



Chevrolet Cruze

A tempting offer

Dear company car owner, Chevrolet wants to tempt you with the Cruze. This new sedan seduces with coupé-like lines. Next to that, the Cruze offers excellent value for money, so the lease is low. But is it really such a good idea to trade your trusted company car for a Chevrolet?

Destination of the test drive is Santander, a trendy town on the north coast of Spain. That means the test starts off with a lengthy drive over highways and that's exactly where this latest model from Chevrolet feels at home.

In this price range most brands only offer hatchbacks and Chevrolet is one of the very few to offer a compact sedan. Per pound Chevy offers more metres of metal and that translates into more comfort on long distances.

Also, the Cruze is very silent for a car with this price tag. That is: sounds from the wind can hardly be heard at all. Because of this, excessive noise from the tyres is even more obvious.



Diesel or petrol?

First the 2.0 litre diesel engine with automatic five-speed transmission was tested, the top spec version. To keep the price low, Chevrolet doesn't use the latest engines but rather chooses proven technology off of the rack. The automatic gearbox also uses traditional technology, but works fine nevertheless.

The diesel engine performs well (150 PS / 320 Nm), but the fuel consumption isn't as low as most modern diesels (5.6 litres per 100 km). Therefore the Cruze may be cheap to buy, but it isn't as cheap to run as other cars which use more modern technology. Also, the diesel engine emits an old-fashioned lorry-like noise, while some of the most modern diesel engines run as smoothly as a petrol engine.



For comparison, the second part of the journey was done with the entry level version: the 1.6 litre petrol car, "S" spec. In mountainous areas the 114 PS / 153 Nm engine isn't powerful enough. Even when shifting down a gear, the Cruze 1.6 has to work very hard just to keep up with the traffic.

On the other hand, on flat surfaces and on level highways the 1.6 litre engine is a fine choice. Here the power is exactly enough and the engine now performs with ease. Just as with the diesel, the petrol engines are less economical than the more modern engines from other brands.



Suspension

No matter the chosen engine, the Cruze brakes very well. An emergency stop is performed with some drama (screaming tyres, not keeping a straight line), but the braking distance is very short indeed.



Roadholding is comparable to that of the competing cars, although Chevrolet emphasises on comfort. Steering may feel a bit sloppy sometimes. Only the top spec model is fitted with speed-dependent power steering; this makes the car feel more dynamic.

This dynamism is also thanks to the modern suspension. The Cruze uses the so called "Delta" platform, which will also be used for the next generation of the Vauxhall Astra. No matter what the trim level, the Cruze feels solid (according to the manufacturer the car is 140% more rigid than the Nubira) and therefore doesn't feel like a budget car.



Looks and levels

Once at the destination it is time to take a good look at the car and take some pictures. The most striking feature of the Cruze is the curved roofline, which makes this sedan look a little like a coupé. The front is bold and looks confident. The panel gaps are very small, giving a high-class feel to the car.

But the strongest point of the Cruze is the low price. As stated before, the Cruze offers a lot of car per pound. Space in the front is ample; when the front seats are slid all the way back

even tall drivers can no longer reach the pedals! Both the steering wheel and the seats are adjustable in every direction, guaranteeing a good sitting position no matter what the driver's posture.



Despite the sloping roofline, room on the back seat is still fair. Even in the rear, adults have enough space. The boot is, as expected from a sedan, very large (450 litres). That should come in handy for a leisurely "cruze" to the Spanish sun ...

Conclusion

Does the Chevrolet Cruze hold up when compared to the renowned brands? The answer is: yes. But although the Chevrolet Cruze is a fine car, one cannot expect miracles at this price.

Comfort and performance are just average. Roadholding, build quality and design are a big step forward for Chevrolet. Although the Cruze is not an exceptional car, there's nothing wrong with it either. At no point it is evident that Chevrolet cuts costs or offers less than its competitors. So the real temptation comes from the low price, and what businessman can resist that? ■

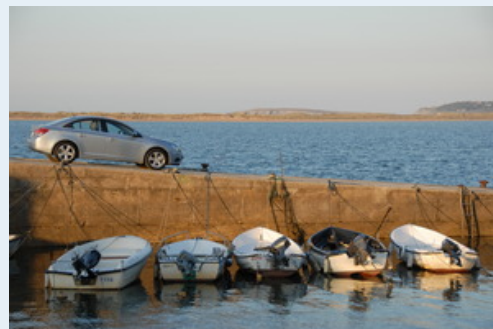


Specifications

Chevrolet Cruze 1.6 LS

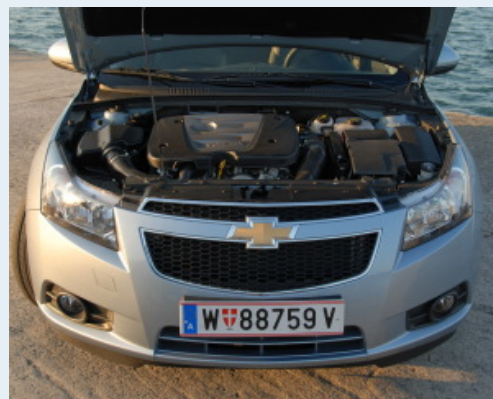
Size and weight

Length	460 cm
Width	179 cm
Height	148 cm
Wheelbase	269 cm
Kerb weight	1260 kg
Trailer	695 kg
Trailer - braked	1200 kg
Fuel capacity	60 l
Luggage space	450 l



Engine and performance

Capacity	1598 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	114 bhp @ 6400 rpm
Max torque	153 Nm @ 4200 rpm
Drive	voorwielen
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	12.5 secs
Top speed	185 km/h
Average mileage	6.8 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	9 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	5.5 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	159 gr / km



Price

Price	£ 12,595
Price base model	£ 11,995