



Renault Scenic

Featuring 2.0 16v



What's different?

Potent two-litre heads revised engine line-up in Renault's new-look Scenic. Wider range of models, more standard equipment, improved interior features.

JUST AS WE'VE ALL BECOME FAMILIAR WITH the term mini-MPV, Renault has decided that it now prefers the title MAC (multi-activity car) for its chic little five-seater family holdall.

But what's in a name? Call it what you will (but now drop the Megane bit), the Scenic has been a brilliant sales success. Indeed, it's been so flattered by imitation that it needs this makeover to try to stay ahead of the game now being played by close rivals and upcoming pretenders to the mini-MPV – sorry, MAC – crown.

Exterior changes result in a bolder, more-rounded nose with sizeable bonnet nostrils and large, double-optic headlamps. Otherwise, apart from different rear lamp clusters and a smoothing of the tailgate, it's the body very much as before.

Like the other recently revised Meganes, the new Scenic has adopted Renault's "range-without-options" theme, resulting in a wider choice of model combinations (35 in all), now with extra equipment. There are eight trim levels and a choice of four engines. There's the direct-injection 100bhp 1.9dTi turbo-diesel and three 16-valve petrol units : a 95bhp 1.4 (which replaces the 90bhp 1.6e), a 110bhp 1.6 (20bhp up on the eight-valve 1.6e), plus the new range-topping 140bhp two-litre engine from the latest Laguna and Espace.

This more muscular motor, with variable valve timing, has been introduced in response to customers' demands for more power – and they get it; 25bhp extra, in fact, together with 139 lb ft of torque at 3750rpm compared with 127 lb ft at 4250rpm with the old two-litre lump. Renault says that it will do 0-62mph in 9.9sec and has a top speed of 122mph; if so, it will out-perform a two-litre Golf GTi – it certainly feels swift.

A "hot MAC" it may be, but there's nothing brash or boy-racer about it; there's just effortless vigour from the smoothly spinning engine that makes for confident overtaking. It isn't the sweetest of power units as the tacho needle approaches the red line, however, but the extra turn of speed now on tap makes it a decidedly lively and entertaining performer. It's a relaxed main road

cruiser, too, aided, no doubt, by the improved noise insulation measures. In addition, Renault reckons that its average fuel consumption is 16 per cent (almost 5mpg) better than the old two-litre's.

All Scenics now come on 15-inch wheels, there are disc brakes all round (with ABS as standard) and the retuned four-torsion-bar rear suspension incorporates a 14mm-wider track. There doesn't feel much difference on the road on the lower-powered models – the ride remains firm but well cushioned and there's still noticeable body lean when you drive briskly along winding roads.

It's a different story in the case of the two litre, which has stiffer suspension and wider, lower profile (195/60) tyres, which reduce roll and increase the grip without adding too much to ride harshness. But avoid the optional 16-inch OZ Superturismo alloys on 55-Series rubber if you're preference is for restful progress on B-roads.

Renault insists that incorporating more seats into the Scenic would satisfy only eight per cent of customers, so it's a five-seater as before – never mind what the opposition is up to. The interior remains as cleverly adaptable as we describe it in our earlier full test report (R9826), but a few significant changes have been made, including a restyled facia with easier-to-read dials (white sports type in the two litre) and a height-adjustable driver's seat. Rearward vision is improved by reshaped and lower-set rear head restraints.

Stowage space, already generous, has been further increased by a facia top glovebox, a pull-out drawer

under the driver's seat and, on air-conditioned models, a refrigerated compartment below the centre console that will keep three drinks cans cool.

The tall, rectangular shaped load space offers the additional versatility of a split-folding rear parcel shelf with four different settings, and, on RXE and Monaco models, an opening tailgate window that allows easier access to the boot space in awkward areas.

The same safety features that won Megane its class-leading position in Euro NCAP crash tests feature in the Scenic. These include driver, passenger and side airbags on all models, pretensioners and load limiters for the front seatbelts, as well as for the two outer rear belts, and two Isofix child seat anchorage points at the rear. For added security, the doors and tailgate lock automatically at speeds above 6mph.

VERDICT

The new Scenic's "cleaner", more powerful and economical engines, the wide range of models and equipment, and the broad span of keener prices give fresh impetus to an already cleverly conceived and well executed model. They're timely, too, giving extra ammunition to the Scenic in its battle for mini-MPV – sorry, MAC – supremacy.

If forthcoming rivals are able to equal this appealing new model's all-round competence, they will be doing very well. If they can *better* it, MPV buyers are in for a treat.

FACTS AND FIGURES*

	1.4	1.6	2.0	1.9dTi
BODY				
Type and style		five-door, five-seat mini-MPV		
Length x width (cm)		413 x 174 (with mirrors folded)		
Trim levels		16v. SR. RT. Alizé. Sport. Sport Alizé. RXE. Monaco		
Trims available	five	six	three	six
ENGINES				
Capacity (cc)	1390	1598	1998	1870
Valves/fuel	16v/petrol	16v/petrol	16v/petrol	8v/direct-injection turbo-diesel
Power (bhp/rpm)	95/6000	110/5750	140/5500	100/4000
Torque (lb ft/rpm)	94/3750	109/3750	147/2000	139/3750
TRANSMISSION				
Type	five-speed manual or four speed automatic (except 1.4). Front-wheel drive			
CHASSIS				
Suspension - front	independent MacPherson damper/struts, coil springs, lower arms and an anti-roll bar			
- rear	independent by trailing arms and four transverse torsion bars			
Steering	rack and pinion with hydraulic power assistance			
Brakes	discs front and rear with anti-lock control and electronically controlled rear brake apportioning			
Tyres	185/65R15H	185/65R15H	195/60R15H	185/65R15H
PERFORMANCE				
0-62mph (sec)	12.9	11.2	9.9	12.7
Maximum speed (mph)	107	115	122	108
Mpa (gov't combined)	39.8	38.7	35.3	47.9

* Manufacturer's figures