



LES
ANNÉES
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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.