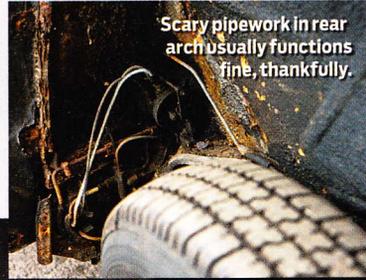




The front crossmember and chassis longerons are a worry if rotten.



Scary pipework in rear arch usually functions fine, thankfully.

INTERIOR & EXTERIOR TRIM

Interiors wear out and new parts are not generally available, but there's an active secondhand market. Don't assume you can turn a low-spec car into a Pallas; the posh trim is the rarest and most valued of the lot and it's cheaper to buy the right car in the first place. Exterior brightwork can be found but you can spend thousands if it all needs replacing.

CHASSIS/BASE UNIT

Peel back the windscreen seal and look at the cant rail. This runs all around the roof and can rot terribly – the roof will have to come off if you find lots of bubbling above the side windows. Water runs down the C-pillar (peel back the boot carpet under the parcel shelf) and if you remove one bolt each side you can take the rear wings off and look at the rain gutters. A full chassis resto would cost £5000 from a specialist.

SUSPENSION, STEERING AND BRAKES

The hydraulic system is actually reliable and long-lasting, but it gets expensive to replace if dead. This makes buying a runner much more attractive. If the car will start, the pump should turn and the car should rise. Steering and brakes should also respond. Knock a lot off your offer if buying a non-runner: pumps cost £250, pipes £110 for a front-to-rear, and accumulator spheres are £42 each.

Writers run out of superlatives when discussing the many qualities of the Citroën DS, but the extraordinary model range is less often shouted about: what other classic encompasses values from £1000 (rusty left-hand drive D Super) to over £100,000 (concours Chapron Décapotable)?

This means you can join a desirable group for not much cash, especially if you're prepared to buy a tired one and bring it up to scratch. However, the usual warnings apply about which tired one to buy.

Paul Harris of Citroën DS specialist Pallas Auto says: 'Go for the one with the least corrosion as everything else can be replaced. Most important is the condition of the chassis, as restoring it properly means removing the exterior panels, interior and mechanics. It's not difficult in itself, but it's uneconomical for a left-hand drive D Super which will never have the same value as a right-hand drive Pallas, EFI, semi-auto.'

You need to know your Ds. The first DS arrived in 1955 with oleo-pneumatic (oil-air) suspension, brakes, steering, clutch and a semi-automatic gearbox you select like a clutch-less manual via a stick on the top of the steering column.

A manual 'box option arrived in 1963, bigger engines from 1965 (2.2-litre DS 21) and then 1972 (2.3-litre DS23). Bosch electronic fuel injection (EFI) was offered from 1970, and the Pallas was the top-spec luxury model.

Those shark-like, faired-in lamps appeared from 1967, and 1365 dropheads were made from 1961 to 1971. The spacious Safari estates are rarer than saloons but less valued – say 10-20% cheaper. The ID was the simplified economy version (1957 on), with no hydraulic suspension or gearbox, though UK-built cars always used hydraulics for steering and brakes.

ID was re-named D Special and D Super in 1969. 'A really mint DS with the sought-after combination of EFI, Pallas interior, RHD and the semi-automatic gearbox will soar past £20,000. However, the simple ID family are an easier restoration prospect, are cheaper to buy and are marginally less likely to have been tarted up. Parts availability is excellent, for all post-1970 cars at least, and the club scene is thriving – you won't be short of help.

Paul Harris offers the last word: 'If you want a project, only pay project money – £1000-£4000 depending on spec. Don't buy a ratty MoT'd one for a lot more only to find it won't pass another test without major work.' ■

WHO TO SPEAK TO

- **Pallas Auto** www.pallasauto.co.uk
- **DS Workshop** www.dsworkshop.co.uk,
- **French Classics** www.frenchclassics.co.uk,
- **Echappements de Collection (parts)** <http://echappementcollect.free.fr>
- **Citroën Car Club** www.citroencarclub.org.uk
- **Citroën OC** www.citroen-owners-club.co.uk
- **Citroënnet** www.citroenet.org.uk

1955-1975

Citroën DS and ID

The pros and cons of acquiring a project goddess

WORDS NIGEL BOOTHMAN PHOTOS LYNDON MCNEIL



1 OUTER PANELS

Yes, they're non-structural over the all-important base-unit, but small rust bubbles on the surface usually mean worse underneath and hence repair or replacement. Good used front wings cost £500, reproduction rear wings cost £300. Door skins are £300 each. DS models are quite fiddly and expensive to paint and the long curves show up poor results.

2 ENGINE

The pushrod four-pot engines are simple and tough, but they get smoky which can mean either a top-end rebuild (£1800) or a full job (£4800). Listen for rattles from bent pushrods, look for feeble performance and poor starting from worn-out units and beware of malfunctioning EFIs, as parts can be hard to find.



3 TRANSMISSION

If you're looking at a runner, check for whine on the move from both manuals and semi-autoboxes. If it's the gearbox then sometimes a bearing can be changed in situ, but if it's the diff then it's a rebuild (£1700-£2500). A good secondhand one is cheaper.

Values: ID19/DS23 Pallas

Mint: £14,000/£25,000

Good: £7000/£12,000

Poor: £1500/£4000

Thanks to: Paul Harris of Pallas Auto (www.pallasauto.co.uk, 01322 837001) for advice and supply of the car.