

D, I Mean “C” TEST No. 9 19/07/2011 – 1988 CX 2500 GTi Automatique)

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Model: CX 2500 GTi

Year: 1988

Years active: 1988->

Engine:

2500cc Serie ‘M’, 138 bhp (DIN) 150bhp (sae)

Transmission: 3 Speed Automatic

Colour: White

Test duration: 09 July 2011

For: Refined, quiet, effortless high speed cruising with impeccable road holding, handling and brakes

Against: Doesn’t have swivelling headlights. (in other words, not a ‘D’, & I had to find something - but that is only being nit-picky as is also an amazing car)

WHAT!!!! A CX Test here???? Have we gone mad?



INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

Would you believe it- after months of inactivity (which I am constantly admonished for) – here is a Road test!

Aside from a four-year relationship with Triumph Heralds and a brush with GS's and a Dyane 6, I was brought up in, under and around DS's. This may make me a little biased, but then what would I be doing associating with this website if I wasn't!

I remember as a child of between 8 & 9 years old, visiting a warehouse somewhere in Auckland to view the very first CX that came into the country. I can't remember the colour – I think it was either blue or white, but we were surprised to find that there was a lack of turning lights, that it had a standard brake pedal, was only 4 speed and even though it had electric windows at the front, the door panels still had the recess for the manual window winders.

Remember, this was the mid seventies. No Internet & we had never even seen a picture of one of these cars, save a very poor quality black & white photocopy of the side profile only and maybe the dashboard, so the 'details' I mention above were not obvious to us before the first viewing and as D fanatics we probably had pre-conceived ideas about what a Citroen should look like, so any of the CX's good points (it's good looks, and imposing profile for example) were overlooked. A test drive was not offered so we had no idea how it rode, handled etc.

Whatever way you looked at it though, the aerodynamic profile was amazing - and that dashboard!!

Some memory hunting and a bit of information I stumbled across last night while hunting for something else has revealed whose car it was. Alby Matthews! Yes, he imported the first CX into New Zealand in 1975 and it must have been this we went to see.

Over the next four years, we heard stories about poor build quality, faulty transmissions (especially the first 5 Speeds and Autos) and other generally negative feedback about them. A CX did not interest us. (We were biased, apparently!) Alby, however had a great run out of his CX and enjoyed it for 25 years. I'll have to check with Kevin what happened to it...

In 1979, Mum & Dad decided they would "upgrade" and buy a brand new GS 1220 Pallas, which of course would mean trading in The DS21. I remember feeling excited about getting a new car (I still have the GS/CX brochure, the colour and upholstery swatches from this temporary period of delusion), but could not understand why the DS had to be replaced and was not at all happy about the idea. Then one weekend a few weeks down the track, it was announced that the plan was not to go ahead. I am not sure why – Mum now can't remember the plan at all – but I am eternally grateful that it did not eventuate!

Anyway, the point is that it was a GS it would have been replaced with and not a CX - probably partially a financial decision, but also a lack of interest in a CX at the time but I also mention it because of the CX/GS brochure I still have. I have to admit that by the early eighties I did look at the photo's of the beautiful CX 2400 Pallas and dribble a little. What actually happened was that Mum's Dyane 6 was sold and replaced with a 1974 GS 1220 Club which she had until 1984.

In the 80's our attitude changed towards the CX somewhat, although not enough to own one, but that was more to do with a love of D's than a loathing for CX's. It was generally opined that if you wanted a CX, you should get a 1979 model year or later, as from this time the teething problems had been ironed out and it had become a respected addition to the Citroen family. Dad's friend for many years, the late Stan Ireland, owned an immaculate metallic green 1979 model and Dad drove it down to Hamilton and back one day. He was quietly impressed, but did state that "It's not a D"

When the later CX's – the GTI and Turbo models came out a little later, we were definitely impressed however, and one of those would definitely have to be in my stable one day, I thought.

Roger however still had mixed feelings regarding CX's and although an interest in them has always been there (will I buy one, won't I?, as he puts it), he was not a CX convert, and the only Citroens he would ever own would be DS's & BX's. (He was very impressed with the Xantia last Saturday however (Insert a Tui's ad here- he is worried my front struts will fail in moment)).

About 2 months ago this changed. He is now not only the owner of a 1985 CX 2500 GTI Auto, but a **proud** owner – a totally fanatical convert who has a DS23 IE Auto sitting in the carport gathering dust with a sulky look on its front bumper. She growls every time the CX rises up beside her and glides off with the driver grinning from ear to ear.

I was slightly sceptical and a number of argumentative and comparative emails were exchanged. Sceptical, that is, until I was handed the keys and drove from Bombay to Papakura. This was not what I suspected. This was **niice!** A few weeks later I was given the

keys again and drove to Hamilton and back. Asked what I thought near the end of the trip, I replied “I want one – an Automatic one, just like this.”

Well, I have digressed enough now, so – here is my report:

PERFORMANCE/HANDLING

This is the category which I was probably the most impressed. We all know the virtues of the mighty D (Yes I am allowed to compare, as a) I am biased, and b) this is a DS website, non?). Once mastered, it is sure footed and has road holding abilities that still surprise and can get out of some sticky situations as long as the driver keeps cool. The key term here is “Once mastered”. The D can & does take a bit of getting used to for most (unless the skill was inbred), but the CX seems to be a car that the driver can adapt to and feel very at home in rather quickly.

The steering, while ever so sensitive in its application in the SM (although I have no complaint about it in that vehicle either (maybe inbreeding again)) is almost perfect in its lower-geared form in the CX. Once you are used to it, the Varipower, or more accurately “DIRAVI” system is a pleasure to use and the car can be thrown around the countryside with a lot of enthusiasm quite controllably. Naturally, understeer is present, although this is masked to an extent by the steering. Only occasionally coming out of a bend could an unusual situation be sensed, but this was more getting used to the powerful self-centering action of the system, rather than any loss of traction.

The performance is impressive. This is a big car, but can certainly out-perform many of its fellow road users. Remember – this car is nearly a quarter of a century old, but feels just as refined as a modern car. It is smooth, quiet and tends to glide past other fast moving objects with its nose in the air, with still plenty of horses to spare.

The Automatic box (and yes, this is me talking) is also impressive, with on the whole smooth, imperceptible changes. This is a far cry from a certain C5 I used to drive, which either refused to change, or when it did, it was so harsh I thought something might break!

The ride seems to be just right – the right level of firmness/softness yet also very quiet with little road noise compared to a D, which not only adds to the comfort, but also the controllability and overall handling.

ENTERTAINMENT VALUE

I am not sure whether this is the correct category for this comment, Or whether this is a complaint, but I found it entertaining how the speedo would go up beyond XXXkm/h. I would notice this, then go Oh F###!, then button off, only to find that the speedo would only drop by 5km/h. I found the car very difficult to keep under XXXkm/h. See next section on what to do about this.

BRAKING

Excellent. Powerful, progressive and very useful. Application of this pedal did finally provide the ability to retard the GTi back down to XXX km/h. She is a very naughty girl.

RELIABILITY:

So far, so good, but I can't see any problems other than Don1's neglected DS23 getting harder and harder to start owing to disuse and being generally ignored.

I was thoroughly impressed. I want one!