



Citroen C3 Aircross

More spacious, more adventurous

Review | It is now a tradition at Citroën. In addition to the standard C3, there is also an adventurous version: the C3 AirCross. However, with the new C3 AirCross, Citroën promises even more than before. Besides being tough, the C3 AirCross is said to be spacious, modern, comfortable and cheap. Does that all go together?

The new C3 AirCross is unmistakably the adventurous sibling of the regular C3. The AirCross follows the C3's style, which is complemented by details for a tougher look. Moreover, the C3 AirCross has an above-average ground clearance (20 cm), making it a true SUV.



The angular design serves more than looks and a low price (flat/angled panels are easier to produce than round/wavy shapes). In fact, the C3 AirCross is available as a seven-seater. To make room for a third row of seats, the AirCross is longer, wider and taller

than the standard C3. The wheelbase is longer and a very large rear door provides good accessibility to the rear seats.

Space

A third row of seats is possible, but not standard. As standard, the C3 AirCross comes as a five-seater and then the increased exterior dimensions provide noticeably more cabin space. When opting for the third row of seats, the rear bench comes forward 6 cm (not on rails, so not adjustable) for much-needed legroom in the far back. However, despite all the adjustments, space in the rear seats is only sufficient for short journeys. Adults have to fold up like on a budget airline and only children fit reasonably well.



Note: with the third row of seats in use, luggage space is nil (40 litres). The question is therefore: how often is it necessary to carry seven people without any luggage? In this respect, it is important to know that the second rear seat row is only available in combination with a petrol or hybrid engine. This is because the third row of seats requires a "dimple" in the floor for the feet of the rear passengers, which is not possible in an electric car because of the batteries in the floor. Moreover, the weight of two extra occupants would be too much for the rear suspension. Since the batteries are built into the floor, the electric-powered version has less space for the feet of the rear passengers under the front seats.

Equipment

In front, the C3 AirCross also offers noticeable extra space thanks to the wider and higher cabin. The layout of the dashboard is similar to that of the standard C3. That is, using extremely simple means, Citroën arrives at a concept that is quirky, thoughtful and economical. The high seating position combined with the small steering wheel is even reminiscent of the "iCockpit" of sister brand Peugeot. Only the hard plastic on the dashboard and door panels betrays that the C3 AirCross is a cheap car.



At first, buttons and even a speedometer seem to be missing. In fact, the functions are taken over by a projector. Because the data is displayed just below the windscreen, it is into a driver's field of vision and offers the effect of a "head-up display" at a fraction of the price.

Although at odds with a competitive price, Citroën also promises maximum comfort. This includes the seats, which, thanks to a combination of soft and firm padding, are a good fit and comfortable on long distances. In addition, Citroën proudly reports that the C3 AirCross is equipped with many safety systems, but it forgets to mention that most of these are mandatory by the European Union since 2024.

Handling

What also contributes to comfort is the suspension. This is thanks to so-called "Progressive Hydraulic

Cushions". The suspension reacts differently to short and long bumps, to fast and to calm driving.



The performance of this system is therefore highly dependent on the road surface. It is never worse than conventional dampers and indeed manages to provide extra comfort in favourable cases. Especially long, undulating movements are effectively absorbed. Very sudden obstacles, such as speed bumps taken too quickly, are passed on just as hard as in a conventional car. The difference with the technically related Opel Frontera is therefore minor.

Hybrid

Citroën does not opt for separate electric and conventionally powered cars, but delivers all models with as many different engines as possible. This is why the C3 AirCross is available as a petrol, hybrid and electric car.

"The price is keen thanks to thoughtful ergonomics, smart savings and economies of scale"



The "hybrid" is in fact just a mild-hybrid. The degree of assistance from the electric motor is therefore much lower than in a full hybrid. The hybrid therefore drives like a very ordinary car with average performance. The automatic transmission stands out in a positive sense, as it is perfectly tuned to the character of the petrol engine.

Electric car

Compared to the electric-powered C3 AirCross, the hybrid feels like a car from a previous era. The electric version drives with more ease, offers more agility and is quieter. However, performance is poor and so this electric car is not only heavy, but feels even heavier. Despite this, energy consumption is high (17 to 18 kWh / 100 km).

The C3 recovers energy during coasting and braking, but this effect is minimal. Braking with the throttle, as is possible with many other electric cars, is therefore almost impossible with the C3. During the test, the sport mode was therefore invariably chosen in combination with additional energy recovery. This behaviour can be seen as tame or even characterless, while the driver of the hybrid is more engaged in driving. However, the character of the electric version can also be interpreted more positively: the electric C3 AirCross offer maximum convenience and comfort.



Conclusion

Is the new Citroën C3 AirCross spacious, modern, comfortable and yet cheap? There is no doubt about the first two things. The C3 AirCross is spacious and the third row of seats is an unusual option in this segment (only on hybrid and remaining boot space with seven seats in use is nil). The equipment is modern.

Comfort and a low price seem to be contradictory. That's why Citroën has sought a compromise. By simple means (seat padding, multi-chambered shock absorbers), Citroën has found a "if it doesn't work, it doesn't hurt" solution. This approach is not as effective as more expensive techniques, but when it works, it works well.

The price is kept thanks to thoughtful ergonomics, smart savings and economies of scale. The latter is thanks to its parent company (Stellantis), which shares the same technology for multiple cars from multiple brands. Compared to those cars, the Citroën is, as it should be, the most idiosyncratic. ■



Specifications

Citroen C3 Aircross

Size and weight



Length x width x height	439 x 181 x 166 cm
Wheelbase	267 cm
Kerb weight	unknown
Trailer	710 kg
Trailer - braked	1.250 kg
Fuel capacity	44 l
Luggage space	460/1600 l
Tyre size	215/60R17

Engine and performance



Capacity	1199 cc
Cylinders / valves	
Max power	136 PS @ 5500 rpm
Max torque	230 Nm @ 1750 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	secs
Top speed	unknown
Average mileage	5.3 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	6.4 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	4.5 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	120 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 25,740
Price base model	Â£ 20,240