



Renault Twingo (2007 - 2014)

New energy

Review | At last! The new Renault Twingo has arrived. The previous generation had been on the market for more than 15 years. This wasn't due to laziness on the part of Renault, but more uniquely due to the car's innovativeness. The car was so far ahead of its time; in fact, this model was still able to compete with its competitors after all those years. But now, it is time for a new Twingo.

I remember it as if it were yesterday, although it is in fact somewhat longer ago than that. It was the year of '92. I had no idea what I would become when I grew up, but I always knew that it would be something to do with cars. Then, with the Twingo appearance at the local dealer's, I formed an instantaneous opinion I wouldn't be found dead in one of those .

A couple of year later, my parents bought said vehicle. A Twingo. With the ink barely dry on my driving license, I was ever so happy to have their permission to borrow their car. Oh that Twingo, which I had insulted so, it drove so well! I had judged the whole car on its appearance, and this would in turn be part of the reason for Renault's decision to modernize it. The small Twingo offered a sea of space plus all manner of clever inventions, placing this little car on a superior plain.



The new twingo

2007 and the situation is slightly different. I no longer beg to borrow a car. Now, car manufacturers stand in line to loan me their cars. It's all part of the game. With my previous positive experiences of the old Twingo in mind, I gladly hopped into this new model.

However, the design is in no way as daring as it was

back then; nor is this newcomer exceptionally attractive. This is partly due to the unfortunate photography of the manufacturer. In the first press photos, somber coloured cars have been placed in thoroughly uninspiring environments.

In reality, the Twingo looks exceedingly nice, especially in orange! The car springs out at you showing off its sexy lines. The front is typical of Renault, the rear is very individualistic with its lines running against the direction of the traffic. The test-driven GT model is embellished with little silver shields on the broad beam lights, silver side mirrors and a sprightly roof spoiler (guess which colour?). The only comment that can be made about the design is the door handles, which are awkward and in some cases (ladies, watch out!) can break your nails.

Interior

Inside the Twingo, the same marvellous feeling of yore still dominates. The interior is too spacious for the exterior. Instinctively, such a small car cannot offer this much space on the inside. Around the front seats, there is an abundance of space to move around and thanks to the many adjustable positions everyone can find their ideal position. However, the base as well as the back support of the seat is too short, which is particularly unpleasant over long distances.



The back seat positioned on rails allows you to choose whether you would like more legroom or more luggage space depending on the situation. Unfortunately as the rear shelf isn't manoeuvrable,

there is an enormous gap when the rear seat is pushed all the way forward. On the floor of the luggage space, there is a storage bin, which divides the space into compartments. There is no cover for the storage. Also it should have been set horizontal allowing the rear seat to slide back completely. This makes the boot awkward and reduces its capacity down to zero.

The Twingo is not only spacious; it also feels spacious. This is due amongst other things to the deep dashboard and the windshield which is placed far out in front. The gauges (speed indicator and onboard computer) have been placed in the middle distance, which is more restful on the eyes. As a driver tends to look in the distance at the other traffic, it is easier to let the eyes occasionally focus on the gauges, which are further up on the dashboard than just behind the steering wheel. The rev counter is daringly located on the steering wheel, functioning more as an ornament than anything else.



Grass mat

On top of the dashboard behind the steering wheel there is a "grass mat". Completely covered with rubber quills, this anti-skid mat is designed to keep small objects in place. In theory, it's a nice idea, however in reality it doesn't work so well. It's annoying trying to fish small objects out from amongst the stalks, while larger objects just end up sitting on top. A mobile sat-nav does manage to stay in place, but is not readable as it has disappeared behind the steering wheel.



Much more useful are the organizer boxes. A pocket lamp, mobile phone holder and a make-up kit are available that fit exactly into cup-holders. Oddly enough, all this really clever stuff is only available in a few colours which seem to clash with the polish and interior colour of the car.

The more standard aspects of the finish are modern and complete. Bluetooth connection, MP3 portal, an onboard computer and even a full air conditioning system are all part of the package (whether it be as an option or not). Thanks to the space and the plush standard finish, the Twingo is not easily surpassed by much larger cars. However, the sloppy workmanship does make it feel like the cheapest Renault.



Driving

When I drove the Twingo with my parents, it wasn't the car's appearance but its performance that captured my heart. The new Twingo drives even better than the previous generation. The steering is immediate, sharp and nimble. This car drives just as a small car should: deftly and lively. The Twingo feels completely at home in the city as well as when it's being piloted through heavy traffic like a lightning bolt.

The road handling is good and can party with the hardest when required. The good road handling means that the Twingo isn't just pleasant to drive, it's also very safe. It is a relief to know that the car isn't going to land in a ditch after a sudden swerve. In spite of the good road handling, Renault has found enough space for comfort, allowing this little fellow to be a lot more than just a city car.

Turbo!

The best has been kept until last. Every Twingo is spacious and fully equipped, whether it is as an option or not. However it is only the GT version which was test driven, that has a very special engine. Although it is 1,2 litres, the added turbo makes the performance comparable to that of a 1,6 or 1,8 engine of rival models. Simultaneously, the consumption still remains that of a 1,2 litre engine.



The turbo engine has 100 bhp and 145 Nm of torque. At low revs, the GT behaves just like an ordinary little car, which keeps up nicely with the rest of the traffic. When the needle of the rev counter passes 3,500 revs per minute, the turbo kicks in and the engine power suddenly increases. There is first a whistling sound from the fore-section, and then this orange rocket shoots off! With its lively character, the sensation of speed is massive, which perfects the experience.

Conclusion

History repeats itself. Due to its progressive appearance, I had underestimated the previous Twingo enormously. This precocious little car of yore at last knows how to convince with its unprecedented interior space and outstanding driving characteristics. The new Twingo is designed with maybe a little bit of conservatism; consequently it is hard to believe that there is any room for modernization. Again, this was a pleasant surprise. The new Renault Twingo has in every respect succeeded and leaves behind a very positive impact.

The Twingo looks a lot nicer in reality than Renault's photos lead you to believe. The interior is remarkably spacious and equipped with all the necessary clever inventions that make daily life so much nicer. The finish is complete, but the workmanship is sloppy. The driving characteristics are outstanding. The Twingo is well-organized, compliant, safe and lively: exactly what a small car should be. Moreover the test driven GT version with its fantastic turbo engine delivers an enormous driving pleasure (Ivo Kroone). ■



Specifications

Renault Twingo (2007 - 2014) GT

Size and weight



Length x width x height	360 x 165 x 147 cm
Wheelbase	237 cm
Kerb weight	955 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	350 kg
Fuel capacity	40 l
Luggage space	165/285 l
Tyre size	185/55R15

Engine and performance



Capacity	1149 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	100 PS @ 5500 rpm
Max torque	145 Nm @ 3000 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	9.8 secs
Top speed	189 km/h
Average mileage	5.9 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	7.8 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	4.9 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	140 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 9,995
Price base model	Â£ 8,375