



## Renault Twingo

### Turning around

Review | What do the carousel of Nantes and the new Renault Twingo have in common? Of course, both are French, fun and meant for the whole family. But there's more! In both cases the makers dared to think outside the box. The unique carousel has three storeys, making it a technical showcase. The new Renault Twingo also distinguishes itself, thanks to unusual technology...

The French city of Nantes was once known for its shipbuilders. Around the disused shipyards artists now create mechanical art. For the artists it's not about practical use, but about thinking differently. Tourists flock to the city to gaze at the most awesome constructions, with the three-tier carousel as a highlight. Renault is not an idealistic organisation, but it needed to find a way to distinguish itself from the rest. The standard recipe to be more attractive is to be bigger, faster and more comfortable. However, with a small, frugal and economic car that's not an option.



### Distinguishing features

Yet, Renault found a solution that's as least as original as the creations of Nantes' artists. In most cars the engine is mounted in the front, powering the front wheels. This construction is cheap, safe and predictable. However, in the Renault Twingo the engine is in the back, powering the rear wheels.

Because of the high costs, so far this layout has only been used in sports cars. There was always one

exception to this rule: Smart has been building rear-wheel drive, rear-engine cars for many years. This is why Renault and Smart cooperated in designing the new Twingo. In this way the development costs could be split and production costs could be reduced as well.



## Spec levels

The layout of the cabin is both clever and playful at the same time. For example, as an alternative to the usual storage space, Renault offers a removable box that can be fitted in the spot of the cupholders. Instead of a traditional globe box, there's a removable "glove bag" available. This isn't as handy as it sounds, because the bag can only be opened when it is removed.

Combined with the right option packs the Twingo can be fitted with all the luxury and safety items of a bigger car. For example, there's a camera that can look ahead with the driver and issue a warning when accidentally crossing the markings on the road. The test car featured power windows, light sensor and air conditioning. Oddly enough, the latter is turned on by default. The driver has to actively turn it off at the start of every drive to save fuel. Another miss: there's no rev counter.



When it comes to audio, communications and navigation Renault offers two options. The first is the fully integrated "R-Link" system which is also available on bigger Renaults. This functions very well and the built-in TomTom satellite navigation is amongst the best on the market.

As an alternative, there's a cradle and a bespoke app for smartphones (Android and iOS) available. The Renault app can be used to navigate and play music. The map appears on the display of the phone, while the instructions sound from the speakers of the car. At the moment of writing this functioned well, but certainly not perfectly.





## Space

The single biggest advantage of the unusual layout of the Twingo is the cabin space. Because the engine is mounted under the luggage floor, the front-seats could be moved further forward, thus creating more legroom on the back seat. Compared to the length of the car, the space in the back is excellent. In absolute numbers the Twingo remains a small city car with ditto space in the back. The driver and co-driver sit up a bit higher than usual, providing a slightly better view of the road than usual.



The floor of the luggage space is raised a bit higher than in other compact cars. The boot measures 196 litres and that's no more than fair. By folding the backup seat, the luggage space increases to 980 litres which is far above average. By folding the passenger's seat, objects up to 2.1 metres in length can be transported.



## Handling

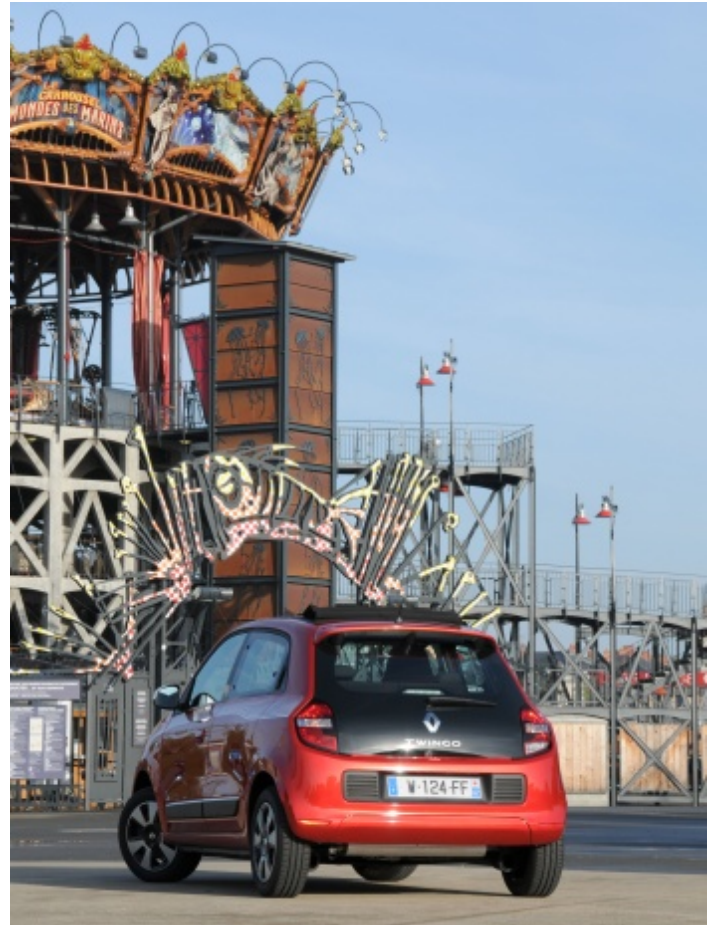
Once on the way, again the Twingo differs from the rest. Thanks to the special layout the wheels could be mounted even farther into the corners than usual. While the new Twingo is shorter than the previous generation, the wheelbase is longer! This doesn't just translate to more cabin space, but also to exceptional straight line stability (less steering required to keep in a straight line on the motorway).

Because the front wheels aren't disturbed by the engine power, the feeling in the steering wheel is more pure. Keep in mind that the engine power is modest, yet the benefit is there. When it comes to stability and comfort, the Twingo can even rival with its big brother: the Renault Clio!



In city traffic the Twingo is right at home. Strictly speaking the engine isn't in the rear, but just in front of the rear axle making it a mid-mounted engine; just like in a pure-bred sports car! This is why the Twingo has an almost perfect weight distribution (45/55), which also improves handling. In theory the special layout can cause the rear to break out ("oversteer") like a sports car, but the electronic stability programme (ESP) effectively prevents this from ever happening.

Another perk: because the steering wasn't in the way, the engine could be mounted lower and this improves the centre of gravity (better handling). The space that's usually occupied by the engine is now used to make the front wheels pivot even further. This is why the Twingo has a very small turning circle (8.7 metres) and that comes in handy in a narrow car park or in dense city traffic.



## Engines

For the Twingo, Renault has developed two new engines. The base engine is the "SCe 70" which, as the name implies, generates 70 horsepower. This is more than enough to keep up with traffic, both in the city and on the motorway. For a three-cylinder engine the SCe 70 is exceptionally refined and mature.

The second engine on the price list is the "TCEe 90", which develops 90 PS. This engine has a smaller displacement (898 instead of 999 cc) and owes its bigger output to a turbo. The difference between the two engines is obvious. The TCE 90 revs easier, reacts more fiercely on the throttle and, thanks to the turbo, it delivers a bigger punch at high speeds.



On the downside, the turbo engine is more audible (this strongly depends on the seat in the car) and isn't as suitable for an economic driving style. As soon as the gas is even stroked gently, the turbo kicks in while the fuel pump doubles its efforts. This can be prevented by selecting "eco mode", but this in fact reduces the power so much that it defeats the purpose of buying the stronger engine in the first place.

During the test drive the average fuel consumption of both engines was exactly the same: 5.2 litres per 100 km. Because of the higher price and the small difference in performance (at least in eco mode) the SCe 70 is the engine of choice.



## Conclusion

A new car should always be better than its rivals, otherwise it is pointless introducing a new model. With small cars, this is a real challenge because the size of the car and the budget are limited. While other brands merely offer cars that look different, Renault actually offers a more superior product thanks to different technology.

By mounting the engine not in the front but in the back, the Twingo offers a unique combination of cabin space and manoeuvrability. This layout also ensures superior handling. The newly developed engines are quick, quiet and frugal. In short: by turning things around, the new Twingo manages to distinguish itself from the masses in a very positive way. ■





# Specifications

## Renault Twingo SCe 70 Expression

### Size and weight



Length x width x height	360 x 165 x 155 cm
Wheelbase	249 cm
weight	864 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Fuel capacity	35 l
Luggage space	219/980 l
Tyre size	165/65R15

### Engine and performance



Capacity	999 cc
Cylinders / valves	3/4
Max power	70 PS @ 6000 rpm
Max torque	91 Nm @ 2850 rpm
Drive	Rear wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	14.5 secs
topspeed	151 km/h
Average mileage	5 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	4.2 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	3.7 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	95 gr / km

### Price

Price	Â£ 9,495
Price base model	Â£ 9,495