



LES
ANNÉES
90 / 00



ZR-95-FJ

#276

**Renault
21 Hatchback Baccara
(1991)**

**Odeon
021**

Period: 1989-1993

Built: 2,096,000

Engine: 2.0l 4-cyl.

Power: 136 PS

Top speed: 203 km/h

Price: fl. 52,395

Predecessor:

Renault 18

Successor:

Renault Laguna

Date acquisition:

04/09/2018

Approx. first plate Approx. last plate

XP-17-XH GZ-HB-52





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Renault followed Volvo's example in offering a hatchback body style.



Having grown up in and around the Renault 21, I have a close emotional connection to it, although it is in many ways quite a bland car. For most of my childhood, my parents drove Renaults 21: between 1986 and 1997 they consecutively owned a white TL saloon, a grey TL station car ("Nevada") and a post-facelift green GTS seven-seater "Familiale". I recall that, on one of the many occasions that our green Nevada Familiale was at the dealership for repair, we had a white 21 Hatchback courtesy car, albeit not in top-of-the-range Baccara trim as shown here. If I remember correctly, the license plate was ZN-28-YG.

Already when first introduced in 1986, the R21's design was described as "ordinary" (Autocar, 11 June 1986), yet in other respects the car was well-received: it was regarded a big step up from the ageing 18 which was "little more than a modernised 12" and seen as "undoubtedly a winner" in terms of driving comfort, interior space, and general refinement.

Yet, the bland design arguably stood in the way of greater commercial success. Hence, in recognition that conservatively styled saloon cars were losing favour

with the buying public and building on the success of similarly conceived cars such as the Volvo 440 and Opel Vectra Hatchback, Renault added a five-door hatchback to the range in 1989. The introduction of the hatchback body style coincided with the mid-lifecycle restyling, which saw the adoption of larger headlights and a more open grille that no longer had the Renault logo asymmetrically positioned toward the right but more conventionally right in the centre.

This Odeon model is a five-door hatchback in ultra-luxury Baccara spec, equipped with leather interior. On the outside, the multi-spoke alloy wheels as seen on this model are a giveaway that this is not your bog-standard Renault 21. Despite the overall quite bland look, even in hatchback form, stand-out features of the R21 that I always liked are the dashboard with characteristic "shelves" and the clean and modern looking red-and-smoked-glass light bar at the rear. Although the hatchback did little to turn the tide for the commercial success of the 21, Renault decided to offer its successor, the Laguna, only as hatchback and station car and to drop the saloon altogether.



The Hatchback completed the 21 range at the time of the mid-lifecycle restyling.



On one of the many occasions my dad's Nevada broke down, we had a 21 Hatchback as courtesy car.



NY-82-VV

#204
Renault
5 GTL
(1985)

IXO

Period: 1984-1993
Built: 4,943,629

Engine: 1.4-liter 4-cyl.
Power: 60 PS
Top speed: 158 km/h
Price: fl. 20,500

Predecessor:
Renault 5
Successor:
Renault Clio

Date acquisition:
12/09/2016

Approx. first plate Approx. last plate
LN-90-VB HF-NH-70





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Although the original Renault 5 introduced in 1972 had a near timeless charm, in 1984 Renault felt the time was ready for a major update and the “Super-Cinq” was born. The modernised car was still instantly recognisable as a Renault 5 – the squared highly placed headlights, and the narrow vertical rear light clusters had remained as hallmark features and the basic shape was unchanged – but perhaps it lacked the natural charm of the original. Whereas the original Renault 5 far outcompeted the rivalling Peugeot 104 in the 1970s, the Peugeot 205 was the definite winning number of the 1980s, taking over the title of best-selling French chic urban runabout from the original R5. That said, in 1990 the ball was again firmly in Renault’s court as the Clio succeeded the R5 Supercinq, holding the title of best-selling French subcompact again for most of the 1990s, out-competing Peugeot’s 106 and then-ageing 205.

Despite not reaching the success of its predecessor, the “Supercinq” R5 nevertheless was a very common sight on Dutch roads, as well as in most other European countries in the 1980s and 1990s. When first dating my sister, my brother-in-law often came to visit us in his mum’s white three-door NL-04-RB and later in a grey five-door PX-15-ZD. One of my primary school teachers had a white

three-door, TN-52-PY, and my aunt a green five-door NX-19-GT.

Autocar (22/09/1984) described the “Superfive” as “sleeker, more power, but still unmistakably a Renault 5”. Compared to the original R5, it noted the Super Cinq had a more spacious interior and bigger windows giving “an added feeling of brightness and airiness”. The dashboard adopted the typical “piano style” layout already used in the Renaults 9 and 11. All in all, they concluded: “The new R5 looks much like the old car, but the subtle differences do give the Superfive a pleasingly modern aspect. Besides, the arrow-shaped frontal treatment, lower bonnet line, flush-fitting glass and shrouded door handle make good aerodynamic sense”.

The model in my collection is a red five-door middle-of-the range GTL version. It is not the most sophisticated of model cars, for example because the lower sills seem a bit too coarse, and the steel wheels lack definition. However, characterful details such as the single reverse light, only mounted on the right-hand side, and the offset front indicators are reproduced nicely.



The Peugeot 205 proved even more successful than the second-gen Renault 5.



The renewed Renault 5 adopted a similar design language to the larger 11.



LES
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95-76-UL

#170
Renault
12 TL
(1972)

IXO

Period: 1969-1980

Built: c. 4.1 million

Engine: 1.3-liter 4-cyl.

Power: 60 PS

Top speed: 142 km/h

Price: fl. 7,993

Predecessor:

Renault 10

Successor:

Renault 18

Date acquisition:

2006



Approx. first plate Approx. last plate

94-74-MV FF-73-KJ



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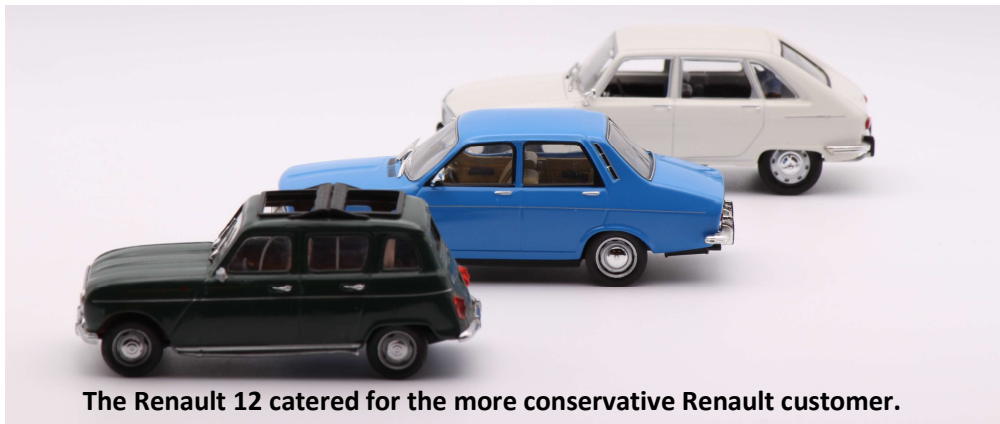


After the launch of the modern-looking R4, R6, and R16 all as hatchbacks, Renault introduced the R12 in 1969 to continue to cater for the more traditional customer who wanted a more conventional three-box saloon. At the presentation of the R12 in its 25 September 1969 issue, Autocar wrote: "In recent years the Regie Renault has devoted the majority of its resources to the production of versatile, five-door vehicles which offer high standards of passenger comfort allied to unusually good load-carrying abilities. Although the new R12 has a mechanical layout similar to that of [the R4, R6, R16], it is a conventional four-door saloon".

Although the downward sloping boot gave the car a very distinctive – perhaps even gracious – profile, it was otherwise a rather unremarkable looking car. The shape of the roof was seen as quite distinctive at the time of the R12 launch. AutoCar explains: "The Renault 12's unusual profile has been dictated, in the main, by practical considerations. Renault's aim has been to provide the rear seat occupants with accommodation comparable with that afforded by the front seats. From the top of the steeply raked windscreen, the roofline rises gently, reaching a maximum above the rear seat. It then undergoes a slight, but abrupt, step-down

before continuing the last few inches to the top edge of the concave [rear window]. The R12 was also available as very capacious Break (stationwagon), and sportier Gordini model. The model in my collection is the more "up-market" TL (Tourisme Luxe") which had two separate seats rather than the base version's single front bench. Although it is a fairly rudimentary model car, the fuel cap at the rear that puts the license plate annoying off-centre is a nice detail.

Despite its conventional looks the R12 was a huge success for Renault. Until 1980 around 2.5 million R12s were built in France. A further 1.6 million were built in Turkey until 1999! In addition, nearly two million were built as Dacia 1300 in Romania between 1969 and 2004, where it had been one of the few cars on sale during the communist era. When I visited Romania in 2004 the R12-based Dacia was still by far the most common car on the road. I even rode in one [an orange Break] on a private tour to the Bran castle, including an episode where the elderly woman driving it attempted to overtake a truck on a secondary road, only to realize the car lacked the necessary accelerative power and tuck back behind the truck in a break-and-steer manoeuvre I was happy to survive...



The Renault 12 catered for the more conservative Renault customer.



One of the Renault 12's rivals is the Opel Ascona.



GY-04-TF

#201
Renault
Fuego GTX
(1981)

IXO

Period: 1980-1986

Built: 83,725

Engine: 2.0-liter 4-cyl.

Power: 110 PS

Top speed: 190 km/h

Price: fl. 30,560

Predecessor:

Renault 15/17

Successor:

none

Date acquisition:

12/09/2016

Approx. first plate Approx. last plate
GF-83-LV NR-93-KD



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Clamshell rear window also on later R11 and R25



The Renault Fuego was introduced in 1980 to replace the Renault 15 and 17 coupés. At the front, the car had a clear resemblance to the 18, on which it was largely based. At the rear it had a large glass clamshell tailgate that gave the car a modern and distinctive appearance. The highly aerodynamic design was characterised by a black profile line running from the front indicators towards the back where it ran all around the clamshell window (later also adopted on the Renault's 11 and 25). In its road test (20 December 1980), Autocar described the Fuego design as an "arresting combination of styling and aerodynamics, showing that such sometimes quarrelling disciplines can be married".

The GTX version in my collection was topping the range until the arrival of the Turbo in 1983. As indicated behind the rear window, the GTX was fitted with a 2-litre engine. The typical wheels with two parallel grooves also featured on the 18 Turbo. As a world's first, some versions of the car were equipped with remote central locking, an innovation that only became mainstream in the early 2000s.

The car was an initial success. It outcompeted the Opel Manta and Ford Capri in Europe where it was the best-selling coupé in 1981 and 1982. Sales started to dwindle soon after, however. Given the shrinking market for affordable coupés the car was not replaced at the end of production in 1986.

In its canonical road test, AutoCar rated the Fuego GTX quite favourably as "a desirable machine". It praised the car's excellence performance levels and good balance between sporting character and driving comfort: "By Renault standards, the ride is very firm and rather joggly at low speeds with competent damping and comfortable absorption of most bumps as the speed rises". Levels of refinement, however, left ample room for improvement. For example, AutoCar noted: "All power steering systems are slightly noisy; [however], the Fuego GTX one makes a not unpleasant deep moaning sound when working hard, during manoeuvring. The test car's engine suffered from a tappet-like click, its dashboard from a small occasional rattle, plus a squeak from behind suggesting a loose exhaust bracket". Other areas for improvement included the slightly notchy gear change and "intrusive noise levels even at middling speeds".



The Renault Fuego was essentially a Renault 18 Coupé.



In 1981 and 1982 the Fuego outsold the Ford Capri in Europe.