

# Renault Scenic

*Featured model: 1.6 16v Dynamique*



## AT A GLANCE

*considering size, price and rivals*

<b>Overtaking ability</b>	★☆☆☆☆
<b>Space/practicality</b>	★★★★☆
<b>Controls/displays</b>	★★★★☆
<b>Safety</b>	★★★★☆
<b>Handling/steering</b>	★★★☆☆
<b>Comfort</b>	★★★★☆
<b>Fuel economy</b>	★★★★☆

## SPECIFICATION

**engine** 1598cc, 4-cylinder, petrol; 110bhp at 5750rpm, 109 lb ft at 3750rpm; belt-driven twin overhead camshafts, 16 valves

**transmission** 5-speed manual, front-wheel drive; 20.2mph/1000rpm in 5th, 16.1 in 4th

**suspension** front: independent damper/struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar.

Rear: independent, four transverse torsion bars, trailing arms. Telescopic dampers front and rear

**steering** hydraulic power assistance; 3.5 turns lock-to-lock; 10.6m diameter turning circle between kerbs (18.3m for one turn of the wheel)

**brakes** ventilated discs front, solid discs rear with standard anti-lock and brake force distribution controls

**wheels/tyres** 6½in alloy with 205/50R16 89H tyres (Michelin Pilot Primacy on test car); full-size (alloy) spare

## LIKES ...

heaps of hidey-holes and storage slots  
air conditioned coolbox for drinks  
"best-in-class" radio controls' stalk  
air con + twin sunroofs on most models

## and GRIPES

vague "hit-and-hope" gearshift quality  
fr armrest hinders gear/handbrake use  
low-end lethargy, especially if laden  
some fittings still feel a bit frail

deck", apart from a vague gearshift and cramped pedal layout. Its worthy blend of a relaxed ride, clever flexibility and myriad handy, well thought out conveniences remains as impressive as ever.

The comfortable back seat offers ample leg-stretching space and headroom, but proves "cosy" for more than a couple of well-fed adults. All three seats (including the narrower centre one) flip-fold, slide and take out, and each sports a head restraint and a full, three-point seatbelt. Removing the centre seat (and shifting the remaining pair on to an inboard set of floor mounts) turns the Scenic into a really relaxed four-seat runabout with limo-like legroom to stretch out in.

Thanks to good height under the shelf and a complete lack of wheelarch intrusion, the large, slab-sided load area eagerly eats up all manner of cargoes, while a newly added opening tailgate glass proves a handy convenience.

**R**ENAULT MAY HAVE WRITTEN the rule book on smaller, more affordable MPVs (not to mention totally dominating – at least for a while – the sector it helped to create), but it didn't take other car makers long to cotton on to a patently imaginative idea. Since the Scenic arrived on the scene, rivals have flooded into (and out of) showrooms thick and fast.

Not least among these are the roomy Citroën Picasso, Vauxhall's seven-seat Zafira and the controversially styled, six-berth Fiat Multipla, the last two stumping up a seat or two more for the school run than the Scenic's sum-total of five.

Renault hasn't rested on its laurels, though. Of late, the ever-popular people-carrier has undergone a Phase II facelift, together with a recent expansion and renaming of trim and equipment levels.

Along the way, Renault has also quietly slipped a 1.8-litre version into the Scenic's multi-valve petrol engine line-up, which now spans from a 95bhp, 1.4-litre "starter" to the brisk 140bhp two-litre. This is supported by a pair of 1.9 turbo-diesels, the newest being the 105bhp, common-rail dCi.

The 1.6 16-valver we sample here serves up a 15bhp boost over its eight-valve predecessor. But despite this and modest overall gearing, acceleration remains more adequate than ample compared with this engine's livelier, more frugal performance in the lighter, less lofty Megane hatchback.

Inside, there's little to criticise about the Scenic's sportily white-dialled "flight

## VERDICT

**It may not be the roomiest, best built or most rewarding mid-sized MPV to drive, but the ever-versatile Scenic remains a complete and convincing contender in this class. It got so much right first time that, wisely in our view, Renault has merely fine-tuned it (rather than risk making wholesale changes) in its bid to keep the seemingly ever-growing pack of pretenders at bay.**

## THE SCENIC RANGE

**size and type** lower medium (mid-priced) MPV  
**trim levels** Freeway, Sport and Elegance "Collections" with several versions in each  
**engines** petrol: 4 cylinder/1.4-litre/95bhp, 4/1.6/110, 4/1.8/120, 4/2.0/140; turbo-diesel: 4/1.9/80, 4/1.9/105  
**drive** front-wheel drive, 5-speed manual (stepped 4-speed, torque converter automatic option with 1.6 and 2.0 engines

OVERTAKING ABILITY <span style="float:right">★☆☆○○</span>					
<i>Bulky body makes the 16-valve 1.6 feel less lively on its feet than paper figures suggest, especially in higher gears. Better than its eight-valve forerunner, but by no means the briskest in this class</i>					
acceleration in seconds	through gears*	③ <sup>rd</sup> gear	④ <sup>th</sup> gear	⑤ <sup>th</sup> gear	
20-40mph	3.6	6.8	9.3	13.3	
30-50mph	4.5	6.6	9.3	13.3	
40-60mph	5.8	6.9	9.5	13.7	
50-70mph	7.5	7.7	10.0	14.9	
<b>30-70mph</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>28.2</b>	
max speed in each gear (*using 6250rpm for best acceleration)					
gear	①*	②*	③*	④*	⑤
speed (mph)	31	56	78	101	110

SPACE AND PRACTICALITY <span style="float:right">★★★☆☆</span>			
<i>Others offer more seats, but Scenic's mix-and-match versatility still hugely practical. Back "cosy" for three big blokes, but rear seats all slide. Limo-like space as a four-seater with centre seat removed</i>			
<i>in centimetres (5-door MPV)</i>		<b>inside</b>	(† with sunroof)
<b>outside</b>		front - legroom	87-108
length	417	- headroom	94-98†
width - inc mirrors	198	rear - typical leg/	102/*
- mirrors folded	173	kneeroom	76*
height (no roof bars)	160	- headroom	92†
load sill height	3/56	- hiproom	132
<i>(inside/outside)</i>		<b>load space</b> (all seats in use)	
<b>steering</b>		(litres/cu ft)	385/13.5
turns lock-to-lock	3.5	load length	73-165
turning circle (metres)	10.6	full length to fascia	250
easy to park/garage?		load width	105-110
	★★★☆☆	load height (to shelf)	25/50
		(to top of aperture)	91
* 109/85 as four-seater			

**CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS** ★★★☆☆  
*Lofty, commanding cockpit, height adjusters on both front seats and tilt-adjust wheel, but gearshift a bit vague. Splendid radio controls' stalk the best of its type - fine safety feature, too*



HOW THE SCENIC 1.6 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 legroom - front (cm)	typical leg/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	steering turns/ circle (m)	overall length (cm)
RENAULT SCENIC 1.6 [5]	4/1598/110	3465	12.0	28.2/19.3	34½	26/40	108	102/76 <sup>1</sup>	3.5/10.6	417
Citroën Picasso 1.8 [5]	4/1749/117	3205	10.6	27.6/17.6	35	27½/18	106	95/72	3.3/11.9	428
Daewoo Tacuma 2.0CDX [5]	4/1998/119	3350	11.0	24.4/17.0	29	28½/20	103	103/77	3.0/10.4	435
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
Nissan Almera Tino 1.8 [5]	4/1769/114	3170	11.4	29.2/20.2	33	26½/10	108	98/71°	3.2/10.7	427
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

\* max seating capacity in brackets

† all with ABS <sup>1</sup> 109/85 as 4-seater <sup>°</sup> 105/81 as 4-seater

SAFETY <span style="float:right">★★★★○</span>	
<i>Four airbags up front, plus "curtain" bags giving extra protection front and rear, three-point seatbelts and head restraints all round, and Isofix child-seat mounts net the Scenic a class-leading 4-star NCAP rating</i>	
<b>braking</b>	<b>dry road stopping distance</b>
pedal feel <span style="float:right">★★☆☆○</span>	from 50mph (with standard ABS)
in emergency <span style="float:right">★★★☆☆</span>	pedal load
handbrake <span style="float:right">★★★☆☆</span>	unhurried 10kg
	sudden 40kg
	+4kg ie 44kg
	distance
	36m
	26m best stop
	27m ABS on

EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS 1.4 tested Mar 2001			
front impact	69%	side impact	100%
overall	85% ★★☆☆○	pedestrian rating	★★☆☆○

SECURITY FEATURES	
central locking	✓
remote control	✓
auto window closure	✗
deadlocks	✗
alarm	✗ <sup>1</sup>
immobiliser	✓
luggage security	★★☆☆○
✓ standard <sup>1</sup> standard on Privilege models ✗ not available	

**HANDLING AND STEERING** ★★★☆☆  
*Agile and wieldy for an MPV, but tall build means more rock-and-roll in the turns. Low-geared steering lacks ultimate 'bite', but Scenic still fairly happy to be hurried*



**COMFORT** ★★★☆☆  
*Plenty in the front, but less seat width and heating/ventilation behind. Rides well generally, but squat tyres fidget and fret over bad road faults*

**FUEL ECONOMY** ★★★★○  
*Tall build takes a toll at the fuel pumps, but smallest-engined Scenic does its best to beat this handicap. Less frugal than official figures would have you believe, but still a firm favourite in the mpg stakes*

AA test results (mpg)	official figures (mpg)
worst (hard/urban)	25
best (gentle/rural)	45
<b>overall mpg on test</b>	<b>34½</b>
realistic tank capacity	54 litres
typical range	410 miles
urban	29.4
extra urban	47.1
<b>combined</b>	<b>38.7</b>
CO <sub>2</sub> emissions	173g/km
car tax band	C