

First drive

This is the best all-electric city car yet, but it's pricey

A greener city drive

CITROËN C1 EV'IE

Order an Ev'ie and you get a new Citroën C1 supermini with the engine and transmission stripped out and replaced with an electric motor and a bank of batteries.

The Ev'ie keeps the practicality and safety of the four-star Euro NCAP-rated Citroën C1. It has four good-sized seats too, unlike the Mini E prototype, which loses its back seat for battery storage.

The Ev'ie is eerily silent from the outside and we wonder whether other road users will hear it coming. Inside, there's only a whizzy sound from the motor that grows as you gain speed. The Ev'ie has acceptable acceleration around town and a top speed of 60mph.

A full charge takes six hours and can be done with a domestic 13 amp socket. It's claimed this costs just 95p. The Ev'ie's



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official range is up to 75 miles, but we found that its batteries ran low after half that on a London commute.

Price is the stumbling block. It starts at £16,850 for the three-door VT, almost £9,000 more than the conventional C1 VT 1.0 petrol. The Ev'ie is the first real fully electric alternative to conventional cars. We expect it to be the first of many.

Until electric cars are more affordable, go for a small-engined, low emission supermini, or join a car club if you don't need a car every day. See www.which.co.uk/carclubs for more.

The entry-level Mini First targets new drivers

Time for your first Mini?

MINI FIRST

This budget Mini is aimed at new drivers, hence the First tag. The basic version is £10,950, but you can add extras (air conditioning is £665).

The First uses a de-tuned version of the Mini One's 1.4-litre petrol engine. Its 75bhp output means that its performance is hardly sparkling, and claimed economy is the same as the higher-powered One (53.3mpg). It's in

a lower insurance group though, so it should be cheaper to insure. As is typical with a Mini, road handling is excellent with direct steering and minimal body roll. It has the same safety equipment, so there are front, side and curtain airbags, and electronic stability control.

VERDICT The First is an affordable Mini, but the engine is weak and is no more economical than the Mini One. We think the Mini One is worth the extra £1,435.



This month

Visit www.which.co.uk/cars to read full first drives for most mainstream new cars, including the eco-friendly Volvo C30 DRIVE. You can watch video reviews for many models, too

Volvo C30 DRIVE

Volvo's stylish C30 hatchback is already a Which? Best Buy. A leaner and greener DRIVE version promises low emissions and up to 72.4mpg thanks to better aerodynamics, a more efficient diesel engine and a stop-start system. Will it save you money? Log on to www.which.co.uk/volvoc30drive to find out.



Chevrolet Cruze

Chevrolet's new medium-sized saloon replaces the Lacetti. It's safer, better equipped and has an attractive interior. Prices start at £11,995 for the basic 1.6 S petrol, and there is a 1.8 and two 2.0 diesels (125 and 150bhp). But depreciation is steep. See www.which.co.uk/chevroletcruze.



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