

Chevrolet Cruze Hatchback

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This car handles far better than it looks. It's also punchier and more comfortable than you might imagine.

You see, the Chevrolet Cruze 1.7 VCDi LT Hatchback gives the impression of being a tiny bit boring and mediocre. From the overly-flexible door panels to the hollow-sounding interior plastics, everything just oozes 'budget'. But is this a bad thing if the car is reasonably priced? Probably not in today's economic climate.

You see, people still want nice things, even when life isn't quite as sweet as it used to be – and a shiny motor is one of them. Let's face it, there's nothing quite like the heady scent of a brand new car - and knowing you're the first owner gives you a kind of thrill.

So, what's the Cruze like inside? Straight away, the iffy looking part-textile covered, plasticky dashboard lets things down a bit, but in lots of other ways the Chevy is admirable. For a start, getting comfy behind the wheel is easy. The driver's seat hugs and supports you in all the right places and the arrangement of the controls is refreshingly simple.

In mid-range LT trim, under review here, the Cruze Hatchback incorporates features such as cruise control, electric windows, a multi-function trip computer, parking distance sensors, remote audio controls and a leather steering wheel and gearknob. What a shame I couldn't find a USB port for my iPhone though.

Regardless of some seemingly low-rent materials used on the Chevrolet Cruze Hatchback, it's not a bad piece of kit for £18,115. Indeed, in five-door guise, the car is even more practical than its saloon sibling which already has one of the biggest load areas in its class. The boot is big, square and deep, so that should tick a major box for anyone looking for a new set-of-wheels that will swallow a pushchair or two, and the weekly supermarket shop.

As alluded to at the top of this piece, the Cruze is reasonably entertaining to drive. The steering is direct and road-holding



is decent - almost sportily so, but that should be expected really. After all, the saloon variant won both the 2010 British Touring Car Drivers championship and both drivers' and manufacturers' titles in the World Touring Car series.

Under the bonnet, lurks a 1686 cc four cylinder 16 valve turbo diesel engine, although it feels more like a 2.0 litre oil-burner. There's heaps of low down shove, meaning you can stir up a swell of power quite easily - and that makes overtaking easy. The six-speed manual gearshift is slick and precise and getting from 0-62mph only takes 9.8 seconds. Okay, that's not blisteringly speedy - but it's impressive enough for a five-seater family car.

The engine isn't just a respectable performer; it's also fuel-efficient and emits low carbon dioxide (CO2). Returning an official average of 62.7 mpg and giving off just 117 g/km of CO2, the 1.7 VCDi propelled Cruze Hatchback is likely to appeal to private and fleet customers alike.

In reality, coupled to Chevrolet's comparatively high specification and keen pricing, that makes the latest Cruze one of the best value five-door family hatchbacks on the road.

PROS

- Reasonably priced • Handling • Efficiency • Load space

CONS

- Some cheap materials • No USB port

FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 124 mph
- 0-62 mph: 9.8 secs
- Combined mpg: 62.7
- Engine: 1686 cc 4 cylinder 16 valve turbo diesel
 - Max. power (bhp): 129 at 4000 rpm
 - Max. torque (lb/ft): 221 at 2000 rpm
 - CO2: 117 g/km
- Price: £18,115 on the road

