

On Test **Renault Scenic dCi 85**



Like a good oak-aged wine

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The third generation Scenic has now, like the first two editions, been test driven by myself. 3.3 million sales further down the line, the latest Scenic has all the panache and appeal of the earlier cars. This, in my opinion, is another grand edition to be added to the multi-purpose-vehicle range. Belying its 4,344 mm length and 2,077 mm width it really does give the same pleasant drive as the latest Mégane and Mégane Coupe.

This of course has to be kept in context because MPV design parameters are vastly different from saloons or coupes, and yet with the same shared technical DNA as the new Mégane, featuring MacPherson type front suspension coupled with a new 'horned' subframe three times stiffer than the previous generation of rear suspension, it ensures that lateral sub frame movement is restricted in relation to the body. This helps to account for the remarkable directional precision.

MPVs tend to suffer from considerable body roll when being driven with verve and enthusiasm, therefore it comes as a pleasant 'plus' to find that the new Scenic has a cornering 'lean' that is lower than any other MPV and similar to a normal saloon car. One dramatic result is a decent reduction in the chance of car sickness.

This vehicle has the suspension tuned to a grand degree, and the work on dampers has led to much better control of vertical movement and the ability to ride over imperfect Maltese road surfaces far better than most ordinary cars manage. It's such a precise science that the Scenic handles just as well laden as empty.

The brakes have been seriously looked at as this is a fast and fairly heavy machine and fade

free braking can be expected to stop the car in 39 metres (braking distance) from 100km/h almost *ad infinitum*.

The drive itself was impeccable. Using narrow town streets, with the driver's seat pumped right up, forward and lateral vision with the fairly narrow and properly sloping 'A' pillars was much better than in many conventional vehicles, and the Scenic was driven with confidence and in comfort along roads that the small Ka would have almost balked at.

Without intruding heads or masses of luggage behind the driver it was simplicity itself going backwards, once it had been established that old ladies in wheelchairs or kids in pushchairs had not been parked immediately astern of the vehicle.

The six-speed gearbox was rather fun on the dual carriageways even if the small engine developing only 85 bhp and taking 16.4 seconds

to reach the magic 100km/h could have been something of a bore if gear changes had been attempted at anywhere near maximum revs.

As it was, staying almost within our maximum speed limit and changing up and down with gusto, to enjoy the most of a very willing diesel, provided the impetus to realise that although the option to get into sixth at less than 60km/h was available, it was far more fun to use the gearbox as the engineers intended.

In proper climes the car runs out of steam at a respectable 165km/h, so even this diesel model has the right ingredients and don't forget big brother the dCi 160 peaks at 205 km/h and gets to 100km/h in only 9.1 seconds.

There are many things apart from the fluid, sporty lines of this MPV that should awaken a passionate interest in this great five-seat, people-friendly transporter.

First on the serious list must be that the car has been designed to allow four 1.85m tall adults (the average size of north European males) to travel in complete comfort. From the driver's viewpoint I appreciated that the driver's seat has 70mm of vertical and 240mm of fore and aft travel.

This works in conjunction with a steering wheel with 50mm of reach adjustment along with a decent amount of height adjustment. It's incredibly easy to get the absolute maximum out of the driving position.

No MPV designer can afford to shirk the boot space and this incarnation carries 10 per cent more by volume than the previous version, the same as an extra cabin bag. Whilst on board, the cabin can carry up to 86 litres of stowage in four underfloor compartments, four underseat drawers, six map pockets, two aviation style tables (most useful), an 11 litre glove box and up to nine litres in the sliding centre console (please note that certain equipment is optional).

VERDICT

COMFORT

★★★★☆

It doesn't get much better than this.

PERFORMANCE

★★★★☆

This small diesel (1461cc) pulls like a 'train' and is entirely 'right' for Malta.

COOL

★★★★☆

She gets a high star rating because of the sheer fun factor.

QUALITY

★★★★☆

The two aviation-style tables did it for me.

HANDLING

★★★★☆

This MPV is good, even by normal saloon car standards.

PRACTICALITY

★★★★☆

All things to all drivers.

RUNNING COSTS

★★★★☆

With combined fuel consumption working out at 4.9l/100km this has to be near a class winner.

AT A GLANCE



PRICE

Starting from €18,900.

TOP SPEED

165km/h

0-100km

16.4 seconds

ECONOMY

4.9l/100km; combined cycle.

CO₂

130g/km

ENGINE

Four cylinders, displacing 1461cc

POWER

85bhp at 3750rpm

TORQUE

200Nm at 1750rpm.

TRANSMISSION

Six-speed manual



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