



Citroën DS4

Outstanding

Car review | Are you looking for a car that turns every drive into a thrilling experience? Do you want a car that everyone will notice and make your colleagues jealous? Then the Citroën DS4 may just be the car for you. The DS4 is based on the modest C4, but this is the extravagant outgoing type of the new duo of mid-sized cars from Citroën.

It is easy to make a mistake. So when you make cars, don't make the mistake of literally copying a success from the past. This is why the DS4 is not a modern incarnation of the "DS" from the 1960s. Yet, just like the first DS the new DS4 is an innovative car.

That is because the DS4 combines three body styles in one. The DS4 has the dynamic lines of a coupé, the strong stance of an SUV and the practical use of a hatchback. This by itself gives the car a unique look, but the designers went beyond that. When scrutinising the DS4, one finds new details all the time. Take for example the rims, the tiny works of art in the door sill, the bold stitching of the leather seats or the colour-adjustable dashboard lighting. None of these make the car any better, but they sure make the DS4 more exciting.



Space

In the cabin, dark tones set the mood to give the feeling of a true coupé. At the same time much light enters the interior via the huge panoramic windscreen. This window extends further up than usual and, as a bonus, makes it easier to see traffic lights.

The room in the front is just fine. The room in the back is poor, especially the space under the front seats which is minimal, making it hard for the passengers in

the rear to rest their feet. A real deal-breaker is the fact that the rear windows cannot be opened. Just like an SUV the seating position of the DS4 is raised a little, but the difference between this and a regular car isn't as big as Citroën claims.



To increase the fun, Citroën asked Denon to supply the audio system. Denon is a highly reputable maker of home audio systems and they do an excellent job in mobile audio as well. The sound of the (optional) hi-fi system is powerful and spacious. Even at high volume, the system remains crisp and clear. An iPhone/iPod connector is available as well.

Not as exciting, but certainly useful, are the many safety systems available for the DS4. When there's another vehicle in the dead spot of the mirror, a little warning in the DS4's mirror lights up. When accidentally (read: while not indicating) crossing the lines on the road, the driver is warned by means of a vibration in the seat. Forget about the optional massage function: this is no more than repeatedly blowing up and releasing air from the lower back support.

Handling

Striking looks and an eye-catching cabin make for a pleasant introduction, but in the end a car has to convince with its handling. Technically, the DS4 is based on the C4. However, the suspension is much firmer. On top of that the test car was fitted with 19 inch rims, which means the last bit of comfort on bad surfaces has gone as well.



Thanks to its firm suspension, roadholding is sublime. On short, sharp corners the DS4 is almost as agile and alert as a true sports car. In longer bends the wide tyres grip very well. The smaller Citroën DS3 does the same with even more flair and eagerness, but the DS4 is just as capable. Both steering and brakes differ from the C4 and are built to last under the wear and tear of a more sporty driving style. An emergency stop causes a lot of screaming tyres and the braking distance is no more than average.



Diesel

The DS4 is meant to be a sporty car, so only the strongest diesel engine and the strongest petrol engine have been tested. The diesel develops 163 PS / 340 Nm and reacts immediately to every movement of the throttle, regardless of the engine speed. Because of this the "DS4 HDi 160" isn't just quick, it feels quick

as well. Just as easily the diesel can be driven while hardly shifting gears at all; even when the engine speed drops to 1,000 rpm, the engine doesn't budge. At higher revs the engine is clearly audible and that does affect comfort.

The "HDi 160" is not fitted with a stop/start mechanism, but does help the driver to economise by means of a shift indicator. A calm driving style costs about 5.2 litres of diesel per 100 km (54.3 mpg). Driving fast takes 6.4 litres to cover 100 km (44.1 mpg).



Petrol

All petrol engines have been designed in cooperation with BMW. The strongest of which is the "THP 200" which, as the name implies, develops 200 PS. The engine reacts more fiercely on each command of the driver and delivers a bigger punch.

The front wheels can easily handle this power thanks to "intelligent traction control". This system does what the label says: when accelerating quickly the computer tests to see if wheelspin improves performance then adjusts the amount accordingly.

To increase the fun factor, at around 5,000 rpm a valve in the air intake is opened which gives the DS4 a very sporty sound. At the same time the display of the rev counter turns red. Despite the fact that all 200 horsepower had been utilised regularly while test-driving, the average fuel economy was a very modest 6.8 litres per 100 km (41.5 mpg). That is almost as frugal as the diesel, while the petrol engine is more quiet as well.



Conclusion

Many vehicles try to combine two extremes. They have to be sporty yet comfortable or compact and still spacious or extravagant and conservative. In most cases the result is a compromise. This is why Citroën builds two outspoken versions of each model. The "C4" is the more conservative of the new duo of mid-sized cars. The "DS4" driven here is the extravagant, fun loving, sporty sibling.

When it comes to handling, Citroën made a clear decision. The DS4 has a firm suspension and therefore offers less comfort than the C4. Because of this roadholding is much better and the DS4 is great fun to drive.

The fun factor is increased by the engines. The "HDi 160" and "THP 200" driven here are both eager to perform, strong and still pleasantly frugal. The picture is completed by the creative design, which makes the DS4 an outstanding car in every way. ■



Specifications

Citroën DS4 1.6 THP 200 DSport

Size and weight



Length x width x height	428 x 181 x 153 cm
Wheelbase	261 cm
Kerb weight	1.291 kg
Trailer	695 kg
Trailer - braked	1.250 kg
Fuel capacity	60 l
Luggage space	385/1021 l
Tyre size	225/45R18

Engine and performance



Capacity	1598 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	200 PS @ 5800 rpm
Max torque	275 Nm @ 1700 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	7.9 secs
Top speed	235 km/h
Average mileage	6.4 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	8.4 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	5.2 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	149 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 23,650
Price base model	Â£ 18,150