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New DS3 Hatch and Cabrio Road Test

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New DS3 Hatch and Cabrio Introduced to the Design-led Brand



By David miles (Miles Better News Agency)

The DS Automobiles premium brand was separated from Citroën in 2014 to stand alone with its own models and own dealership network. Since the DS3 Hatch and Cabrio 'supermini sector' sized models were introduced the range has expanded with the DS 4, DS 4 Crossback and DS 5. In addition there are DS 5LS and DS 6 for the Chinese market.

Over 600,000 DS models have been sold worldwide since its spin-off from Citroën, and of that total 390,000 have been DS 3 models. The UK was the largest global market for DS last year, even outselling its home market of France. The UK's DS sales in 2015 were 16,429 units, and this year, with the revised models, sales are targeted at 18,500 vehicles. When it comes to the choice between Hatch and Cabrio, in the UK 93% of customers chose the Hatch.



Although now branded DS 3, the three door Hatch models were first introduced in 2010 and the Cabrio in 2013 as Citroëns and based on their C3 range. The latest 2016 versions are a further step upmarket with revised styling, more specification, new engine options and an average £700 price increase. Prices for the three door Hatch now start at £13,995 and rise through 19 variants to £25,495. The latest DS 3 Cabriolet with 13 variants is priced from £16,295 and goes up to £24,795. Personalisation has played a big part in the sales success of the DS 3, with 78 body/roof colour combinations and over three million personalisation options.



Depending on the model and engine chosen, there are the core spec levels of Chic, Elegance, Prestige, Ultra Prestige and soon to arrive Performance. The latter has three levels, Performance, Performance Black and Performance BRM Chronographs.

There are seven engine options; three versions of the latest 1.2 litre PureTech three cylinder petrol units with the choice of 82 hp or turbocharged versions of 110 and 130 hp power outputs. There are two THP 1.6 turbo petrol units with 165 and 210 hp, and for diesel customers there is the choice of 1.6 litre BlueHDi with either 100 or 120 hp outputs. All engines have Stop & Go as standard. Transmission choices are five or six speed manual or a new six speed automatic, depending on the engine chosen.

The 1.6 litre THP 210 hp petrol unit will only be available for the Performance specification versions of both the Hatch and Cabrio. This unit pushes out 300 Nm (221 lb.ft) of torque with CO2 emissions of just 125 g/km. The engine is mated with a close ratio six speed manual gearbox, with drive to the front wheels through a Torsen limited slip differential. The suspension has been lowered by 15 mm (0.6 in), the front and rear tracks widened by 26 and 14 mm (1.02 and 0.55 in) respectively. Larger 323 mm (12.7 in) front disc brakes with Brembo callipers are used, with 249 mm (9.8 in) discs at the rear. Top speed is 143 mph, zero to 62 mph takes 6.5 seconds and Combined Cycle fuel economy is officially 52.3 mpg. Prices for the 1.6 THP Performance versions start from £20,495 for the Hatch and £22,795 for the Cabrio.

BUT unfortunately it's not the DS 3 Performance versions I am testing here, they haven't arrived in the UK yet, but will do soon. Instead I got behind the wheel of the very latest DS 3 Prestige 1.6 THP 165 hp with a six speed manual gearbox and a price-tag of £19,295. But with some of those many options DS promote, the price was £21,540.

The latest changes for all the latest DS 3 models include the new DS corporate face which features chrome DS 'wings', which extend from the large and deep grille with its DS emblem to the swept-back LED headlights and fog lights. The overall look of the original DS 3 is retained with its floating roof, two tone body colours and the 'shark fin' panel behind the



B-pillar.

Inside there is more glitz, with updated and upgraded new trims and controls, and more spec items. Centre of the fascia panel for all versions is a new 7.0-inch colour touchscreen, providing access to many of the car's functions, but fortunately not the most used such as heating and ventilation, and the radio. DS say this system does away with 20 buttons previously needed on older versions. The new screen also provides access to Mirror Screen, the DS connectivity system compatible with Apple CarPlay and MirrorLink. Android smartphones that are compatible with MirrorLink can use MyDS to listen to and send text messages. There is also a standard fit SOS and Assistance facility. The new DS models are also fitted with front and rear parking sensors, a reversing camera and Hill Start Assist for manual gearbox models. Standard kit on the cheapest Chic versions includes alloy wheels, electrically operated door mirrors, electric windows, air-con, cruise control, DAB radio, remote locking, split folding rear seats and Bluetooth.



The Prestige version I tried adds even more items including Active City Brake, 17-inch alloys, rear spoiler and automatic headlights and wipers. Some of the extra cost personalisation options fitted to the test car were Perla Nera black body colour with a Topaz roof colour - which was sort of a metallic dark brown which really didn't go together, making the Hatch look dull rather than eye-catching. Inside was the Topaz interior trim kit and Nappa Watchstrap leather upholstery.

Overall the interior is smart and modern and with less buttons, so it has a 'cleaner' appearance although some of the plastics are hard to the touch. The front seats are comfortable but the Watchstrap leather finish might be an acquired taste. Whilst there is ample room up front, the two rear seats have limited leg and head room for adults. On the plus side the boot space goes up from 285 litres (10 cu.ft) to 980 litres (34.6 cu.ft) with the



rear seat backs folded down, more than the MINI Hatch - the DS 3's most obvious rival.

The 1.6 litre THP 160 hp turbocharged direct injection petrol engine is well known in other Peugeot and Citroen models and also well-liked. With 240 Nm (177 lb.ft) of torque from just 1,750 rpm, it has a very good response from low engine speeds and a linear power delivery right through the rev range. This engine only comes with a six speed manual gearbox and is a great combination with short-throw precise gearchanges. Top speed is 130mph and zero to 60mph takes an impressively low 7.5 seconds.

The great feature of this engine is that for most of the time during motoring on our traffic congested, stop-start motoring journeys it is very flexible, docile and very easy to drive. However once the road clears, nip it down a cog or two and the unit springs to life without effort and it really can be a fun car. The ride is on the firm side but not that uncomfortable, however potholes do send thumps and bumps into the car as does road-noise from poorer road surfaces - and those were the only things that let the car down. Otherwise it was well behaved, well balanced and nimble.

It also cruised on motorways without stress at the legal maximum speeds and yet returned the good real-life fuel economy of 42.4 mpg for my week's motoring. True that is short of the 50.4 mpg Combined Cycle official figure which I think could be easily achieved by careful use. The CO2 emissions are 129 g/km so VED road tax is £0 for the First Year rate and £110 for subsequent years. Company car users will now pay 22% Benefit-in-Kind tax following the recent increase in The Budget. Insurance is a reasonable band of 27E.



VERDICT

Overall the latest DS 3 in terms of styling and extra equipment is a move upmarket. It puts the brand a further step away from its Citroën genes, but it is going to be a tough call for it to worry the premium brand MINI Hatch or the Audi A1 in its 'supermini' sales segment.

For: High specification, wide range of models and options, impressive range of engines, fresh looks.

Against: Firm ride, road noise intrusion, not enough soft-feel interior trim for a premium brand car, select carefully from the options list in terms of colour combinations and what



extras add value rather than detract from its future resale worth.

MILESTONES AND WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC. IN BRIEF:

DS 3, Prestige, 1.6 THP 165, 6 speed manual 3 door hatchback.

Engine: 1.6 litre, 4 cylinder, direct injection turbocharged petrol,.

Transmission: 6-speed manual.

Power: 165 hp.

Torque: 240 Nm (177 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm.

Performance:

0-62 mph: 7.5 seconds.

Top speed: 135 mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 50.4 mpg (42.4 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 129 g/km, VED road tax £0/£110, BIK company car tax 22%. Insurance group: 27E.

Warranty: 3 years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: 3 doors/4 seats, L 3,948 mm (12.96 ft), W 1,715 mm (5.63 ft), H 1,483 mm (4.87 ft), boot/load space 285 to 980 litres (10 to 34.6 cu.ft).

Price: £19,295 (£21,540 as tested).



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