

Wild drive: Renault Clio Gordini

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The Gordini name is one that will resonate deeply in the hearts of older Renault fans and now the French marque has brought it back for the latest generation to enjoy.

Although the modern phase of Gordini was already re-launched with the Twingo RS last year, the family has just been expanded to include a more hardcore sibling in the form of the Clio Gordini.

While fans may be disappointed by the fact that it's mechanically identical to the existing Clio RS, Renault says the 2-litre normally aspirated engine's already in a high state of tune with its 148kW and 215Nm outputs, and squeezing extra kilowatts out of it would have affected reliability.

Basically this engine's already earned its stripes then, in Renault's opinion, and there are stripes aplenty in this unique Gordini stylistic package.

The Clio Gordini's body has been coated in Malta Blue paint, which you can't get on any other Clio, while its twin white stripes that run from the bonnet to the tailgate are a classic Gordini feature.

Other neat touches include contrasting black and diamond-effect 12-spoke alloy wheels, an F1-style front splitter, gloss black highlights on the front bumper and rear diffuser and white rear-view mirrors. The cabin also gets its fair share of black and blue contrasting and Gordini motifs.



The car was launched in fittingly high-adrenalin style at last weekend's Knysna Hillclimb, a Renault-sponsored event, where journalists were given the chance to race the hill against the clock. Here's what our launch correspondent from Star Motoring, Denis Droppa, had to say:

"Although you always hanker for more power on a competitive hillclimb, the 16-valve powerplant has a nicely free-revving nature at sea level and often catches you by surprise at how briskly it runs into its 7500rpm rev limiter.

"Renault claims a sea level 0-100 km/h sprint time of just 6.9 seconds and a top speed of 225 km/h, but at

Gauteng altitude the car will battle to keep up with rivals like the turbocharged Mini Cooper S.

"The Cup chassis is the real hero of this story, and feels like it could handle a lot more horses. Without feeling teeth-jarringly firm - which makes the Clio Gordini RS a comfortable everyday car - it makes for a very neutral and predictable-handling car that scurried up that twisty hillclimb like a startled cheetah.

An Electronic Stability Programme (ESP) provides the safety net, but can be disconnected for spirited driving such as track days and hillclimbs.

"When I did so the car had a tendency to slight oversteer on the limits - the kind of handling true enthusiasts like, rather than the typical understeer characteristics of front-wheel drive cars. A really top job on the chassis, Renault, give yourselves a pat on the back."



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“The six-speed gearshift’s a delight to use and I never missed a change even during the aggressive cut-and-thrust of trying to outpace my fellow journalists up the hill, and the sports seats really hug you in place.” Denis concluded.

The Clio Gordini Renault Sport sells for R279 900, which is a cool twenty grand more than the standard RS version. The price includes a five-year/150 000km warranty and three-year/60 000km service plan.

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