

CLASSIC DRIVER

Driven: Citroën DS Décapotable



Gosh, what a head-turner. The smartest parts of London are familiar with the most exotic motor cars, but for sheer style a Chapron-bodied Citroën certainly makes its mark.

While London's collective fashionista might admire the très chic, timeless lines of possibly France's most elegant post-War car, few will have realised the rarity of this particular example.

Only recently coming to the market, via London dealer [Hexagon Classics](#), the grey-with-red-hide DS21 is believed to be just one of three in the following specification: fuel-injection, four-speed manual, electric power hood and separate factory hardtop from new. In addition, it has a bespoke interior with special head-rests and centre console.



It is a beautiful creation and, having been the subject of a three-year, total, nut-and-bolt restoration, is in quite perfect condition. The comprehensive history file carries a photographic record of the work carried out and includes an original letter from Madame Chapron, no less, as well as extensive correspondence from Citroën's heritage department.

Easing the shark-like nose of the Décapotable into London's lunchtime traffic, I am struck by the civilising effect the car has not only on me, but on its immediate road-space. Other road-users might stop and stare, but quickly allow the car room to sail forth. Likewise, pedestrians, camera-phones at the ready, welcome the DS, rather than resent it.







From a driving perspective (rather important, however attractive the clothes...), the DS feels very modern. The famous 'black mushroom' brake 'button' works perfectly well after a little acclimatisation and the very direct steering is finger-light.

Column-mounted changes may be making a reappearance in new cars such as the S-Class, and the H-pattern lever of this Citroën's is just inches away from the wide-diameter steering wheel. It suits the relaxed nature of the car.

As well as freeing up floor-space for a Hermès handbag, of course.



The seats are beautifully re-trimmed in red hide and offer both comfort in a straight-ahead cruise as well as surprising support when using the strangely effective cornering capabilities of the famous hydropneumatic suspension. It really does handle well, and will do all the ride-height and driving-on-three wheels tricks the ground-breaking-for-its-day set-up is famous for.

The performance is good enough for, I don't know... 100mph maybe? More than enough to get you around on the autoroute.



With the hard-top fitted (it's a 15-minute job to remove it - easily done in an owner's garage) the DS becomes more navy pinstripe and less linen suit. The visibility is pretty good and it's a cosy solution to the "what do I do in winter?" scenario. With the hard-top fitted on cold winter nights, high in the hills of Provence, the front-wheel drive affording good traction and adjustable ride-height available to negotiate that long villa driveway, it could be a genuine all-year-round addition to the garage.

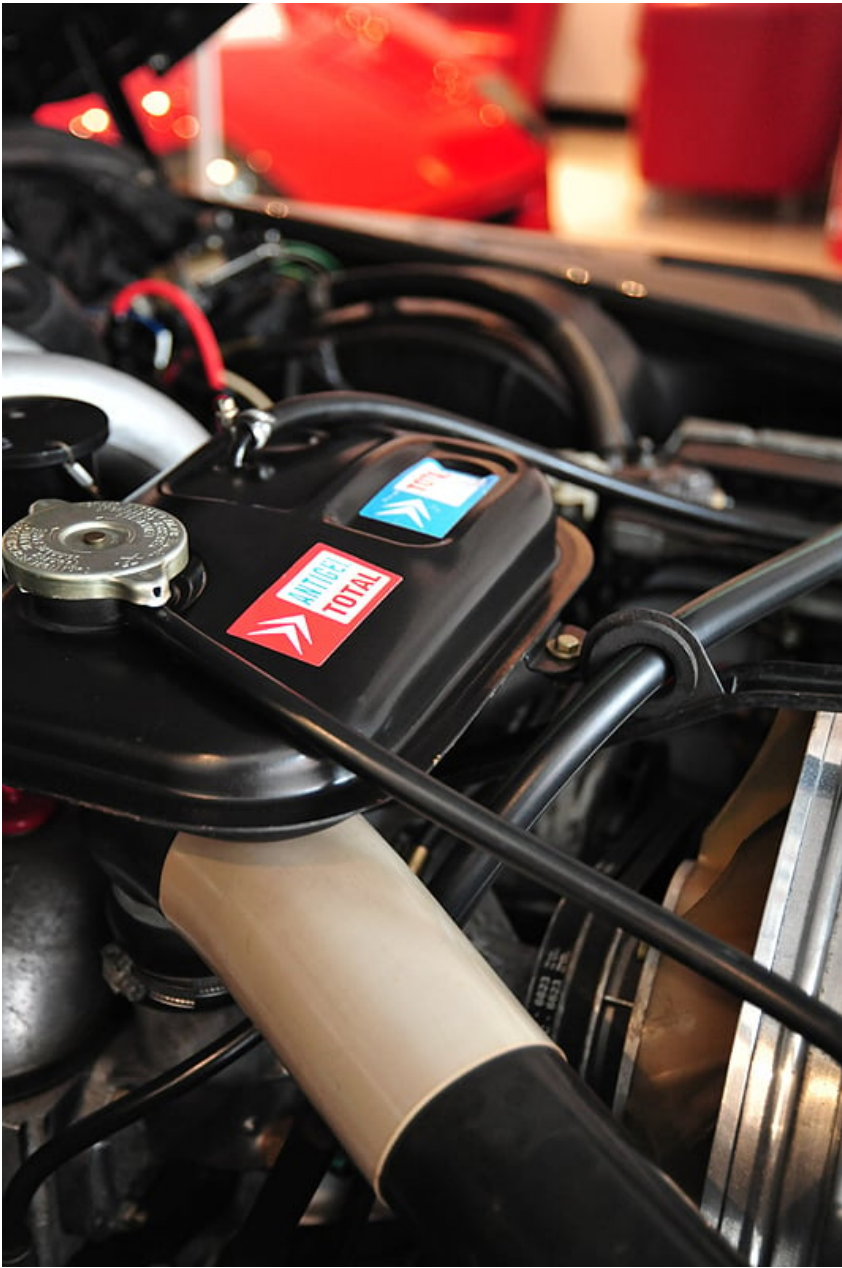






Come April or May, it's back to either completely open, or the fabric hood easily raised via its electric mechanism.

And, even on the Côte d'Azur, you can rely on some admiring glances from the locals, for whom beauty – topless or otherwise – is a way of life.







You can see further details and photos of the car in the [Classic Driver Marketplace](#). For further information, call Hexagon Classics on +44 (0)20 7225 3388 or email sales@hexagonclassics.com.

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