





# Citroën

## Automobiles CITROËN



<b>Type</b>	Subsidiary of PSA Peugeot Citroën
<b>Founded</b>	1919
<b>Founder(s)</b>	André Citroën
<b>Headquarters</b>	Paris, France
<b>Industry</b>	Automotive
<b>Products</b>	Automobile
<b>Employees</b>	13,900
<b>Parent</b>	PSA Peugeot Citroën
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://Citroën.com">Citroën.com</a>

**Citroën** (French pronunciation: [sitʁo'ɛn]) is a French automobile manufacturer. Founded in 1919 by André Citroën, it was the world's first mass-production car company outside of the USA. Since 1976 it has been part of PSA Peugeot Citroën, and its headquarters is on rue Fructidor, Paris.

Originally a mass-market car maker with relatively straightforward designs, Citroën shocked the world in 1934 with the innovative Traction Avant, the world's first mass-production front wheel drive car (1934–56). Other significant models include the H Van (1947–81), the 2CV (1948–90), the DS (1955–1975) and the CX (1974–91).

# History

## Early years

André Citroën built armaments for France during World War I and after the war he had a factory and no product. In 1919, the business started to produce automobiles, beginning with the conventional type A. The Type A was designed by Jules Salomon, Chief Design Officer from Le Zèbre.

Citroën was a keen marketer—he used the Eiffel Tower as the world's largest advertising sign, as recorded in the Guinness Book of Records. He also sponsored expeditions in Asia (Croisière Jaune) and Africa (Croisière Noire), intended to demonstrate the potential for motor vehicles equipped with the Kégresse track system to cross inhospitable regions. The expeditions conveyed scientists and journalists.

In 1924, Citroën began a business relationship with American engineer Edward G. Budd. From 1899, Budd had worked to develop stainless steel bodies for railroad cars, for the Pullman in particular. Budd went on to manufacture steel bodies for many automakers, Dodge being his first big auto client. In 1928, Citroën introduced the first all-steel body in Europe. The cars were initially successful in the marketplace, but soon competitors (who were still using a wooden structure for their bodies), introduced new body designs. Citroën did not redesign the bodies of his cars. Citroëns still sold in large quantities in spite of not changing the body design, but the car's low price was the main selling point and Citroën experienced heavy losses.

In an attempt to remedy the situation, Citroën developed the Traction Avant. The Traction Avant had three revolutionary features: a unitary body with no separate frame, front wheel independent suspension, and front wheel drive. Citroën commissioned Budd to create a prototype, which evolved into the 7 horsepower (CV), 32 hp (24 kW) Traction Avant of 1934.

In 1933, Citroën also introduced the Rosalie, a passenger car with the world's first commercially available diesel engine, developed with Harry Ricardo.

## The Michelin era

Achieving quick development of the Traction Avant and its production facilities at the same time was too costly and overly ambitious, causing the financial ruin of the company. In 1934, debt forced the company into foreclosure and it was then taken over by its biggest creditor, the tire company Michelin. Fortunately for Michelin, the Traction Avant met with market acceptance and the basic philosophy that had led to this design continued.

Citroën has always been undercapitalized, so its vehicles have a tradition of being underdeveloped at launch, with limited distribution and service networks. For both the important DS and CX models, development of the original engine around which the design was planned proved too expensive for the finances available, and the actual engine used in both cases was a modest and outdated four-cylinder design.

During the German occupation of France in World War II, Citroën researchers continued their work in secret and developed the concepts that were later brought to market in the 2CV and DS. These were widely regarded by contemporary journalists as avant garde, even radical, solutions to automotive design.



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This began a period of unusual brand loyalty, normally seen in the automobile industry only in niche brands, like Porsche and Ferrari. The cult-like appeal of the cars to *Citroënistes* took almost two decades to fade, from 1975 to about 1995.

Citroën unveiled the 2CV (2 fiscal horsepower, initially only 12 HP) at the Paris Salon in 1948. The car became a bestseller, achieving the designer's aim of providing rural French people with a motorized alternative to the horse. This car remained in production, with only minor changes, until 1990 and was a common sight on French roads until recently.

1955 saw the introduction of the DS, the first full usage of Citroën's now legendary hydropneumatic self-levelling suspension system that was tested on the rear suspension of the last of the Tractions. The DS was the first European production car with disc brakes.

The DS featured power steering, power brakes and power suspension, and—from 1968—directional headlights. A single high-pressure system was used to activate pistons in the gearbox cover to shift the gears in the transmission and to operate the clutch on the Citromatic, Citroën's semi-automatic transmission.

This high-pressure hydraulic system would form the basis of many Citroën cars, including the SM, GS, CX, BX, XM, and Xantia. These vehicles shared the distinguishing feature of rising to operating ride height when the engine was turned on, like a "mechanical camel" (per *Car & Driver* magazine). A lever located just ahead of the driver's door allowed the driver to adjust the height of the car. On right-hand drive models, this lever was located behind the driver's right foot. The height-adjustability of the suspension allowed for clearing obstacles, fording shallow (slow-moving) streams, and changing tires. This type of suspension was uniquely able to absorb road irregularities without disturbing the occupants.

During Citroën's venture with Maserati, the Citroën high-pressure hydraulic system was used on several Maserati models, for power clutch operation (Bora), power pedal adjustment (Bora), pop-up headlights (Bora, Merak), brakes (Bora, Merak, Khamsin), steering (Khamsin), and the entire Quattroporte II prototype, which was a four-door Citroën SM under the skin.

Citroën was one of the early pioneers of the now widespread trend of aerodynamic automobile design, which helps to reduce fuel consumption and improve high-speed performance by reducing wind resistance. The firm began using a wind tunnel in the 1950s.

## **Financial restructuring**

In 1963, Citroën negotiated with Peugeot to cooperate in the purchase of raw materials and equipment. Talks were broken off in 1965.

That year Citroën took over the French carmaker Panhard in the hope of using Panhard's expertise in midsize cars to complement its own range of very small, cheap cars (e.g., 2CV/Ami) and large, expensive cars (e.g., DS/ID). Cooperation between both companies had begun 12 years earlier, and they had agreed to a partial merger of their sales networks in 1953. Panhard ceased making vehicles in 1967.

1968 saw a restructuring of Citroën's worldwide operations under a new holding company, Citroën SA. Michelin, Citroën's long-time controlling shareholder, sold a 49% stake to FIAT, in what was referred to as the PARDEVI agreement (Participation ET Développement Industriels).

That year Citroën purchased the Italian sports car maker Maserati and launched the grand tourer SM, which featured a V6 Maserati engine and a fully powered steering system called DIRAVI. The SM was engineered as if it were replacing the DS, a level of investment the GT sector alone would never be able to support,

even in the best of circumstances. Circumstances became more unfavorable as the 1970s progressed. Citroën suffered another financial blow in the 1973 energy crisis. In 1974, the carmaker withdrew from North America, due to design regulations that outlawed core features of Citroën cars.

Huge losses at Citroën were caused by failure of the Comotor rotary engine venture, plus the strategic error of going the 15 years from 1955 to 1970 without a model in the profitable middle range of the European market, and the massive development costs for the GS, CX, SM, Birotor, Maserati Bora, Maserati Merak, and Maserati Khamsin models—each a technological marvel in its own right.

## The PSA era



Logo used until 2009

Citroën was weak and unable to withstand the softening of the automobile market that accompanied the 1973 oil crisis. That year FIAT withdrew from PARDEVI and returned its 49% stake to Michelin. This was an ominous sign of things to come and, less than a year later, Citroën went bankrupt. The French government feared large job losses and arranged talks between Michelin and Peugeot, in which it was decided to merge Automobiles Citroën and Automobiles Peugeot into a single company. In 1974, Peugeot purchased 38.2% of Citroën and became responsible for managing the combined activities, in particular their research, purchasing, and investments departments.

Peugeot sold off Maserati to DeTomaso in May 1975, and the Italian firm was quickly able to exploit the aspirational image of the Maserati brand to sell tens of thousands of newly-designed Bi-Turbo models.

The takeover was completed in May 1976, as Peugeot SA purchased a 90% stake of Citroën SA and the companies were combined into a holding company, known as PSA Peugeot Citroën.

The PSA venture was a financial success from 1976 to 1979. Citroën had two successful new designs in the market at this time (the GS and CX), a resurgent Citroën 2CV, and the Citroën Dyane in the wake of the oil crisis, and Peugeot was typically prudent in its own finances, launching the Peugeot 104 based Citroën Visa and Citroën LNA. PSA then purchased the aging assets of Chrysler Europe, which it rebranded as Talbot, leading to losses from 1980 to 1985.

PSA gradually eliminated Citroën's ambitious attitude to engineering and styling in an effort to rebrand the marque as an economy brand. In the 1980s, Citroën models were increasingly Peugeot-based, which was part of a worldwide motor industry trend called "platform sharing." The 1982 BX used the hydropneumatic suspension system and still had a *Citroënnesque* appearance, while being powered by Peugeot-derived engines and using the floorpan later seen on the Peugeot 405. By the late 1980s, many of the distinctive features of the marque had been removed or diluted—the AX GT, for example was noted by contemporary journalists for its poor ride quality, an unusual attribute for the brand.

Citroën has expanded into many new geographic markets. In the late 1970s, the firm developed a small car for production in Romania known as the Olcit, which it sold in Western Europe as the Citroën Axel. That joint venture has ended, but a new one between PSA and Toyota is now producing cars like the Citroën C1 in the Czech Republic. In China, the C3 and Xsara are sold alongside the Fukang and Elysée local models. Citroën is still a global brand except in North America, where the company has not returned since the SM was effectively banned in 1974 for not meeting NHTSA bumper regulations.

The ubiquitous and versatile 2CV workhorse was finally killed off in 1990, without replacement. Companies like Chrysler with the CCV concept car, Toyota with the Scion xB and Honda with the Element have recognized the 2CV concept and translated it to the modern era. More recently, Citroën has introduced the C3 Pluriel, an unusual convertible with strong allusions to the 2CV, both in body style (such as the bonnet) and in its all-round practicality. A "retro style" C3-based, post-modern 2cv like the new VW Beetle and BMW MINI is under active consideration by Citroën.

The Pluriel is but one example of Citroën's return to innovation, after launching somewhat dull (although efficient) models throughout the 1990s. Other examples are the C2, C4, and C6. The introduction of newer models, such as the long-awaited CX replacement, the C6, indicates Citroën's continued commitment to innovation in the 21st century. But the days of clean-sheet thinking and truly radical innovation are long gone. Being too avant-garde and too far ahead of public taste is too risky.

In 2003, Citroën sold 1,372,500 cars, according to the PSA Peugeot Citroën group's 2003 annual report.

## **European Car of the Year awards**

### **Winners**

- 1971: Citroën GS
- 1975: Citroën CX
- 1990: Citroën XM

### **Podiums**

- 1971: Citroën SM
- 1979: Citroën Visa
- 1988: Citroën AX
- 1994: Citroën Xantia
- 2003: Citroën C3
- 2005: Citroën C4
- 2007: Citroën Grand C4 Picasso



## USA Car of the Year award

- 1972 Citroën SM Motor Trend Car of the Year

## The C\_42

Citroen's Flagship store, situated on the Champs Elysees in Paris, underwent its biggest renovation ever, in 2007. The building was designed by Manuelle Gautrand, and was selected in September 2002. The plan was to bring the showroom back to its former glory, which was to make it distinctive and innovative, in-keeping with Citroen's brand values. The famous Citroen chevrons can be seen in the already iconic glass facade, whilst the cars inside are displayed on large circular rotating platforms, over numerous levels. A Citroen Boutique is located on the ground floor, featuring Citroen memorabilia such as model cars. The cars inside the showroom change regularly, according to the season. As of April 2009, the season is 'Airdream Season', based on the company's new range of eco-friendly Airdream models as well as eco-friendly Concept cars. Citroen often use the venue to reveal new production cars and concepts to the press. In October 2008, Citroen dedicated the exhibition to the launch of the new C3 Picasso, coinciding with its world debut at the Paris Motorshow.

















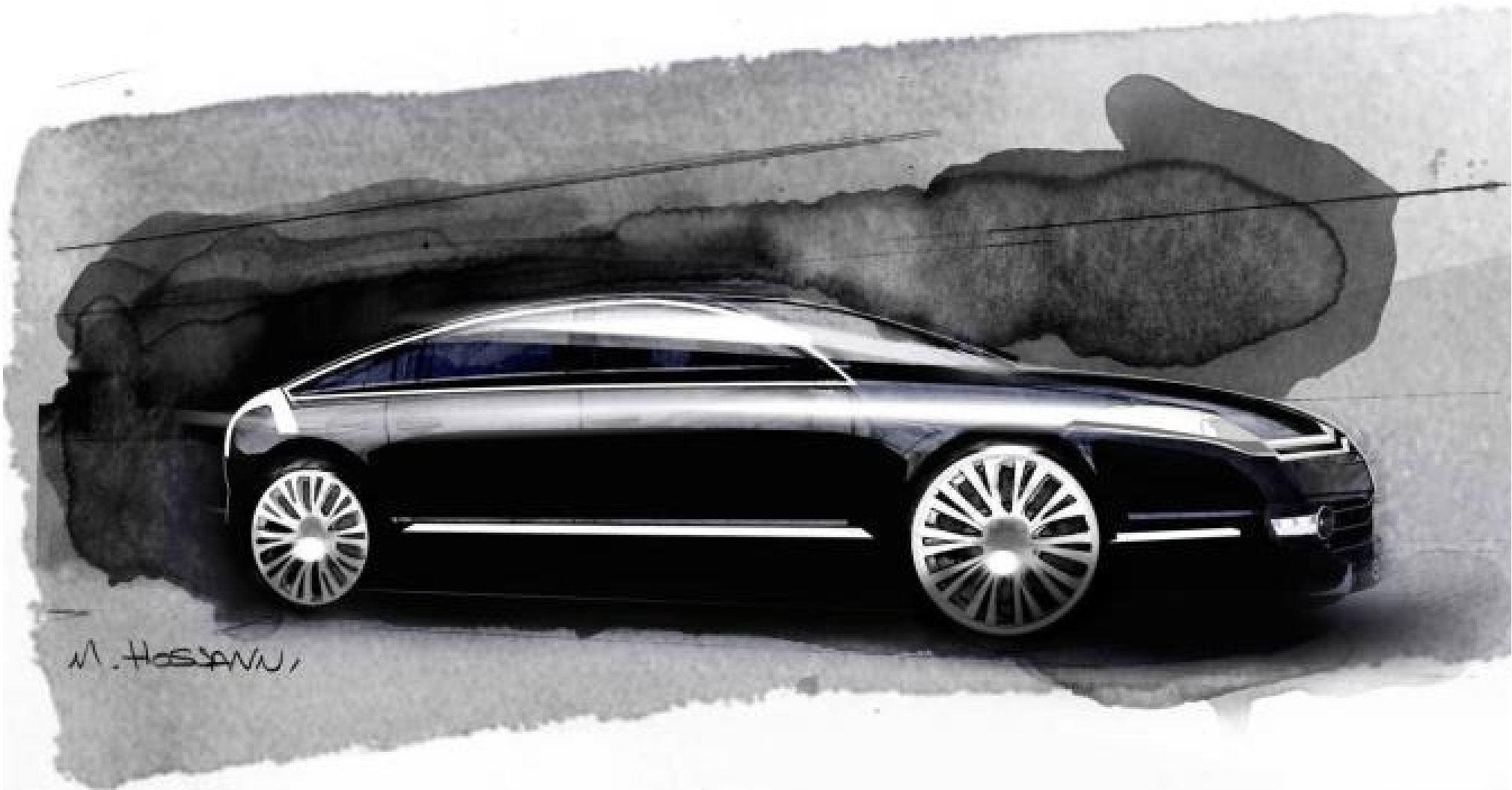








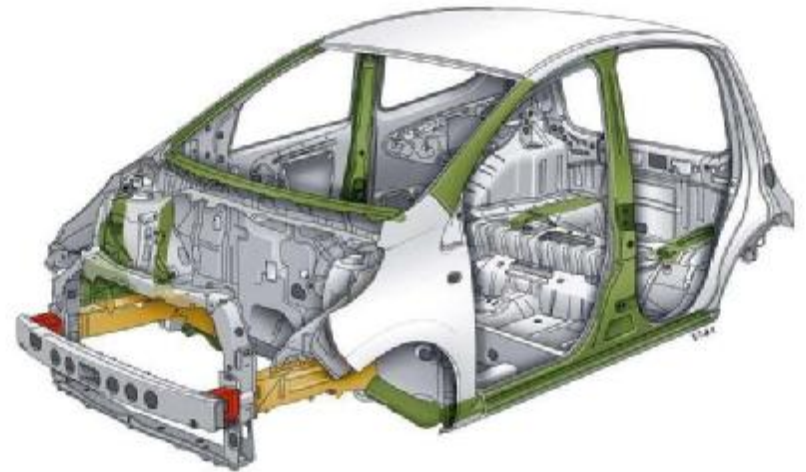




M. HOSIYANU,



## CITROËN C1



- Zones renforcées**  
Reinforced areas
- Zones à déformation programmée**  
Progressive deformation areas
- Absorbeurs de chocs**  
Absorption blocks

