

Chrysler Delta 1.6 MultiJet SE

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THIS IS a comfortable car. During my time with the Chrysler Delta I drove it on all sorts of roads - motorways, A roads, B roads, farm tracks – you name it. Afterwards, I always felt free from aches and that ‘numb bum’ sensation you can get after long stretches behind the wheel.

I can't say I'm a great fan of the five door Delta's exterior profile though – it looks a little too bulbous at the rear for my taste. That said, I've seen worse looking new motors on the road and, for the price (just over £19,000), you get a lot of car for the cash; everything is well padded and the controls are smooth to operate. Luxury touches such as a leather clad steering wheel, a refrigerated compartment and privacy glass do make you feel that the Delta is a step up from the average hatchback.

The interior is roomy enough for four and, because the rear seats can recline 25 degrees backwards, your passengers are also offered impressive comfort options. But the boot is a letdown. It's deep but not quite wide enough to easily fit in a folded up pushchair. I should know – I tried to load my little kids' paraphernalia into the boot, and it was a tighter squeeze than I'd hoped for. Never mind, in all other respects this fairly unusual looking car does the job of carting everyone around in relative style well. And it's different from other vehicles in its sector, such as the VW Golf or Ford Focus. It's economical too; on average, you can squeeze around 60 mpg out of the tank.

With a 0-62 mph gallop of 10.7 seconds the Chrysler, mated to a 1.6 MultiJet turbo diesel engine, is not going to burn much rubber - but it doesn't feel underpowered. In fact the 222 lb/ft of pulling power allows this car to tow a load of up to 1300 kg (braked). That's not bad for a hatchback with executive airs. The oil-burner can sound a little less refined than some new diesel cars on the market, but this is only at start up and things under the Delta's bonnet quieten down once you get rolling.

On the safety side of things, the mid-sized Chrysler has won a European New Car Assessment Programme (EuroNCAP) five star crash safety rating. This is thanks to six airbags fitted as standard (front, window and curtain bags on both sides), and five three-point safety belts, with load limiters and pretensioners fitted to the front seats. In addition to that, the Delta is fitted with some pioneering electronic systems to make life at the wheel enjoyable yet very safe. Prime among these is the Absolute Handling System. This is an amalgamation of various existing technologies such as Electronic Stability Control (ESC), Hill Holder to ensure perfect hill starts every time, Anti Slip Regulation (ASR) which uses brake and engine control to optimise traction at any time, and a system which cuts in to ensure engine torque isn't interrupted if a swift down change is needed during a climb.

Along with its smaller sister, the new Chrysler Ypsilon, the Delta marks the resurgence of Chrysler Group LLC, which was formed in 2009 as a strategic alliance with Fiat. Chrysler's portfolio contains some of Europe's most recognisable vehicles, including the 300C saloon and top-selling Grand Voyager MPV. Now with the help of Fiat's experience and knowledge in the small and medium-sized car sectors, Chrysler can infuse compact, more environmentally friendly models with the luxurious character traits of its bigger cars.



PROS 'N' CONS

- Safe ✓
- Comfortable ✓
- Economical ✓
- Pulling power ✓
- Looks X
- Boot X

FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 120 mph
- 0-62 mph: 10.7 secs
- Combined mpg: 60.1
- Engine: 1598 cc 4 cylinder turbo diesel
- Max. power (bhp): 118 at 4000 rpm
- Max. torque (lb/ft): 222 at 1750 rpm
- Max. towing weight (braked) 1300 kg
- CO2: 122 g/km
- Price: **£19,195 on the road**