



**JV-28-NF**

**#185**

**Citroën  
2CV Charleston  
(1983)**

**IXO**

**Period:** 1948-1990  
**Built:** 3,867,932

**Engine:** 602cc flat twin  
**Power:** 29 PS  
**Top speed:** 115 km/h  
**Price:** fl. 11,570 / £2,882

**Predecessor:**  
none

**Successor:**  
Citroën Dyane, AX

**Date acquisition:**  
10/10/2015



Approx. first plate    Approx. last plate  
**NP-84-21**    **YT-20-PD**  
Charleston first:  
**GS-13-XY**



When I was little, I had a sticker with a red-and-black Charleston 2CV on my bedside lamp. My schoolmate's dad worked at a Citroën dealership and as result I was given a near-endless supply of Citroën stickers and other paraphernalia. It must have been one of my earliest memories, but I also remember seeing one as a four- or five-year old when riding to school on the back of my mum's bike. I seemed to recall license plate FX-28-SV, but likely things got mixed up in my mind. As both FX-05-SV (my uncle's Volvo) and FX-33-SV (a 343) were Volvos, FX-28-SV was unlikely a Citroën.

Anyway, the Charleston special edition was introduced in autumn 1980 in a bid to sustain buyer interest for what was, by then, an outdated vehicle concept. With its distinctive burgundy-and-black paint scheme, the Charleston was an instant hit. Thus, rather than keeping it a limited edition as originally intended, Citroën decided to continue building Charllestons until the end of production in 1990. The introduction of the Charleston also marked the return of the round headlights that had been used on the car initially but were replaced by squared ones in the 1970s.

This model car nicely portrays how the Charleston livery accentuated the playful 2CV design. The rolled open roof gives a nice peek into the interior with chequered black-and-white upholstery, the typical single-spoke steering wheel, and the dashboard-mounted gear lever.

I drove a 1985 2CV on a holiday to France in 2013 (albeit not a Charleston). It was an unforgettable experience. Apart from being agonizingly slow and loud, it needed a bit of throttle when stationary. As I couldn't find the handbrake, my husband operated the throttle when stopping for traffic lights on inclines, whilst I pushed the brake and clutch pedals. The unusual gearbox pattern also required quite some getting used to.

In 2020 I made a new discovery about the 2CV. I compared model-by-model statistics on the number of new cars sold in 1983 in the Netherlands to the number of cars still registered. Among all cars sold new in the Netherlands in 1983, the humble Citroën 2CV - known affectionately as the "ugly duckling" – turned out to be by far the most common survivor. Nearly 1 in 5 (18.3%) of the of the 4,900 sold in 1983 were still registered and 1 in 9 (11.1%) were road-worthy (i.e., having the equivalent of a valid MOT) as of 2020. Its charming characterful design must inspire owners to give it the necessary tender love and care, whilst its simple engineering keeps maintenance costs in check.



The Charleston with its 1950s forebear. The 2CV's production run spanned well over four decades. The black-and-burgundy colour scheme makes the Charleston one of the most sought-after 2CV's today.



The Fiat Panda is built to a very similar ethos as the 2CV: basic but charming and ingenious design and engineering. Affordable motoring at its best.



The Dyane, Visa and AX arguably all were intended to replace the 2CV but – despite each having their own "Gallic charm" none could quite match the 2CV's. The 2CV managed to outlive all except the AX.