



Renault Megane

Sense and sensibility

A new car should be spacious and practical, yet not too large. The performance should be good, but the fuel economy still decent. A car should be fun to drive, yet safety may not be forgotten. The new Renault Megane promises just that perfect balance between emotion and reason. Does the new Megane deliver?

Renault went completely overboard when designing the previous Megane. The car was to distinguish itself from the masses and so Renault choose a daring design. The result: one half of the public loved it, the other avoided the Renault-dealerships like the plague.

To prevent the latter Renault now choose the so called "love at first sight"-design. The Megane is drawn in such a way that even outsiders should feel instant attraction to the car. But colour plays an important part. All lines focus on the head lights and when those lines are masked by a dark colour, the Megane looks strange and unbalanced.



Interior

Inside the Megane once again offers a good mix of sensibility with an unmistakable French charm. Those who do not feel comfortable in the almost sterile interior of a German car, will most likely feel right at home in the warm, stylish cockpit of the Megane. Optionally the entire interior can be finished in light colours (only the "Privilège"-version), which makes this a great workplace.

Space in the front is ample. The room on the back seats, however, is poor for a car this size. To make matters worse the space under the front seats is so small that there's no room for the feet of the rear passengers, almost forcing them to sit sideways.



As usual by now in this segment, the materials used are more refined than a couple of years ago. Renault also makes great progress in finishing quality, making the Megane III recognisable as a member of the latest generation of mid size hatchbacks.

Trim level

As it should be with a new car, the Megane has some new gadgets on offer. When first introduced two sat nav systems will be available: one based on a CD-ROM and one with a DVD. In April 2009 "Navigation for All" will be introduced: a system that has been developed together with TomTom and is expected to cost no more than 400 pounds.



The airconditioning has two modes: in the "soft" mode it is quiet and hardly noticeable. In the "fast" mode a true polar blizzard can come out of the air vents to cool down the cabin as quickly as possible.

The speedometer uses a digital display, making it easy to read. When a speed limit is set, the edge of the display is green as long as the maximum speed has not been exceeded. When exceeding the set speed limit, the edge turns red.



A shift indicator stimulates the driver to drive economically. Optionally the Megane 3 can be fitted with an electronic parking brake. This works so quickly that it is never disturbing, yet offering extra comfort.

A smart detail: on top of the (movable) ashtray is a space that exactly fits a miniature notebook. Renault lists keyless entry ("Renault Hands Free card") as a novelty, but this is in fact common in this segment (and even with smaller cars!).



Optionally an audio system is available that has been developed in cooperation with "Arkamys". According to the brochure this offers a "unique 3d experience", as a computer manipulates the sound so that it seems as if there are more speakers in the car than there really are. Therefore each instrument should have its own unique place in the sound stage. In reality the promised "3d effect" is minimal, but the Arkamys-system does have a pleasant sound (powerful, controlled and well balanced) and does come highly recommended.

Engines

For this test of the sensible Megane an equally sensible engine was chosen. Completely new for the Megane III is a

1.9 litre diesel engine, developing 130 hp / 300 Nm. This offers a perfect balance between performance and fuel economy. The "130 dCi" performs very well and can even accelerate fiercely when required. The diesel engine is always quiet, but not completely silent. The engine isn't so overpowered that the front wheels cannot handle the power.



Fair performance comes with fair fuel consumption: Renault promises 5,1 litres per 100 km. On a demanding course (lots of mountains, and challenging, twisty roads) the Megane III used a very decent 5,4 litres of diesel per 100 km.

Road holding

The low fuel consumption is owed to reduction in weight. Although the new Megane is larger than its predecessor (9 cm longer, 6 cm wider), the car is still lighter. Together with the improved suspension, this results in excellent handling.

The power steering is electrical, which again makes the car more economical (mechanical power steering is always "on" and therefore always needs power). The steering does feel somewhat artificial, but in this case that's a compliment: thanks to this new technology steering and feed-back are much better than with the more traditional predecessor.

The entire suspension is set to avoid mishaps and to correct them when necessary. Although the Megane can corner at sensationally high speeds, this is certainly not a challenging car. Emphasis is always on safety. Because of that the Megane is fitted with remarkably powerful brakes. So the new Megane is all about sense and sensibility.



Conclusion

Does the third generation Renault Megane deliver a perfect balance between emotion and sensibility? That depends on the requirements of the buyer. Those who are looking for the most tantalizing or most challenging car will be disappointed in the new Megane. The car isn't as radical and daring as its predecessor and aims at a much wider audience.

The Megane distinguishes itself from the competition by modern looks and an unmistakable French charm. The equipment level is excellent and even innovative. The new 130 dCi diesel engine performs very well and has good fuel economy. The handling is exemplary and especially safe. Buyers looking for such a car will be more than satisfied with the new Megane. ■



Specifications

Renault Megane dCi 130 Privilege

Size and weight

Length	430 cm
Width	181 cm
Height	147 cm
Wheelbase	264 cm
Kerb weight	1295 kg
Trailer	695 kg
Trailer - braked	1300 kg
Fuel capacity	60 l
Luggage space	372/1162 l



Engine and performance

Capacity	1870 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/2
Max power	130 bhp @ 3750 rpm
Max torque	300 Nm @ 1750 rpm
Drive	voorwielen
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	9.5 secs
Top speed	205 km/h
Average mileage	5.1 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	6.2 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	4.5 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	135 gr / km



Price

Price	£ 18,398
Price base model	£ 13,701