



Citroën DS3 Cabrio

Less is more

Car review | The Citroën DS3 mainly owes its success to two factors: looks and being fun to drive. How does one improve on that? The designers said there was no room to improve its looks. Stronger engines may deliver even more fun, but at a price. Yet, Citroën found a way to enhance the fun: remove the roof! Is less of a DS3 more fun to drive?

"Remove the roof" is easier said than done. The roof is an essential part of the structural integrity of the car. Without a roof other parts of the vehicle need to be reinforced to ensure safety. That makes a car more expensive and heavier, which affects driving pleasure. Also, according to the designers it is hard to preserve the unique lines of the DS3 when opting for a traditional drop top.

In the past Citroën offered a special construction on the "C3 Pluriel". A cloth roof opened up and the rear window folded away neatly. Next the pillars above the windows could be removed to turn the car into a fully-fledged convertible. This construction proved too complicated to use and lacked reliability. In the end many C3 Pluriel owners hardly ever made full use of the unique possibilities of their car.



Open top

For the "DS Cabrio" Citroën chose another path. At the press of a button a cloth roof opens up to the rear window. At speeds over 50 mph this will lead to turbulence in the cabin, so at a second press of the button the rear window moves down and the whole "package" rests on the rear shelf.

The advantage of this construction is that the DS3 Cabrio is as rigid as the DS3 hatchback. The system is easy to use and can even be operated at speeds up to 80 mph. Another bonus is that both the extra weight and price are modest. The roof adds 25 kg and £2,000 to the car.



Yet this solution comes with some drawbacks. The most important of which is that the DS3 Cabrio is not a true cabriolet. Because there are still metal beams around the windows, the driver doesn't have a total feeling of freedom. This is merely a Citroën DS3 with an open top; that doesn't make it a convertible.

To make matters worse: the folded roof blocks the view in the rear-view mirror. The boot lid does not pivot, but instead slides straight up. Although the boot is fairly large (245 litres) for a car like this, the access to the boot is small.

Looks

An obvious advantage of the chosen construction is that the looks of the DS3 have not been affected. Even better: the Cabrio looks even sleeker than the regular DS3. This is also thanks to the special colours on the test car combining white with "infinite blue". The roof can be executed in several patterns, which also suits the car very well.



The dark blue / purplish colour is also used on the dashboard and the seats. The cloth upholstery is preferred over the optional leather trim. This isn't just because of its looks, but also because the leather is too slippery. When cornering fast the occupants of the car are shaken and moved involuntarily on their leather seats. The brochure states that the DS3 Cabrio is a true five seater car, but in reality this turns out differently. With a tall driver and/or co-driver in the front the seats are literally moved against the back seat, so legroom in the rear is minimal.



Handling

Citroën promises the Cabrio handles as well as a regular DS3 and that's no lie. The roof consists of three layers and that's why the Cabrio is almost as quiet as the basic DS3. Only when driving through a tunnel is extra noise audible, which reflects from the ceiling of the tunnel through the roof of the car. As

well as that, some loose internal parts of the roof produced extra noise while driving.

When the "Sport Chic" is chosen, every mile with the DS3 is a joy. This is because everything is in an almost perfect balance. With the eager 1.6 litre "THP" in the front, the weight distribution over the front and rear wheels is exactly right. The steering isn't too heavy or too light, but again spot on.



Thanks to the sports suspension, handling is sublime. This makes the driver want to drive hard, because this is when the car best demonstrates how well the chassis is balanced. The excellent handling also means there's a huge safety margin. When the driver underestimates a bend, the DS3 can corner with incredible speeds while not even breaking a sweat.

Performance

The turbo engine develops 156 PS / 240 Nm and reacts instantly to every command from the throttle. The engine is quiet, and just like with a real sports car there's an extremely deep ground noise which makes is audible and even "feelable" when the engine moves its muscles. At every gear change the gearbox ratio proves to be perfect, so the DS3 accelerates fiercely and enthusiastically.

Even the brakes exactly match the strength of the engine. The brakes aren't so powerful that the occupants press their noses on the windscreen at the slightest touch of the pedal. Yet the brakes are powerful enough to always stop the car safely and within a minimal distance.

Conclusion

The DS3 is Citroën's premier fun car. So it was obvious to turn it into a convertible. That's because as a general rule a cabriolet looks better and makes the experience more intense than a regular car. Regrettably this isn't the case with the DS3 Cabrio. The simple construction of the roof does preserve the cars looks and the price increase is modest; yet the DS3 doesn't offer the same feeling of freedom as other convertibles.

Handling remains the strongest point of the DS3. Because the Cabrio is as rigid and doesn't weigh more than a regular DS3, the Cabrio drives as well. The "Sport Chic" in particular is a joy to drive thanks to its sports suspension. The turbo engine performs very well, while being fairly economical. Steering, handling and even the seating position are excellent. So the DS3 Cabrio may be less of a convertible than its rivals, it is more fun to drive. ■

Specifications

Citroën DS3 Cabrio THP 155 DSport

Size and weight



Length x width x height	395 x 172 x 145 cm
Wheelbase	246 cm
Kerb weight	1.131 kg
Trailer	570 kg
Trailer - braked	1.150 kg
Fuel capacity	50 l
Luggage space	245 l
Tyre size	205/45R17

Engine and performance



Capacity	1598 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	155 PS @ 6000 rpm
Max torque	240 Nm @ 1400 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	7.4 secs
Top speed	212 km/h
Average mileage	5.9 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	8 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	4.8 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	137 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 19,840
Price base model	Â£ 15,205