

RENAULT MEGANE CABRIOLET

1.6-Litre Manual



FEATURES	
BEST	WORST
Excellent fuel economy	Very limited rear leg room
A trendy looking convertible	Front seat belts sit
Well equipped	uncomfortably on shoulders
Pleasant road manners	Vision to rear with hood erect

Renault's return to the Australian automotive scene involves entries into several different vehicle segments and the 1.6 litre Megane Cabriolet's job is to tackle the affordable end of the drop-top market.

As such, the Megane Cabriolet's opposition could reasonably be expected to include the Peugeot 306 and Volkswagen Golf Cabriolets, however both of these have 2.0 litre engines and cost around \$10,000 more.

Two soft-tops that are closer to the Megane Cabriolet in price (though they too, are dearer and only offer two seats) are the Mazda MX-5 and the MGF. Another potential competitor that's due shortly is the Peugeot 206 Cabriolet.

There's just one version of the Megane Cabriolet available here in Australia, with the manual priced at \$39,985 and the automatic costing \$41,985.

Renault took the decision to specify high levels of standard equipment for all of its Australian-released models and so the Megane Cabriolet comes with an impressive list of features.

Standard items include four airbags (front and front side), air conditioning, anti-lock brakes with electronic brake force distribution, electric windows and mirrors, an engine immobiliser, alloy road wheels, remote central locking and an in-dash CD player.

The Cabriolet conversion by Karmann looks well executed, with only minimal body scuttle shake over rough surfaces. The fully-lined and electrically-operated hood appears to be weatherproof and draught-free. Though it's power operated, the first (and last) stages of the hood lowering and raising operations have to be done manually.

Probably the least attractive aspect of the Megane Cabriolet's profile is the straight-on look of its rear, which is rather high and lumpy. However from the front, front angle or side-on, the Cabriolet looks perky and modern. It's also a car that looks good with its hood up or down.

The driver and front passenger have ample legroom and are seated in a pair of comfortable bucket seats that offer good lateral support. A cause of discomfort for myself is that the position of the seat belt upper mounting has the belt pulling down on my shoulder.

Forget the rear seat unless you can have the front seats set forward a couple of notches, as rear leg room all but disappears when the front seats are set right back. If you can fit, the rear

seat is reasonably comfortable, however some occupants may find that the built-in head restraints intrude uncomfortably against their head or neck.

Generally, I found the pedal and control layout to be better in the Megane than in a pair of Scenics tested, however with the seat set well back for leg comfort, the steering wheel is then a bit too far away. The wheel is tilt-adjustable but not telescopic.

As with many convertibles, vision to the rear (particularly the corners) is restricted when the hood is erect. Also, the view through the plastic rear window is inferior to glass windows. There is air-blown demisting provided for the rear window, which is reasonably effective.

Though acceleration times don't show the Megane Cabriolet to be a strong performer, the combination of good engine flexibility and sensible gearing make the car feel reasonably lively in everyday traffic situations.

The Megane also pulls quite well in the higher gears, so it's not one of those cars in which you constantly need to be changing gears in order to maintain momentum.

Though it's recommended that the Megane be operated on premium grade unleaded petrol, the upside is that it returns excellent fuel economy. In fact, the overall consumption figure of 6.5 litres/100 km recorded for our test puts the Megane Cabriolet up with some of the most economical vehicles tested, regardless of class.

The Megane has a supple suspension that provides both good ride comfort and sure-footed handling. The power assisted rack and pinion steering is well weighted for precise control and overall, the Megane Cabriolet is pleasant and easy to handle.

SUMMARY:

The Renault Megane Cabriolet might not be super powerful or super quick, but it does successfully meet its objectives to provide transport that is trendy and fun, rather than something that will simply get you from A to B in an efficient, but uninspiring fashion.

Buyers of the Megane must forego some practicalities compared to your average sedan or five door hatchback, but when the weather and driving conditions are right, the joys of open-air motoring can more than compensate for any shortcomings.

RENAULT MEGANE Cabriolet SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE:

TypeFour cylinder, in-line, DOHC, 16 valves
 Capacity in litres..... 1.598
 Induction Multipoint fuel injection
 Fuel recommendation (used for test)..... PULP
 Claimed max. power 79 kW at 5750 rpm
 Claimed max. torque 148 Nm at 3750 rpm
 Specific power output..... 49.4 kW/litre

TRANSMISSION:

Type Five speed manual
 Driving wheels Front
 Speed per 1000 rpm in top gear..... 33.0 km/h

WHEELS: Alloy, 15 inch

TYRES: Michelin Energy 185/60R 15

Spare: Steel, matching size

STEERING:

Type Power assisted rack and pinion
 Turns lock to lock..... 3.5
 Turning circle (measured) 10.6 metres

DIMENSIONS:

Mass 1155 kg
 Length 4082 mm
 Width (excluding mirrors)..... 1710 mm
 Height..... 1368 mm
 Ground clearance (measured)..... 140 mm
 Seating capacity 2 + 2
 Fuel tank capacity..... 60 litres

TOWING:

Max. towed mass (trailer plus load)..... 1000 kg
 Max. towball download (laden trailer) ... 75 kg

NRMA THEFT RATING:

Points on 0-110 scale (high score best) 57.5

WARRANTY: Three years, 100,000 km

MANUFACTURED IN:..... France

TEST RESULTS

Note: Damp test track conditions

ACCELERATION:

50 - 80 km/h (in 3rd gear)..... 5.6 sec
 60 - 100 km/h (in 3rd gear)..... 7.2 sec
 0 - 80 km/h 7.9 sec
 0 - 100 km/h 11.8 sec
 0 - 400 metres 18.2 sec

FUEL CONSUMPTION:

Litres/100 km in city 7.9
 Litres/100 km on highway..... 5.8
 Litres/100 km overall 6.5

BRAKING:

Distance to stop from 80 km/h 31.8 metres

NOISE:

Interior at constant 80 km/h 69 dB(A)

● Test vehicle supplied by Vehicle Distributors Australia Pty Ltd

Call NRMA Automotive Technical Services on 1300 655 443, should you require additional information on this vehicle, on other makes, or for general advice on automotive matters.