

All Aboard

Ian Lamming lets Citroen's new C4 Grand Picasso take the strain

As a child, being a train driver was up there with spaceman and cowboy as potential future careers.

It never happened, of course, as life took me down the road of motor corresponding, but it came pretty close behind the wheel of Citroen's new C4 Grand Picasso.

Staring at the road ahead through one of the largest windscreens on the market it feels like being the driver of a Virgin express.

What is a pretty unrestricted view of the world to start with becomes truly panoramic once the sun visors are pushed back and the glass seems to stretch behind your head.

A small strengthening bar soon gives way to the glass roof and large deep side windows make the Grand Picasso a veritable greenhouse on wheels.

Like small seedlings, we as drivers need light to nurture and flourish and the C4 blesses all inside with dazzling amounts of UV.

Cave-dwellers need not apply and the Citroen is the perfect antidote for those who suffer from seasonal affected disorder.

Grand Picasso adds a full complement of seven seats to the spacious and airy interior. But when they are not all needed they store away leaving a large and accommodating boot.

It's an excellent place to reside and a fabulous way to travel proving that it is not only the train that takes the strain.

Seat-back tables and the obligatory interconnectivity will keep passengers happy and journeys will fly by in a blur of digital device operating.

Driver gets his toys as well and everything is suitably touch-screen showing the C4 is right up to date.

The 1.6 litre diesel is powerful, usable and refined. It offers decent performance and excellent economy while a competent chassis takes care of handling and ride.

The automatic box, operated by a very light plastic stalk behind the steering wheel, changes quickly and willingly to keep the motor in its power-band.

Picasso is strangely nostalgic, my thoughts straying to the last one I drove, on holiday to Monaco, when the boy, only toddling then, devoured a slice of pizza bigger than his head.

And that's the strength of the Grand Picasso. It is a vehicle for the family and something in which a host of memories will be made.

Like a train it takes you on a journey but in the metaphorical as well as the literal sense.

Fact File

- Citroen C4 Grand Picasso
- Engine: 1.6 turbo diesel
- Power: 118hp
- 0-62mph 11.5 secs
- Top speed: 117mph
- Combined MPG: 70.6
- Transmission: six speed automatic
- CO2 g/km: 106

