

## Renault 21 Savanna 2.0GTX



**F**RESH FROM ITS LATE 1989 (PHASE 2) facelift, when hatchback versions joined the existing saloon and Savanna estate car line-up, the 21 is Renault's contender for the vital medium-sized family car sector.

Along with a new, sleeker nose (to match the 'corporate' look of later models), the facelift introduced clearer instruments, larger vents and new rotary heater controls, all housed in a more handsome, soft-plastic fascia moulding. Trim and equipment levels were improved across the board, too.

Looking smarter than ever in its latest guise, the stylish Savanna estate is becoming increasingly popular as a comfortable holdall for big families, with keen value counting strongly in its favour. Having previously tested the transverse-engined 1.7-litre version, it's the turn of the 2 litre this time, which, unusually, has its power unit turned through 90 degrees, to be mounted longitudinally.

Supporting two 1.7-litre and two 1.9-litre diesel versions, the 2 litre comes as this GTX, or as the top-

of-the-range TXE. A seven-seater 'Family Pack', which provides a third, forward-facing row of two seats, is a £450 factory option on all but the cheaper 1.7 and diesel models, with four-speed automatic transmission available on both 2-litre versions.

### At the wheel

The GTX's 2-litre, all-alloy 'four' produces 120bhp at 5500rpm and 124 lb ft of torque, which peaks at a relatively high 4500rpm. However, its broad-band pull and well-chosen gear ratios mean that it feels far less 'peaky' than these figures suggest. With some 30 per cent more power than the 1.7's 92bhp, the 2 litre is naturally swifter, yet the 1.7 is far from pedestrian and the bigger engine consolidates its junior's performance; it certainly doesn't totally eclipse it.

But, while this gives the Savanna a useful boost in performance, it doesn't do fuel economy any favours. From a near top-of-the-class 37mpg overall in 1.7 form, the 2-litre's 31½mpg is rather less competitive among our selected rivals – only the vintage, hefty

Volvo 240 Estate is thirstier. It's a relatively small price to pay, though, for across-the-board improved urge that makes everything feel just that little more relaxed.

With smooth, easy controls (apart from the clutch which is a might heavy), good all-round vision and light, if feel-less, power steering, the Savanna proves popular with a wide range of drivers. Although it's as long as a Granada, it rarely feels that big.

The driver is provided with a seat-height adjuster and adjustable lumbar support, but the front passenger has neither. Operating on the back of the cushion, the seat-height adjuster allows the degree of thigh support to be tailored, too. Lumbar support is only just adequate, however, even with the adjuster set fully firm – and some drivers found the lever-operated backrests wouldn't come upright enough.

The Savanna provides a firmer ride than Renaults of old, with safe, if not terribly inspiring, handling to match. In fact, things can become rather turbulent over poor surfaces; as we've noted before, it doesn't match the saloon in this respect.

### Inside story

Interior space is what the Savanna is all about. Whether you're carrying people, luggage, or both, there's more than enough to go round in the front, back or in the load area. There's a 60/40 split back seat, as well as a large centre armrest and a roller-blind security cover to conceal the cargo; beware of its vicious spring-tensioner, though. All Savannas come with roofrack side rails, too. The back seat arrangement is well thought out: up with the cushion, down with the backrest. With seatbelts built into the seat frame, there's no messing about with loose belt tails, either.

The dearer 'Family' version adds a third bench seat for two, which folds up behind the middle row when not needed. Lacking much in the way of legroom, though, this is best suited to small children, and as it's a factory-fitted option, it can't easily be added later, should your family suddenly acquire two extra members!

Although instantly recognisable as Renault, interior furnishings look decidedly posher than they used to, and large, wide-opening rear doors make it easy for passengers to get in and out.

Simpler to use and looking much neater, too, the rotary heater controls are a welcome change, but the facia vents are too closely tied to the heater. As well as front door bins, a centre console cubby and a rubber-matted shelf atop the facia, there's a lidded, rubber-lined mini glovebox above the heater controls. Its shallow depth will only just take three cassettes, though.

In GTX form, the Savanna comes with electric windows, 'Plip' remote-controlled locking (of the doors, tailgate and fuel flap), power-steering and Renault's excellent remote control stalk for the six-speaker radio/cassette unit. The TXE adds higher-grade trim, alloy wheels, foglamps, electric rear windows, tilt-adjustable steering and a trip computer – in return for an extra £1900.

### VERDICT

**While the 1.7-litre Savanna boasts impressive performance and economy, the 2 litre is a far better bet. Although fuel consumption suffers, the bigger engine feels more relaxed, and because it doesn't have to work so hard, it improves on the smaller unit's mediocre refinement. That said, the 2 litre is nothing special in this respect.**

**The roomy, comfortable interior combined with excellent cargo-carrying facilities, make it a convincing family holdall, but we remain a little disappointed with some aspects of the ride and front seat comfort. The new facia and tidied-up frontal appearance are marked improvements, though. Costing generally a good deal less than most rivals, the Savanna continues to offer a lot of car for your money.**

**Its stylish looks may not have the Chieftain-like qualities of the ever-popular Volvo Estate, but let's face it, the Savanna is nearly £1500 cheaper, just as roomy and, some would say, streets better looking. Case dismissed!**

<b>HOW IT COMPARES</b>	(all 5-door estates)	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 (in)
Renault 21 Savanna 2.0GTX	1995/120	120	9.9	24.4/18.0	31½	102/45*	42½	39½/30	3.3/35¾	184¾	
Citroen BX 19TZi*	1905/125	121	8.9	20.4/14.5	34	98/30	41½	41½/30½	3.0/35	173¼	
Peugeot 405 1.9GTxi*	1905/125	119	10.1	25.0/16.9	34½	104/27*	43	40/30¼	3.1/34½	173¼	
Rover Montego 2.0GTi*	1994/117	114	10.0	30.7/18.6	37½	99/45	41½	40/29	3.5/36	176	
Vauxhall Astra 1.8SXi	1796/112	118	9.8	20.1/14.1	37	91/38*	42½	37½/26	4.1/32½	166½	
Volvo 240GL	1986/117	107	12.2	33.1/22.2	28½	100/45	40½	40/29½	3.5/32¼	189	
Renault Savanna 1.7GTS	1721/90	112	11.3	29.7/21.5	37	100/32	42½	39½/30	3.3/35¾	184¾	

\* performance and economy figures for saloon/hatch version      \*with ABS      † all power-assisted (except Astra)

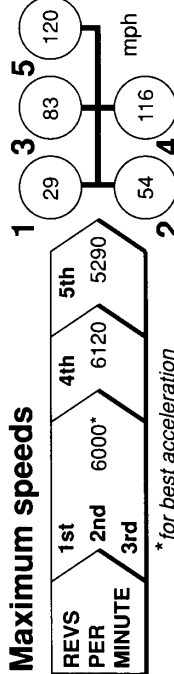
## PERFORMANCE

**Acceleration** time in seconds

<b>STANDING START</b>	0-30mph	3.2	0-60mph	9.7	1/4 mile	17.2
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<b>THROUGH THE GEARS</b>	30	40	50	60	70
		1.8	3.8	6.6	9.9
<b>IN 5TH GEAR</b>		6.3	12.4	17.9	24.4
<b>IN 4TH GEAR</b>		4.6	8.6	13.1	18.0

<b>20 mph</b>	30	40	50	60	70
		13.1/9.8		11.6/8.5	
<b>5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES</b>			12.4/8.6		12.0/9.4



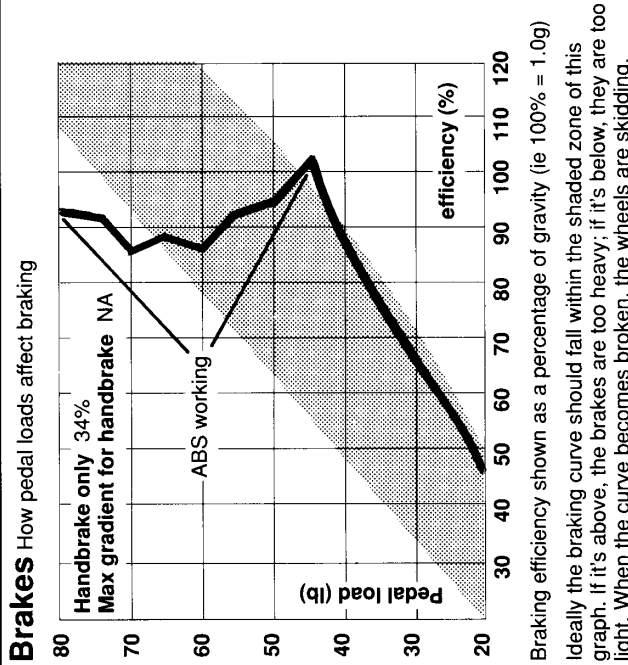
## FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade for tests: 95 octane unleaded

<b>Normal range</b>	mpg
Hard driving, heavy traffic	26
Short journeys in the suburbs	25
Motorway - 70mph cruising	33
Brisk driving, mixed roads	31 1/2
Gentle driving - rural roads	35
<b>Typical mpg overall</b>	<b>31 1/2</b>
Realistic tank range*	55 litres/380 miles

\* based on gauge/warning lamp and filling station experience

## SAFETY



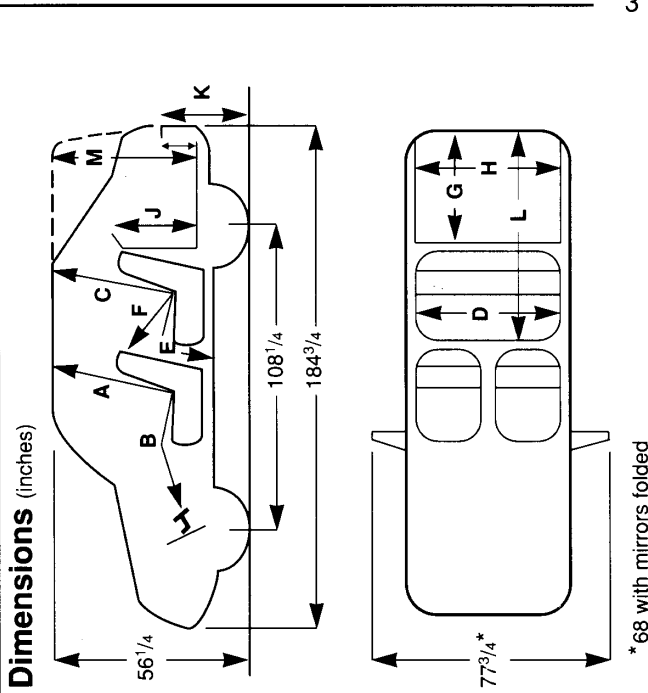
**Fade test**  
How hard use or water affects braking. (Ideal brakes show no change.)

<b>Pedal load needed for 75% stop (lb)</b>	At start of test	38
	After constant use	36
	After severe use	38
	After watersplash	NA
	Number of stops to recover	NA

**Safety check list**

<b>Steering</b>	true 'feel' of the road?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Brakes</b>	powerful?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	sensible effort?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	fade resistant?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Seatbelts</b>	front - effective?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	convenient?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	rears - effective?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	convenient?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Head restraints</b>	front - effective?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	rear - effective?	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Interior</b>	thoroughly padded?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Fuel</b>	shielded filler?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	protected tank?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## MEASUREMENTS



**Kerb weight in lb (full of fuel)**

**Inside** (inches)

<b>A</b> Front headroom	38 1/2	<b>G</b> Load length	44
<b>B</b> Front legroom (min - max)	32 1/2-42 1/2	<b>H</b> Load floor width (min - max)	44 1/2-51
<b>C</b> Rear headroom	38 1/2	<b>J</b> Load height	13 1/2
<b>D</b> Back seat width (between armrests)	52 3/4	<b>K</b> Sill height (inner/outer)	0/23
<b>E</b> Typical rear legroom*	39 1/2	<b>L</b> Load length	69 1/2
<b>F</b> Typical rear kneeroom*	30	<b>M</b> Load height (to tailgate hinge)	29 1/2

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

## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

### ENGINE

**Type and size** front-mounted, longitudinal 4 in line; water-cooled. 88mm bore x 82mm stroke = 1995cc. Aluminium alloy block and head; 5 main bearings

**Compression ratio** 10.1:1

**Valve gear** single belt-driven overhead camshaft actuating 2 valves per cylinder via rockers

**Fuel system** Renix electronic multi-point fuel injection; 66-litre (14.5-gallon) tank with low fuel-level warning lamp. Fuel required: unleaded or leaded, 95 octane minimum

**Ignition system** fully programmed electronic (integral with fuel injection system) with knock sensor, via distributor

**Maximum power (DIN-net)** 120bhp at 5500rpm

**Maximum torque (DIN-net)** 124 lb ft at 4500rpm

### TRANSMISSION

**Clutch** 8.5in diaphragm-spring, dry plate; cable operated. Pedal load: 28 lb/5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in

**Gearbox** 5 speed (all synchromesh) and reverse (4-speed automatic optionally available).

**Ratios:** first 4.09, second 2.18, third 1.41, fourth 1.03, fifth 0.86 and reverse 3.54:1

**Final drive** 3.44:1 to front wheels

**Mph per 1000rpm** 22.68 in top, 18.96 in 4th

**Rpm at 70mph** 3090 in top gear

### CHASSIS

**Suspension** front: independent MacPherson damper/struts with coil springs, lower wishbones and anti-roll bar. Rear: torsion beam axle with trailing arms, transverse torsion bar springs and anti-roll bar; 'helper' coil springs on rear dampers. Dampers: telescopic all round

**Steering** power-assisted rack and pinion (standard on all except TS and TD) with 3.3 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 35<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>ft between kerbs, with 57<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> ft for one turn of the wheel

**Wheels** 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>J steel (optional alloy on test car) with 185/65R14 85H tyres (Continental CH 51 on test car)

**Brakes** 10.4in ventilated discs front, 9.0in drums rear, with vacuum servo. Teves ABS (optional on GTX and TXE versions) fitted to test car – includes 10.0in plain discs at rear

