



Renault Scenic

Featuring 2.0 16v Sport Alizé



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 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 Meganas, 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 twin-cam, 16-valve 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 reckons that this Scenic will out-perform a Golf GTI, sprinting from 0-62mph in 9.9sec – which is exactly what we recorded, so it's certainly swift. For the record, though, our car fell 7mph short of the claimed maximum speed of 122mph.

A "hot MAC" it may be, but there's nothing brash or boy-racer about it; there's just effortless vigour from the eagerly spinning engine that makes for confident

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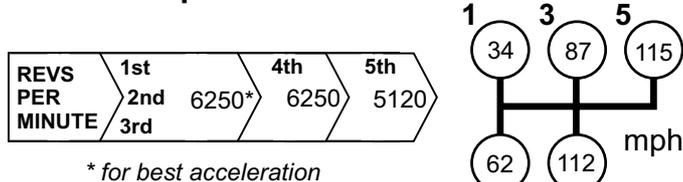
PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds

mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS		1.7	3.7	6.1	9.7
IN 5TH GEAR		5.8	12.1	18.7	26.9
IN 4TH GEAR		4.3	8.7	13.1	17.6

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES		13.3/9.1		12.9/8.8	
			12.1/8.7		14.8/8.9

Maximum speeds



FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade: unleaded Premium petrol, 95 octane

Type of use - air conditioning off*	mpg
In the city - heavy traffic	20
In the country - quiet driving	42
Typical mpg overall	30
Realistic tank range †	55 litres/360 miles

† based on fuel gauge/warning lamp and filling station experience - not nominal tank capacity

*with air conditioning switched on, consumption will increase by 2-4% in winter and 4-8% in summer

FOR THE TECHNICAL

ENGINE

Type front-mounted, transverse four cylinders in line with iron block and alloy head; five main bearings

Size 82.7 x 93.0mm = 1998cc

Power 140bhp at 5500rpm

Torque 189 lb ft at 3750rpm

Valves belt-driven double overhead camshafts actuating four valves per cylinder via bucket tappets

Fuel/ignition electronic multi-point sequential petrol injection integrated with programmed distributorless ignition. 60-litre fuel tank with low-level warning light and digital range display

TRANSMISSION

Type five-speed manual; front-wheel drive

Mph per 1000rpm 22.5 in 5th, 17.9 in 4th

CHASSIS

Suspension front: independent MacPherson damper/struts, coil springs, lower wishbones and an anti-roll bar. Rear: independent trailing arms and four transverse torsion bars. Telescopic dampers front and rear

Steering rack and pinion with hydraulic power assistance. 3.5 turns between full locks. Turning circle diameters average 10.6m between kerbs, with 18.3m circle for one turn of the wheel

Wheels 6½J x 15in alloy with 195/60R15H tyres. (Optional extra 205/55ZR16 Bridgestone Potenza S-02 tyres on test car.) Full-size alloy spare

Brakes ventilated discs front, solid discs rear with vacuum servo. Electronic anti-lock control (ABS) and rear brake apportioning valve (EBV) standard

SAFETY AND SECURITY FEATURES

Assessed on their effectiveness and convenience (the more black blobs the better)

Seatbelts

front ●●●●○ rear ●●●●○

Door locking

central locking?

remote control?

Head restraints

front ●●●●○ rear ●●●●○

auto window closure?

deadlocks?

Interior

safety padding ●●●●○

driver's airbag?

other airbags? (front passenger + two side)

side impact protection ●●●●○

Luggage

Secure from interior/hidden from view ●●●●○

Alarm

engine immobilised?

Fuel anti-spillage ●●●●○

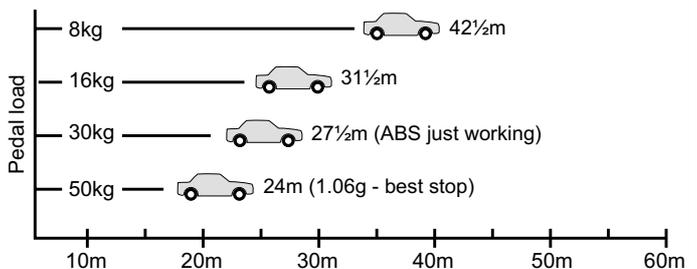
standard on test car dealer fitted option not available

Euro NCAP crash test results - not available

BRAKES

Pedal feel ●●●●○ Behaviour in an emergency ●●●●○ Handbrake ●●●●○

Dry road stopping distance from 50mph (with standard ABS)
A good-to-average best stop is about 26m at 15-20kg pedal load

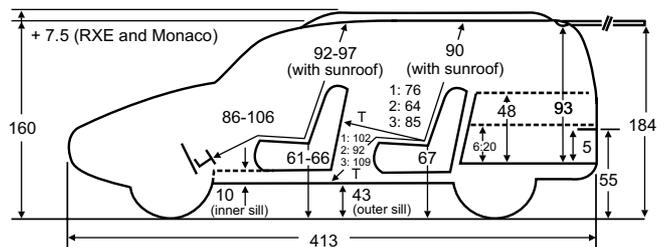


Fade test: pedal load required for a moderate (34m/1.75g) stop:
14kg at start of test, 12kg at end of test (Ideal brakes show no change)

MEASUREMENTS

Centimetres

5-door MPV

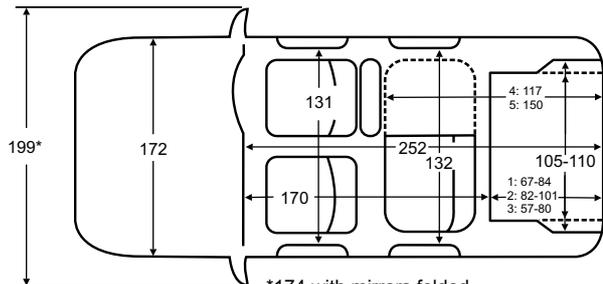


T: typical back seat space behind medium-sized front occupants

1: 5-seat mode, rear seats fully rearwards

2: 5-seat mode, rear seats full forwards

3: 4-seat mode, rear seats maximum rearwards travel



*174 with mirrors folded

4: (three) rear seats folded

5: rear seats removed

6: load cover on lower height setting

overtaking. It isn't the smoothest or the sweetest of power units as the tachometer approaches the red line, neither is it too keen to trundle along at low revs. However, the extra turn of speed now on tap makes it a decidedly lively and entertaining performer provided you keep it revving briskly; by 4000rpm it really means business. It's a relaxed main road cruiser, too, aided no doubt by the improved noise insulation measures. Wind noise from around the roof is quite prominent at speed, though.

For such a live wire, the Scenic's fuel consumption is respectable. On the face of it, 30mpg overall is nothing special, but the two-litre's thirst varies considerably, according to how you drive. Exploit the eagerness and mpg will be down in the low twenties, but drive with decorum and a light right foot and over 40mpg is on the cards. Even mainly motorway cruising results in 33mpg or thereabouts.

All Scenics now come on 15in 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 16in OZ Superturismo alloys on 55-Series rubber if your preference is for restful progress on B-roads. They bump-thump over potholes and can "tramline" irritatingly along ridges, the steering wheel twitching in your hands with a mind of its own. To be fair, though, this isn't a problem on most main roads and motorways.

The brakes feel fine in everyday use and give impressive all-square emergency stops. But to achieve their excellent best stop (over 1g) you have to apply an indecently hard push on the pedal.

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 fascia with white sports-type instruments and a useful multi-function trip computer on the two-litre. There's also height adjustment for the driver's seat, but we wish the seats were more supportive. They're too squidgy for our liking and also rather short, so the long-legged don't have enough thigh support. Some form of cushion tilt wouldn't come amiss, either. Rearward vision is improved by rear head restraints that lower into the seat backs.

Stowage space, already generous, has been further increased by a fascia-top glove-box, a pull-out drawer under the driver's seat and, on this air-conditioned Sport Alizé, 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.

Safety features 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 – something you'll either love or hate.

VERDICT

Thanks to the new two-litre, 16-valve engine, no one can now complain of the Scenic's lack of performance. Although there's still room for improvement in this power units refinement, it adds a fresh dimension to an already cleverly conceived, well executed model. There's now also a wider range of trims and equipment on this latest range, together with a broad span of keen prices. All of these are timely as they give extra ammunition to the already ingenious Scenic in its battle for mini-MPV – sorry, MAC – supremacy. If you don't actually need a seven seater, the Scenic will do very nicely, thank you.



LIKES AND GRIPES

Good all round vision	...	but door mirrors could be bigger
Powerful handbrake action	...	but lever is rather low set
Lumbar adjustment for driver's seat	...	but it doesn't provide enough support
Excellent selection of storage spaces	...	but there's no handy "curry hook"
Air conditioning standard with four of the eight trim levels	...	but its warning light is tiny and almost impossible to see
Instruments easy to read in daylight and after dark	...	but not in the half light – illumination is inadequate
"Smart" wipers adjust to car's speed and clear back window when reverse is selected	...	but don't reach to driver's pillar and leave large unwiped triangle top left of screen



HOW THE SCENIC 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 (m/kg)	Maximum legroom - front (cm)	Typical leg/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	Steering turns/ (p) circle (m)	Overall length (cm)
RENAULT SCENIC 2.0 16v (5)	4/1998/140	3120	9.7	26.9/17.6	30	24/50*	106	102/76	3.5/10.6	413
Daihatsu Grand Move 1.6 (5)	4/1590/90	3370	10.8	28.1/20.0	35	28/16	103	109/75	3.7/9.5	410
Fiat Multipla 1.6 (6)	4/1581/103	3780	12.7	29.2/20.6	29	27½/20*	106	114/83	2.8/11.1	399
Mitsubishi Space Star 1.8GDI(5)	4/1834/121	3150	10.6	27.1/20.4	38	27½/18*	109	103/75	3.1/10.0	403
Peugeot 806 2.0 (7)	4/1998/123	3210	13.4	35.1/23.4	30	27/25*	102	97/78	3.0/11.8	445
Vauxhall Zafira 1.8 (7)	4/1796/113	3630	11.3	22.4/16.3	32	27/14*	103	102/75	3.2/11.0	432
() maximum seating capacity in brackets						* with ABS		(p) all power assisted		