



# Citroën Saxo 1.6 Auto



## What's different?

**Automatic Saxo with new (electro-hydraulic) powered steering and a 1.6-litre engine. Five doors this time, as well.**

**N**OT MUCH HAS PROGRESSED IN THE PSA transmission department since we last sampled a Peugeot/Citroën small automatic. It was a 205 1.6/80bhp five door and suffered both loss of urge and fuel economy because its four-speed transmission used a power-sapping torque converter. Seven years on, the new Saxo/106 five door offers similar accommodation and 10bhp more, but the 'box is now down to three gears and uses a converter that no longer even offers a "lock-up" facility when cruising.

Don't get us wrong – from the driver's point of view this transmission is very user-friendly, and electronics ensure intelligent part-throttle and full-throttle gearchanging to suit most conditions. A double-width brake pedal and a left footrest make for easy control – we found that two-foot driving came easily. There's nothing complicated about the selector, although the markings are on the "French" side of the lever.

The torque converter allows a significant degree of slip, so the tachometer reading rises by nearly 1000rpm when the engine's pulling, compared with a feathered gas pedal at the same road speed. The numerical results don't stand up to close scrutiny, however. Our consumption tests and acceleration times reveal the underlying mechanical inefficiency of the transmission. We've sampled this engine in a 306 manual, recording 38mpg overall and 30–70mph in 11.6sec in what is a larger model that weighs 90kg more. We would expect the Saxo 1.6 five-speed to better 40mpg, and putting it another way, a 1.1 manual will be almost as accelerative as this auto version, yet is 37 percent more fuel efficient. It's a lot cheaper to buy, as well.

The test car came with one Peugeot/Citroën technical innovation: power assistance for the steering that's provided by an electric motor rather than the usual servo-pump driven by the crankshaft pulley drive-belt. It reduces power losses and makes it much easier to add on as an optional extra, because the motor can be placed anywhere under the bonnet, so long as its hydraulic pipework can reach the steering rack. Feel isn't quite as deft as the best we've sampled on a Peugeot, but there's nothing serious to complain about and the reduction in wheel turns is accompanied

by a much better turn in the road on right lock, compared with the Saxo 1.4.

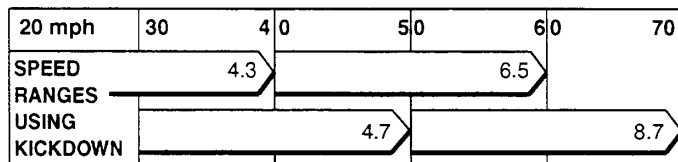
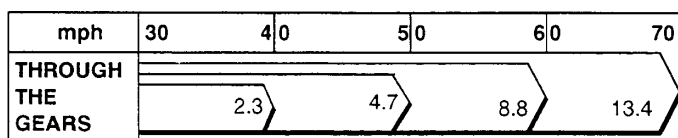
Having a five-door Saxo does more than merely make it easier for rear passengers to reach their (cramped) rear accommodation. You get proper door handles on the outside of the five door and inside, the front seatbelts have height adjusters added. The Saxo's other silly features we complained of are still in evidence, however – amazing when the sister car 106 has them sussed out, including gas-struts for its bonnet opening.

## VERDICT

The Saxo (and 106) Automatic is likeable enough on initial acquaintance; even the absence of Sport and Winter settings may be a comfort to non-technical, non-enthusiast users who just want a small auto car to eliminate all the hassle. However, be warned that even computer control can't transform yesterday's technology to match the best small automatics using CVT (continuously variable transmission). It's no longer necessary to tolerate the performance of a 1.1-litre small car with the fuel thirst of a 406 or a Xantia, simply because your preference is for automatic.

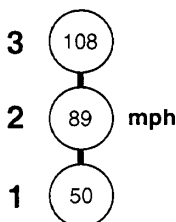
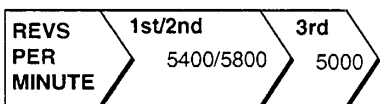
## PERFORMANCE

### Acceleration time in seconds – using kickdown in D



### Maximum speeds

using accelerator kickdown



## FOR THE TECHNICAL

Specification similar to Saxo 1.4 (see R9657) except for:

**Engine** 1587cc/90bhp with multi-point injection

**Transmission** three-speed automatic with hydrokinetic torque converter and epicyclic gear train

**Mph per 1000rpm (theoretical)** 23.7 in top

**Rpm at 70mph (observed at steady speed/level road)** 3180 equivalent to 22.0mph per 1000rpm

**Steering** rack and pinion with electro-hydraulic power assistance; 3.1 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 10.45m between kerbs, with 15.55m circle for one turn of the wheel

**Wheels** 165/65R14H Michelin MXV3A tyres

## FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade for tests: unleaded Premium, 95 octane

Normal range	mpg
Hard driving, heavy traffic	28½
Short journeys in the suburbs	26½
Motorway – 70mph cruising	36
Brisk driving, mixed roads	33½
Gentle driving, rural roads	37
<b>Typical mpg overall</b>	<b>33½</b>
Realistic tank range*	41 litres/300 miles

\*based on fuel gauge/warning lamp and filling station experience

## HOW THE SAXO AUTO COMPARES

	Engine cap/power (cc/bhp)	Revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	Fuel economy (mpg)	Brakes best stop (m/kg)	Maximum legroom – front (cm)	Typical leg/kneerom – rear (cm)	Steering turns/circle (m)	Overall length (cm)
CITROËN SAXO 1.6 AUTO	1587/90	3180	13.4	33½	29/27	105	91/65	3.1/10.55 (p)	372
Rover 114 1.4 Auto	1396/75	3020	13.1	39	28½/26	104	93/61	3.7/9.8	357
Nissan Micra 1.3 Auto	1275/75	3000	12.3	42½	30/15	102	94/66	3.7/9.7 (p)	370
Honda Civic 1.6 (3 door) Auto	1590/115	2860	9.9	38	24½/18*	111	96/68	3.5/10.55 (p)	419
Renault Clio 1.2 Easy †	1149/60	3440	16.6	45½	29/27	103	94/68	3.4/10.3 (p)	371
Daihatsu Charade 1.3 Auto	1296/84	3080	15.0	35½	28½/12	105	98/66	3.2/9.5 (p)	375
† (clutchless manual)					* with ABS			(p) power-assisted	