

citroen relay

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Introduction

The Citroën Relay has long been a staple in the European light commercial vehicle market. Renowned for its blend of practicality, comfort, and distinctive French styling, the Relay has evolved through five generations since its debut in the mid 1970s. Whether you're a small business owner looking for a reliable fleet vehicle, a delivery driver who needs ample cargo space, or simply a car enthusiast curious about the Relay's place in automotive history, this comprehensive guide will walk you through every aspect of the Citroën Relay. From its early design roots to the latest powertrain options, we'll explore why the Relay continues to be a popular choice for drivers who demand both performance and affordability.

What Is the Citroën Relay?

The Citroën Relay, also known as the Citroën Relay van in many markets, is a light commercial vehicle that has served as the backbone of Citroën's commercial fleet for decades. Built on the same platform as the Citroën Berlingo and the Citroën C4 Picasso, the Relay offers a versatile combination of cargo capacity, maneuverability, and driver comfort. Its name—derived from the French word “relayer,” meaning “to carry”—perfectly encapsulates its purpose: transporting goods efficiently across urban and rural routes alike.

Historical Evolution of the Relay

First Generation (1974–1982)

The original Relay was introduced in 1974 as a compact van designed to replace the Citroën 2CV in the commercial segment. Its boxy silhouette, utilitarian interior, and simple mechanical layout made it a favorite among small traders. Powered by a range of 1.3 and 1.5 litre petrol engines, the first generation Relay could haul up to 1.5 tonnes of cargo, a remarkable feat for its size at the time.

Second Generation (1982–1991)

The 1982 redesign brought a more aerodynamic profile and improved safety features. The second generation introduced a larger 1.7 litre diesel option, boosting torque and fuel economy. Citroën also added optional air conditioning and a more comfortable driver's seat, setting a new standard for commercial vans in terms of driver comfort.

Third Generation (1991–2002)

During the 1990s, the Relay received a significant facelift, featuring sharper lines and a more modern interior. This generation expanded its engine lineup to include 2.0 litre diesel units and introduced the first automatic transmission option. The third generation also saw the introduction of the Relay's first “high roof” variant, which increased cargo height and made the van suitable for transporting taller items.

Fourth Generation (2002–2012)

The 2002 model marked a turning point for the Relay, as Citroën incorporated its “Renault Nissan Alliance” platform. This collaboration brought a more robust chassis and improved handling dynamics. The fourth generation also introduced advanced safety features such as ABS and ESP, along with a range of 1.6 , 1.8 , and 2.0 litre diesel

engines that complied with Euro 4 emission standards.

Fifth Generation (2012–2023)

The latest iteration of the Relay, launched in 2012, showcased Citroën's commitment to sustainability and technology. Equipped with a range of efficient diesel engines, including the 1.5 litre BlueHDi, the fifth generation delivered exceptional fuel economy while maintaining robust torque. The interior received a complete overhaul, featuring a digital instrument cluster, smartphone integration, and improved ergonomics. Safety ratings improved with the addition of lane departure warning and a 360 degree camera system.

Design and Architecture

Exterior Design

The Relay's exterior design balances functionality with style. Its boxy shape maximizes cargo volume while keeping the overall footprint manageable for city driving. The front fascia features Citroën's signature "crocodile" grille, while the side panels are streamlined to reduce wind resistance. The rear hatch is large and flush with the roofline, facilitating easy loading and unloading of goods.

Interior Comfort and Ergonomics

Inside the Relay, driver comfort is a priority. The cabin is laid out with a focus on ergonomics: the steering wheel is positioned for optimal reach, and the dashboard is designed to reduce glare. Adjustable seats, a climate control system, and a well placed gear lever ensure that long drives remain fatigue free. For commercial operators, the interior can be customized with modular shelving, a rear seat, or a partition to separate the driver's area from the cargo space.

Cargo Space and Flexibility

One of the Relay's most celebrated features is its cargo flexibility. The standard cargo area measures 2.5 meters in length, with a maximum height of 1.5 meters, allowing for a wide range of goods to be transported. The van's rear seats can be folded flat, turning the interior into a 3.8 meter-long space. Additionally, optional high roof variants raise the cargo height to 1.7 meters, making the Relay suitable for taller items such as furniture or construction materials.

Engine and Powertrain Options

Diesel Variants

The Relay's diesel engines are the backbone of its performance. The most popular engine is the 1.5 litre BlueHDi, which delivers 90 horsepower and 190 Nm of torque while maintaining a low CO₂ output. For heavier loads, the 2.0 litre BlueHDi offers 110 horsepower and 250 Nm of torque. These engines comply with Euro 6 emission standards, ensuring that the Relay remains environmentally friendly.

Petrol and Hybrid Options

While diesel remains the dominant choice for commercial use, Citroën also offers petrol variants for markets where diesel is less common. The 1.6 litre petrol engine produces 115 horsepower and is praised for its smooth power delivery. In recent years, Citroën has explored hybrid options, integrating a mild hybrid system that improves fuel efficiency by up to 15% in city traffic.

Transmission Choices

The Relay is available with both manual and automatic transmissions. The 6 speed manual provides a straightforward driving experience, while the 8 speed automatic (available on the 1.5 litre BlueHDi) offers smoother

gear changes and better fuel economy. The automatic transmission is particularly beneficial for drivers who spend long hours in stop and go traffic.

Key Features and Technology

Driver Assistance Systems

Modern Citroën Relays are equipped with a suite of driver assistance features. Lane departure warning, automatic emergency braking, and adaptive cruise control are standard on higher trims, enhancing safety for both the driver and the cargo. The 360 degree camera system provides a bird's eye view, simplifying parking and loading in tight spaces.

Infotainment and Connectivity

The Relay's infotainment system is user friendly and integrates seamlessly with smartphones via Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. The digital instrument cluster displays essential information, such as fuel consumption and maintenance alerts, reducing the need for the driver to glance away from the road. Bluetooth connectivity and a USB port allow for hands free calls and media playback.

Safety Ratings

In safety assessments, the Citroën Relay consistently scores well. The 2018 Euro NCAP review awarded the van four out of five stars, citing its robust construction and effective airbag system. Newer models have improved upon these results with the addition of electronic stability control and advanced driver assist technologies.

Performance and Driving Dynamics

Despite its boxy shape, the Relay delivers a surprisingly smooth ride. The suspension system is tuned for a balance between cargo stability and driver comfort. The steering is light and responsive, which is especially advantageous in congested city environments. The van's low center of gravity enhances handling during cornering, making it less prone to oversteer.

Fuel Efficiency and Emissions

Fuel efficiency is a critical factor for commercial operators. The 1.5 litre BlueHDi engine averages 6.5 liters per 100 kilometers in combined driving conditions, which translates to roughly 36 miles per gallon. This efficiency, combined with the van's low CO₂ emissions,

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