

# VINTAGE CITROËNS IN SOUTH AFRICA

As far as the Citroën Car Club knows, there are only nine vintage Citroëns (1930 and earlier) in South Africa, although one can never be sure what might be hidden in garages and barns across the country.

Andre Citroën began manufacturing motor vehicles in France in 1919. His unique offering was a fully equipped motor car. This differed from other motor manufacturers in Europe at the time, who sold engine/chassis combinations and required the customer to order a body from a coach builder.

The first Citroën, the Type A, was manufactured between 1919 and 1921. This was followed by a second open tourer, the B2. There are unfortunately no known examples of either of these models in South Africa.

In 1922 André Citroën saw a gap in the market for a motor car that could be driven by ladies and, through the design creativity of Edmond Moyet, the 5HP (or 5CV or type C) was born. These little cars had 856cc engines and were small, cute and easy to drive. The 5HP was produced between 1922 and 1926 and four primary body styles were sold (as well as one or two less common variations).

## THE 5 HP ROADSTER





In 1922 Citroën introduced the 5HP Torpedo, or Roadster, which was a two seater with a simple hood and a fish tail shaped rear. There are two known examples of the Torpedo in South Africa. The Roadsters were both manufactured in 1925.

The crimson roadster (above) has been in the same family since the 1940's and has been preserved in Midrand for decades.

The yellow roadster (right), also made in 1925, was partly rebuilt in Cape Town in the 1960's and is currently being restored in Magaliesburg.



### **THE 5 HP CABRIOLET**

When the ladies of Paris complained that they wanted something a little more weather proof, the Cabriolet was introduced in 1923. The Cabriolet sported the same chassis and engine as the Torpedo and had some minor body variations, the big difference being that it could be completely closed up at the sides, with a more comprehensive hood and windows. There is one known example of the Cabriolet in South Africa.

The 1924 cabriolet based in Gauteng (right) is probably the oldest Citroën in South Africa and is in weekly use, having been restored in Cape Town in the 50's and 60's.



### **THE 5 HP DECALEES**

In order to introduce a third seat, Citroën first experimented with putting a small folding passenger seat in the front and a larger passenger seat in the back. This variation, the Decalees, was not too popular and a small number of these were built during 1925. A few of these were modified by the Spanish (full closed bodies were built on the small chassis).

One example of these is currently being restored in Gauteng (right). This rare, “doctor’s coupe” on the east rand was assembled in Spain in 1925 and a great deal of effort has gone towards restoring it to its original condition.



### **THE 5 HP CLOVERLEAF**

The Decalees gave way to the more popular Trefle or Cloverleaf in 1925. The Cloverleaf had two fairly normal

seats in front and a large central seat at the back.

The name Trefle (or Cloverleaf) came from the configuration of the seats. There are two Cloverleaves in South Africa.



The red three seater cloverleaf (left), manufactured late in 1925, spent several decades being restored in Bloemfontein and is now progressing well in Germiston.

One of the best preserved 5HPs is the 1925 cloverleaf based in Durban (right). This 5HP was imported into South Africa fairly late in its life when its erstwhile owner emigrated from England.



Citroën also manufactured a 5HP delivery van during this period. While there was a Cloverleaf converted into a delivery van in the Cape which was recently sold to a buyer in Malaysia, there don't seem to be any 5HP delivery vehicles in South Africa.

There have been rumours of other 5HPs in South Africa and with luck we may uncover more. The most promising lead is the orange roadster,





shown on the left, which is reputed to be somewhere on the East Rand, although this is a very old photograph.

All the right hand drive 5HP's were produced in Paris between 1922-1926 and despite the fact that over 80,000 5HP's were sold in this period, these little cars were discontinued in 1926 and it wasn't until the production of the 2CV in 1948 that Citroën again made a small vehicle.

The larger Citroëns manufactured between 1924 and 1928 included the B10, B12, B14 and B18. These cars saw the introduction of all-steel bodies and also heralded the end of the reign of the open tourer, as closed bodies became more and more popular during this period.

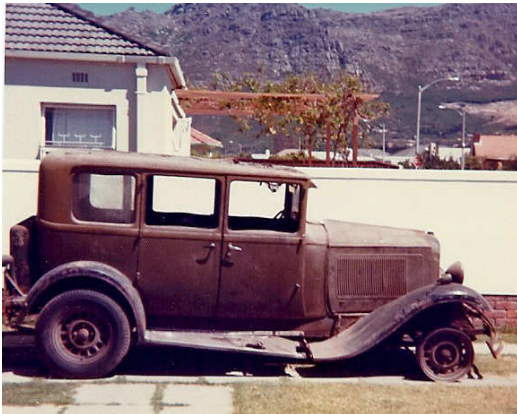
## **THE 1925 B12**

The only example of these in South Africa is the B12 based in Midrand (right). This open tourer has passed through three owners since being bought from a doctor in Mozambique several decades ago. The current owner has restored her to pristine condition.



## THE C4 AND C6

The larger, more powerful, American influenced C4 and C6 of the late 1920s were the penultimate rear wheel drive Citroën series and the last series to be classified as vintage. These were a great success, with almost a quarter of a million C4's sold between 1928 and 1934. South Africa is fortunate enough to have one of each of these stately Cs.



### THE 1928 C4

The large bodied C4F (left) was discovered in a garage in District Six in Cape Town in 1967 and is currently disassembled and awaiting restoration.

### THE 1928 C6 COUPE

The six cylinder C6 was once a working hearse. At some stage it was converted to a pick-up (see right) and has since apparently been converted into a coupe.



Following the vintage era, Citroën introduced the 8cv, 10cv and 15cv (commonly known as the Rossalies). These were manufactured between 1932 and 1935 and were followed by the legendary Traction Avant. While there are probably more than a hundred Tractions in South Africa, we have been unable to unearth any Rossalies.

All in all, we are only aware of nine vintage Citroëns in South Africa. If readers know of any others, please let us know at [srengleass@mweb.co.za](mailto:srengleass@mweb.co.za)