. By providing courtesy and reading lamps all round, centre armrests front and rear, and even B-pillar-mounted fresh-air vents for those in the back, Citroen obviously intends people to enjoy their journey in the XM. The back seat folds down easily to give additional load-carrying space, but if you want the convenience of a split-folding arrangement you'll have to pay extra – on all models.

Luggage and oddments stowage

Boot space is large, flat and rectangular and, as in the BX, there's a low load sill. If it's still not low enough, simply select 'loading heavy objects-mode' on the suspension's ride-height adjuster. The spare wheel lives out of the way under the boot floor.

Inside, there's a veritable Aladdin's cave of cubbies and hidey-holes, including a glovebox with a big 'gullwing' lid.

Heating and ventilation

The Si's heater benefits from automatic temperature control. With this system you simply select the distribution and desired temperature – the heat and fan-speed settings are then taken care of. Rear footwell ducts are standard on all models, while the Si and SEi models also have those handy face-level vents in the rear. A big electric tilt-and-slide glass sunroof is standard, as are rear sunblinds.

Money Matters

Fuel economy

With its considerable bulk, low

gearing and a fairly hard-worked engine, the XM is never going to eclipse the standard-setters at the fuel pumps.

But having said that, our 30mpg overall is not to be sneezed at, and the XM will cover 500 miles or so between refuelling stops, courtesy of its generous (80-litre) tank capacity. Virtually all of this can be used, thanks to realistic low fuel-level monitoring.

Servicing

If Citroen's 'wet' suspension hasn't established a good enough track record by now, it never will. True, there are plenty of complex electronics under the bonnet, but as long as it's reliable, the XM should be reasonably inexpensive to own and maintain.

Delving into the engine bay will largely be left to the dealer with this class of car, but things such as fluid-level checks are straightforward enough.

Warranty and insurance

Warranty cover is on the familiar 12-months/unlimited-mileage basis on mechanical components and six years against rust, although annual (chargeable) inspections are needed to keep it in force. In addition, Citroen includes breakdown assistance for the first year of ownership, and the mechanical warranty extends to two years on the suspension.

The XM generally attracts a Group 6 rating for 2-litre models (Group 7 for the 3-litre V6), which is about average for the large executive class.

Value for money

Model for model, the XM is a very well-equipped car, although its price advantage over rivals isn't as immediately apparent as is the case, say, lower down the BX range.

However, none of the XM's rivals can boast either Hydractive or hydropneumatic suspension, not to mention the car's visual appeal – who says you can't buy good looks?

PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds

STANDING START	0-30mph	0-60mph	1/4 mile
	3.3	10.3	17.6

mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH GEARS		2.0	4.1	7.0	10.2
IN 5th GEAR		6.5	12.6	18.4	24.9
IN 4th GEAR		4.0	7.8	11.8	15.8

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5th/4th SPEED RANGES		13.6/8.4		11.9/7.8	
			12.6/7.8		12.3/8.0

Maximum speeds

MAX REVS	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
	29	5850	6400	6400	5850
	1	3	5	74	122
				54	100

*gives best acceleration

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Grade for tests: 95 octane unleaded

Normal range	mpg
hard driving, heavy traffic	25 1/2
short journeys in the suburbs	23
motorway - 70mph cruising	33 1/2
brisk driving, mixed roads	29
gentle driving - rural roads	32 1/2

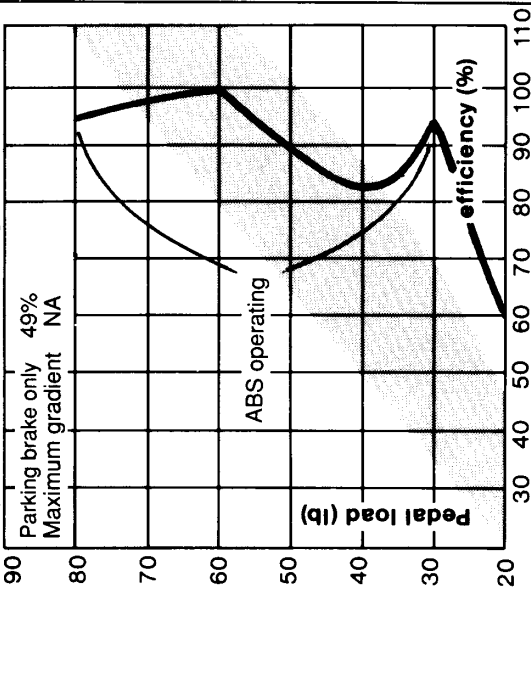
Typical mpg overall

Realistic tank range*	30
	80 litres/530 miles

*based on gauge/warning lamp and filling station experience

SAFETY

Brakes How pedal loads affect braking



% efficiency expressed as a % of gravity. Ideal car's braking performance falls within shaded zone - above, too heavy; below, too light

Fade test

How hard use or water affects braking. (Ideal brakes show no change)

Pedal load needed for 75% stop (lb)

At start of test	25
After constant use	23
After severe use	30
After watersplash	NA
Number of stops to recover	NA

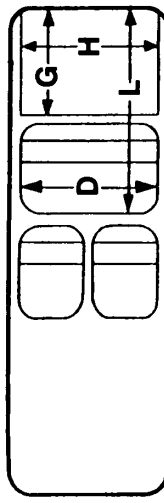
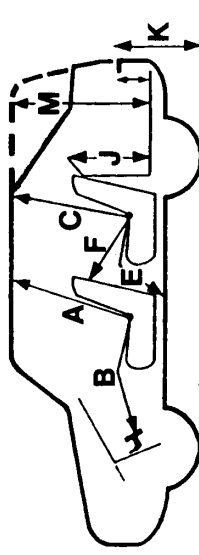
Check list

Steering	true 'feel' of road?	☒
Brakes	powerful?	☒
	sensible effort?	☒
	fade resistant?	☒
Belts	front - effective?	☒
	convenient?	☒
	rears - effective?	☒
	convenient?	☒
Head restraints	front - effective?	☒
	rear - effective?	☒
Interior	thoroughly padded?	☒
Fuel	shielded filler?	☒
	protected tank?	☒

WEIGHTS and MEASURES

Outside (ft and in)

Kerb weight	27 1/2 cwt	Overall length	15ft 5 1/2 in
Overall width	6ft 7 in*	Overall height †	4ft 6 1/2 in
Wheelbase	9ft 4 1/4 in		*6ft 1 1/2 in with mirrors folded



Inside (inches)

A Front headroom	35 1/4-36 1/4	G Load length	37 1/2
B Front legroom (min - max)	35 1/2-44	H Load floor width (min - max)	44 1/4-55 1/2
C Rear headroom	35 1/2	J Load height	18 1/4
D Rear seat width (between armrests)	53	K Sill height (inner/outer) †	5/24 1/2
E Typical rear legroom*	40 3/4	L Load length	60 1/2
F Typical rear kneeroom*	32 1/4	M Load height (to tailgate hinge)	29 1/2

† with engine running

Typical represents the mean measurement behind the driver's seat set at 39in legroom and the passenger's seat set at 41in

Safety

Accident avoidance

While comfort is the primary aim, the XM's Hydractive control has undoubted spin-off benefits (if you see what we mean) should evasive action be called for, endowing it with a far more agile and wieldy nature than the car's ample proportions might suggest. Power-assistance keeps steering loads light, but it does reduce 'feel' of the road.

The fully powered brakes feel as though they could bring a landing Jumbo jet to a halt, but are too much of a good thing in an emergency or on slippery surfaces. Our test car's optional anti-lock control successfully kerbed this over-enthusiasm, but it's an £800 option on the three cheaper models.

And as for that foot-operated parking brake (with hand release): it's an invention of the devil and should never have been allowed to cross the Atlantic. It can make hill restarts really tricky.

Injury prevention

The XM cocoons occupants with plenty of metal and, inside, all looks pretty reassuring. The front seatbelts have height-adjustable top mounts and seat-mounted centre catches to ensure optimum comfort and safety.

With the back seat folded down, the upturned cushion forms a useful safety barrier against unsecured loads.

Security

The XM's infra-red, remote-control central locking proves highly convenient and, of course,

greatly reduces the risk of leaving a door unlocked. High-security locks and keys support this convenience, although once inside, the XM's hatchback configuration provides little additional security for the contents of the boot.

Durability

Build quality

The stylish, well-appointed interior more than lives up to expectations raised by the XM's outward appearance, but it's still not quite

up to the BMW mark. Our test car was a very early right-hand drive production version which, we were assured, accounted for the one or two small problems that we experienced. We hope this is the case.

Rust prevention

An excellent paint finish, plastic bumper units and reassuring anti-rust measures should keep the XM looking its best. Citroen insists on an annual (0.6hr) inspection to maintain the six-year anti-rust warranty, however.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

ENGINE

Type and size front-mounted, transverse 4 in line; water-cooled. 86.0mm bore x 86.0mm stroke = 1998cc. Iron block and aluminium alloy head; 5 main bearings

Compression ratio 8.8:1

Valve gear single overhead camshaft, actuating two valves per cylinder via bucket tappets

Fuel system Bosch LE2 electronic multi-point fuel injection fed from 80-litre (17.6-gallon) tank; low-level warning lamp. Fuel required: leaded or unleaded, 95 octane min

Maximum power (DIN-net) 128bhp at 5600rpm

Maximum torque (DIN-net) 132 lb ft at 4800rpm

TRANSMISSION

Clutch 8.5in diaphragm-spring, dry plate; cable operated. Pedal load/travel: 40 lb/5 1/2in

Gearbox 5-speed (all synchromesh) and reverse. (4-speed automatic optionally available.) Ratios: first 3.46, second 1.85, third 1.36, fourth 1.07, fifth 0.80 and reverse 3.33:1

Final drive 4.19:1 to front wheels

Mph per 1000rpm 20.9 in top, 15.6 in 4th

Rpm at 70mph 3350 in top gear

CHASSIS

Suspension front: independent MacPherson struts with hydro-pneumatic spheres and anti-roll bar. Rear: independent trailing arms with hydropneumatic spheres and anti-roll bar. Front-to-rear interconnection with automatic self-levelling and ride-height control (driver-adjustable) plus computerised Hydractive system

Steering power-assisted rack and pinion with 3 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 35 1/4ft between kerbs, with 51 3/4ft for one turn of the wheel

Wheels 6J steel (standard) or alloy (option fitted to test car) with 195/60R15 87H tyres – Michelin MXV2 standard

Brakes 10.9in ventilated discs front, 8.8in plain discs rear with hydraulic power assistance. Teves ABS option fitted to test car. Pedal-operated (mechanical) parking brake to front wheels

HOW IT COMPARES

	Engine cap/power (cc/bhp)	Max speed (mph)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel overall (mpg)	Brakes best stop (%g/lb)	Maximum legroom – front (in)	Typical leg/kneeroom – rear (in)	Steering† turns/circle (ft)	Overall length (ft/in)
Citroen XM 2.0Si (5 door)	1998/128	122	10.2	24.9/15.8	30	* 95+/30+	44	40 3/4/32 1/4	3/35 1/4	15' 5 1/2"
BMW 520i (4 door)	1990/129	120	11.9	32.0/21.3	28 1/2	93/40	44 1/2	38 1/2/29	3 1/2/36	15' 5 3/4"
Ford Granada 2.0EFi Ghia (4/5 door)	1998/123	118	11.3	26.6/19.4	30	* 96+/40+	42	43 3/4/33 3/4	3/34 1/2	15' 6 3/4"
Rover 820SE (4/5 door)	1994/118	119	10.0	24.9/18.5	28 1/2	* 95/50+	41 1/2	40/31	3 1/4/37 3/4	15' 4 1/2"
Saab 9000 2.0i (5 door)	1985/130	118	10.2	26.0/18.0	32	106/45	42	41 1/2/30 1/2	3 1/4/37	15' 2"
Vauxhall Carlton 2.0i CD (4 door)	1998/120	121	11.3	28.0/20.9	33 1/2	* 103/45+	43	42/33 3/4	3 1/4/34 1/2	15' 4 1/2"

* with ABS

† all power-assisted