

Road test: Citroen DS3 Crossback

by Tim Saunders



'Ahhh, it's as if the car's greeting me,' coos my wife Caroline as she walks up to the DS3. Its door handles pop out and the power folding wing mirrors unfold. The automotive equivalent of

a dog licking you to death.' I can imagine this appeals to lonely people,' she adds. This characteristic certainly draws admiration from fellow motorists I meet on our travels between Hampshire, Dorset and Wales.

When the car is locked the door handles are flush with the body of the car, unlock it and they rise out. It's quite spectacular when you haven't seen this before. However, after a while it becomes annoying. If the keyfob is on your person and you walk past the car the door handles automatically rise and the car bleeps. Happen to walk past a number of times as I do for one reason or another and you can imagine how this would wind the neighbours up. Especially at night.

The DS3 also pays homage to the humble triangle. Never before do I recall driving a vehicle that is so striking and I take my hat off to Citroen for this.

There are triangles on the bold black grille, there is even a massive indentation of a triangle on top of another triangle on both sides of the car. And there are triangles before your eyes inside, wherever you care to glance. The dash is full of them.

Then there is the variety of trim. There's some kind of leather on the dashboard mixed with shiny metal and that metal with its various finishes is a joy to touch. So top marks for this design statement. It really does stand out from the bland crowd.

Then the designers have gone one step further and turned the usual into something more unusual. They've turned things upside down, in fact. The grab handles for the doors have been placed at the top while the levers to open them have been put in their usual place. Then the switches for the electric windows have been placed in the centre of the car, completely unnerving the unsuspecting driver. My wife complains that she does not have her own door mounted button (as she is used to) to operate her window yet the children do in the back. As a touch of design it's a masterpiece but in terms of practicality it's frustrating because it takes a great deal of time to remember where everything is and that can be a problem when you're focusing on the road.

Back inside the DS3, which sounds more like a gaming system, there is an easy to operate sat nav but disappointingly it is not that helpful. During the test my wife's father is admitted to hospital and try as we might to search for Royal Bournemouth Hospital it has no idea whatsoever, offering one in Spain. However, if you do know the postcode or road name, most of the time it will get you where you want to go. But I still cannot figure out how to cancel directions so that there's no voice instructions. We also use it to drive through North Wales and round Snowdonia. Seeing an image of a straight line for the road with a marker on it and nothing else is not very enlightening. Some road



names would be useful. It is also insistent on taking me down non-existent roads which thankfully I ignore.

The black leather seats are comfy and hardwearing. While there is room for our three child seats in the rear fitting them is a pain, in common with most new cars, unfortunately.

It takes me some time to figure out that I can open the boot by pushing a button above the rear numberplate; it's so well concealed I just didn't realise.

The boot is a reasonable size and I like the appearance of the rear with the two sporty exhausts. Those exhausts also make an attractive roar. As for economy I find the fuel level drops too quickly for my liking. When the 44 litre tank is full it claims to be able to travel 500 miles yet the tank is empty after travelling 350 at speeds not exceeding 70mph. Never, as I do, leave it too late to fill this car up either. At one moment it reassures you that there is 50 miles worth of fuel remaining in the tank and before you know it drops to 18 miles and then there is no fuel reading making the motorist's heart thump that bit quicker. Thankfully we make it to a petrol station but this is a pressure I can well do without.

Finished in metallic gold the driver looks out over a curvaceous bonnet. It feels quite a large car to drive but thanks to the reversing camera it is relatively easily to parallel park and surprisingly can get into some quite tight spots. The indicators make an attractive bleeping sound again setting this apart from rivals.

In high winds and heavy lashing rain the radar cruise control, which will automatically accelerate or decelerate depending on the distance of the vehicle in front, just doesn't work and control is handed back to the driver. In fact during the two week road test this cruise control becomes even more temperamental. On our trip to Wales it decides not to work at all, a sign appearing on the dash reads: Fault. What a pain. But I eventually discover that the speed limiter does still work, if required for those pesky speed cameras. It is only when we stop at Chester, for a stroll along the canal, and then restart the engine that the cruise control works again. Later, on our return leg back home from Wales, the same fault rears its ugly head again. It's not without its flaws but this is a characterful car that stands out and is enjoyable to drive.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

DS3 Crossback – Ultra Prestige Pure Tech 155 Auto 8 Speed Imperial Gold metallic

Price: £34,155

Power: 155bhp

Top speed: 129mph

Engine: 1.2 litre petrol

0-60mph: 8.2secs

Economy: around 35mpg

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