

CITROËN CX

Cheaper than a DS and just as characterful, the CX makes a great daily driver, says Mark Dixon



Stylish, practical and affordable, the Citroën CX is a classic alternative to a newer car

A sign of a good car is when motoring journalists dig into their own pockets to buy one. On that basis, the Citroën CX must have something going for it, because British hacks seem to have bought more of these than any other used car.

So what's special about the CX? The space-age looks; the superb ride and handling; and the fact that you can pick up a CX for half the price of a decent DS. If you like big estates, you won't find a bigger one than a CX Safari. But remember that the CX saloon is just that, and not a hatchback, despite its shape.

Most people are put off old Citroëns by horror stories of fiendishly complicated hydraulic systems. The fact is, however, that CX hydraulics are very reliable and well-understood by a large number of small independent specialists across the country. Rust did take

The CX Centre is probably unique in that it operates from a modern Citroën dealership, where classic CXs and the odd Maserati-engined SM rub shoulders with new Xantias. Although briefly tempted by a GTi Turbo 2 (£5,995 in sexy black, with black leather interior) we finally plumped for this Series 1 Prestige.

Roger Bradford says the upmarket Prestige is less sought after than standard CX saloons – it's based on an estate floorpan, and the extra length puts off some buyers. In fact the difference is undetectable once you're behind the wheel, and the Prestige benefits from air conditioning and electric windows.

This example looks very smart following a respray by the CX Centre in its original metallic green and appears rust-free apart from some minor corrosion on the inner bottom seams

of the front doors: there's some filling to the rear corner of the nearside front door, too. The offside rear was replaced with a new panel by The CX Centre.

Inside, the favourable

impressions continue with a clean and original interior, complete with removable rear footrests in that palatial rear compartment. The only evidence of wear is some paint chipping on the

dash binnacle, housing those unreadable but stylish rotating drum gauges. However, severe condensation on the inside of the screen and a moist glovebox suggest a slight

screen weep, not helped by torrential rain just before our visit. The original service record is stamped up to 40,000 miles.

This CX performs well on the road, its automatic gearbox changing smoothly and kicking down easily. It's a relaxing car to drive, its super-light power brakes and power steering encouraging a laid-back approach. A slight pull to the left indicates the tracking needs adjustment – a common fault – confirmed by a worn shoulder on the nearside front tyre. There's plenty of tread all round, however, and the tyres are the correct Michelins.

Any problems will be sorted before the car is sold. Whoever buys it will also have the reassurance of a six-month unlimited mileage warranty.

Verdict: One of the more desirable classic CXs and a practical alternative to a modern car.

We look at a Citroën CX for sale



This CX Prestige has clean and original interior, and bodywork is generally very good

Interior ★★★★★
Exterior ★★★★★
Running gear ★★★★★
Value ★★★★★
Year produced 1983

For sale by: The CX Centre, Harding Way, Somersham Road, St Ives, Cambs PE17 4WR
Tel: 01480 492066

MoT Renewed when sold
Mileage 62,634

£3,250

BUYER'S CHECKLIST

Basic specification

1975-1991: 1,985-2,473cc four, 66-168bhp, petrol or diesel; front-wheel drive; four-door saloon, long-wheel-base saloon, estate and eight-seater estate. Max speeds 91-137mph, 0-60mph 20.8-7.7sec, 23-45mpg

Mechanics

Engine: Petrol engines very reliable and capable of huge mileages, especially earlier DS-sourced units. These were of 1,985cc, 2,175cc, 2,347cc and 2,473cc capacities. All-alloy 1,995cc and 2,165cc units fitted to Athena, Reflex and 22-models not as unburstable but long-lived if properly serviced. Diesel engines more problematic – Turbo 2s suffer from porous blocks – and best avoided.

Gearbox: Early cars had four-speed manuals, gradually displaced by five-speed units across range. Rarely give any problems. Semi-automatic transmission called C-Matic optional until 1981 when replaced by conventional three-speed ZF auto. C-Matic featured conventional gearlever linked to electronically controlled clutch; worn oil seals can make gear selection difficult in later life.

Running gear: Contrary to myth, CX hydraulic system is neither unreliable nor expensive to repair. Gas-filled spheres lose their charge over time, which destroys the car's ride, but recharged units are cheap to buy. However, expect to pay £170 or so to replace rear spheres due to labour involved. Hydraulic pipes suffer from surface corrosion and are often an MoT failure but are thick-walled and respond to cleaning. Check rear wheels are vertical and not leaning inwards, which indicates suspension trouble. Handbrakes operate on front brake discs and need frequent adjustment; impossible if discs are worn thin. Rear discs corrode due to lack of use. Clutches should see 100,000 miles but cost £650 to replace.

Electrics: Not a strong point, so check everything works. ABS fitted to very late cars can be troublesome but faults are usually minor. Avoid steam-cleaning engine bays of late cars with ECUs!

Interior: Series 1 cars have tumbler gauges; Series 2 and all Turbos have conventional dial gauges. Trim in early cars disintegrates but later cars last better. Leather optional on some models; standard for '85-on Prestige.

Parts

Most parts are available new from Citroën at reasonable prices. The exceptions are rarely ordered components, which can be astronomically expensive – a GTi Turbo exhaust manifold costs £850! – but CX specialists can usually supply secondhand items. Prices are for genuine parts unless stated otherwise and are excluding VAT.

Recharged sphere:	£17
Front wing:	£100
Door skin:	£82
Door shell:	£280
GTi Turbo engine:	£1,966
Michelin TRX tyre for GTi Turbo:	£180
Michelin MXV tyre for saloon/estate:	£90
Headlight:	£132
Brake disc (pattern):	£30
Top engine mounting Series 1/Series 2:	£35/£52
Top or bottom front ball-joint (pattern):	£25

Prices

£200-£300
£400-£500
£700-£1,500
£3,000-£3,500

Old nail Series 1 that may or may not be legal
 Tatty Series 2 cars with some MoT still to run
 Average high-spec S1 or low-spec S2 saloons
 Decent GTi Turbo or good early Prestige



Watch for rust bubbling on the rear hatch

1



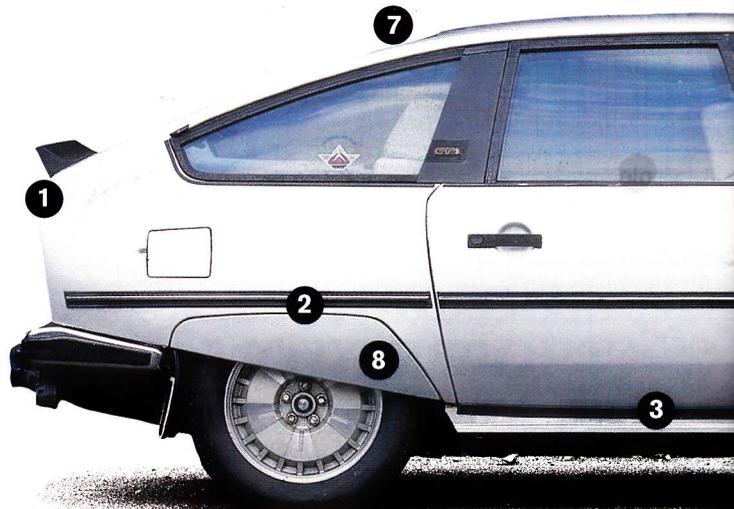
Wings don't bolt on, so beware rust

2



Crusty door bottoms typical of old CX

3



7

Estate CXs can rust along roof above hatch

8

Rear spats are expensive to buy if missing

9

Gas-filled spheres need charging



a hold on earlier cars, it's true, and gave the CX a bad name from which it never fully recovered, although Citroën got to grips with the problem from 1981 onwards with much-improved body protection. The range was completely restyled in late 1985 with colour-coded bumpers and so on but earlier cars have more classic appeal.

Now that used SMs are flooding the market, fewer CXs are being bought by the non-enthusiast although old CX estates (Safaris) and eight-seater estates (Familiales) are still sought after by Joe Public. The

Pros: unique looks; super ride; practicality; huge load space in estate versions

BUYER'S CHECKLIST

Prices

3,500-£4,000	Outstanding early GTi or Pallas; good estates
5,000	Top whack for a mint Series 1 Prestige
7,000	Upper limit for a superb GTi Turbo 2
8,500-£9,000	Very late, H-plated estates in top condition

Model evolution

- June 1975:** CX launched in UK as 2000 and 2200.
- April 1976:** CX2000 Safari estate introduced to UK.
- Aug 1976:** 2400 replaces 2200, 2400 Safari replaces 2000 Safari, and launch of 2200 Diesel (saloon and Safari) plus luxury Prestige.
- Oct 1977:** Fuel-injected, 128bhp CX GTi launched.
- April 1978:** 2500 Diesel replaces 2200 Diesel.
- July 1979:** Reflex and Athena economy models replace 2000 and 2400 Super.
- Feb 1981:** Improvements include better rust-proofing, new paint colours and conventional auto.
- Oct 1981:** All cars given flared wheelarches. 2000 Reflex estate launched.
- Sept 1982:** CX20 replaces Reflex, CX25D replaces Reflex D, Athena axed, Pallas introduced.
- Oct 1983:** CX25 estate replaces 2400; turbodiesels introduced as CX25RD and CX25DTR.
- Sept 1984:** Super-quick CX25 GTi Turbo launched.
- Oct 1985:** Series 2 introduced in UK. Colour-coded bumpers, grille etc plus round-dial instruments. CX22TRS joins range.
- Aug 1986:** Intercooled CX25 GTi Turbo 2 introduced.
- June 1987:** CX DTR Turbo 2 is launched as fastest diesel production car.
- Nov 1989:** CX saloons discontinued. Estate production transferred to coachbuilders Heuliez.
- Jan 1991:** Estate production ceases.



Early interiors are not as durable as late ones

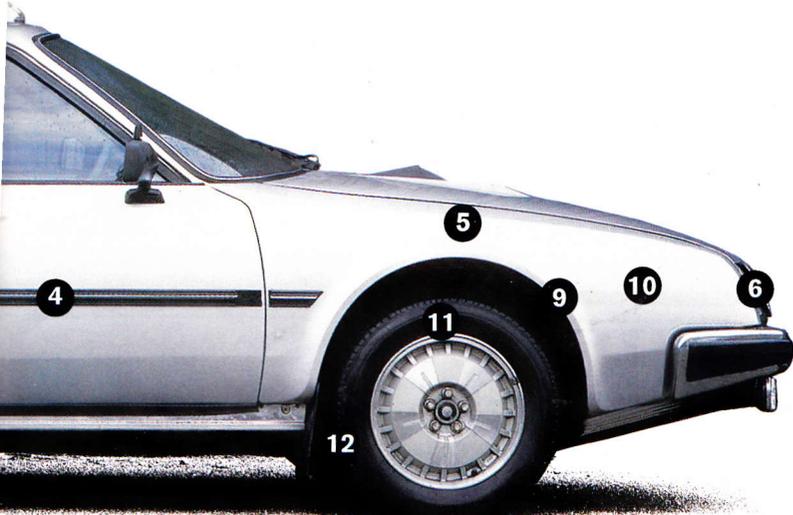
Petrol engines are capable of huge mileages

Headlight units cost £155 each inc VAT

4

5

6



10

11

12

Length of estate version means dents are likely

Upper ball-joint needs special extractor

The correct Michelin tyres must be fitted



Cons: confusing range of models; hydraulics need specialist attention; rust in early cars

Safari is the ultimate autojumbler's workhorse, but you won't get quite as much in a Familiare – only the back row of seats fold flat.

Although CX diesels can deliver up to 45mpg, they aren't as tough as the petrol models – Roger Bradford of The CX Centre, who supplied much of the information for this feature, stopped buying and selling diesels some time ago because of the grief they caused him. Roger's top tips for the most collectable CXs would be the Series 1 GTi Turbo or the long-wheelbase Prestige saloon.

CLASSIC CARS

Selection of specialists

- The CX Centre**, Harding Way, Somersham Road, St Ives, Cambs PE17 4WR. Tel 01480 492066, fax 01480 492065. Sales, service, new and used parts.
- Andyspares**, Units 1/2, Gresham Way, Reading RG30 6AW. Tel 01734 452300. Mainly new parts, some used.
- Andrew Brodie Engineering Ltd**, 50 Sapcote Trading Estate, 374 High Road, Willesden, London NW10 2DH. Tel 0181-459 3725. Parts, service, restoration.
- Citroëmech**, Unit 3, Avenue Works, Eastheath Avenue, Wokingham, Berks RG41 2PR. Tel 01734 794204, fax 01734 892323. Servicing, bodywork, new/used parts.
- Barry Coombes**, Unit 3, Spring Court, Spring Lane South, Malvern, Worcs WR14 4AJ. Tel/fax 016845 66500. Servicing, parts, ECU repairs.
- John Greaves**, 4-6 Park Centre, Station Road, Horsforth, Leeds LS18 5NX. Tel 0113 2586131, fax 0113 2585791. Servicing, new and used parts.
- M & C Lockwood**, Unit B1, Enterprise Way, Idle, Bradford, W Yorks BD10 8EW. Tel 01274 621840, fax 01274 610676. New and reconditioned parts.
- Pleiades**, 20 Glatton Road, Sawtry, Cambs PE17 5SY. Tel 01487 831239. Hydraulic specialist, parts and fitting.
- Southern Continental**, 320A Coldharbour Lane, London SW9 8SE. Tel 0171-274 8233. Repairs, parts.

Clubs

- Citroën Car Club:** PO Box 348, Bromley, Kent BR2 8QT. Has a CX Register with 400-500 members from a total membership of 2,800. Costs £22 per year plus £5 joining fee. Offers insurance scheme and some CX parts; produces monthly magazine *The Citroënian*.