

# Lodgy

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## Review: Renault Lodgy

Driven March 2015

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Renault says MPVs are tricky business. It's more a rational purchase than an emotional one, compared to most other body styles. That probably explains why most of them tend to look boxy and ungainly. The Lodgy is no different. It is not a design that will make you go weak in your knees or result in you having to wipe your drool off the floor, but strangely, it turned quite a few heads as we drove it around Bangalore.

The Lodgy – Renault's all-new MPV will be launched in India this April. It is based on the Duster platform, which is a good place to start for mechanical advantage. The vehicle is shorter in length than an Innova, but interestingly, boasts of a longer wheelbase than the Japanese best-seller. Renault designers have given it a neat face with a prominent chrome grille and reasonably large headlamps. A smart dual-colour chin with angled edges gives the front a focussed and distinctive look. A high waistline and a large glass area that is typical of an MPV profile. The rear gets angular, and not too large, tailamps. The sheer size and a relatively crisp lines makes the Lodgy less ungainly to look at despite the inherent MPV body style.

The car is powered by Renault's tried-and-tested 1.5-litre diesel engine that also powers the Duster, and just like in the SUV, it is being offered in two states of tune - 84bhp and 108bhp. We drove the 108bhp version and it has retained most of its grunt from the Duster. It pulls from any gear and is a very practical powertrain for our kind of driving conditions where changing gears is frequent. This engine is mated to a slick six-speed manual gearbox that slots smoothly into any gear. The 84bhp version gets a five-speed gearbox.

On the road, the one word to describe the Lodgy's drive is - effortless. It doesn't feel too heavy and is quick on its feet. Once past 1500rpm, the torque starts kicking in. And although it peaks at 1750, you do not feel a drop in power and you can see the speedo climb happily into three-digit speeds. The steering is well-weighted, and the chassis feels balanced at reasonable speeds. The long wheelbase helps in a straight

line but body roll is present. That said, it isn't a handful around turns unless if you doing really high speeds.

The cabin of the Lodgy isn't luxurious but surprisingly pleasant. It feels spacious and airy, thanks to its clever combination of trim colours, layout and some shiny bits. The dash borrows heavily from the Duster with a similar touchscreen multimedia system, but this time, it also gets a reversing camera.

The Lodgy's talking point is obviously the three rows of seats. Renault will offer the option of captain seats for the second row. On the top RxZ spec, it has used leather trim for the seats and it is neatly done. A good thing is that the second row sits a bit higher than the front, allowing passengers a slightly elevated view of the front. The last row is wide but not the most comfortable. Two adults and a child can sit with ease. Under-thigh support is missing in the last row, but backrest angle is good, and the knee-room is more than adequate. Renault has done away with the second row's central air con of the Duster, and instead, got a roof air con for the rear passengers. The cooling felt more than adequate in the Bangalore heat, this time of the year, even at the rear.

Overall, the Lodgy is proof that Renault is at the top of the MPV game it started globally, some three decades ago, with the Espace. The Lodgy offers space, comfort and a reasonable drive experience in a body style that inherently isn't very cool to look at. It isn't as compact as the Ertiga or Mobilio and hence offers genuine space for a third row of seats without being as intimidating as an Innova's bulk.

Of course, MPV's being as much a rational purchase as an emotional one, as Renault itself says, pricing will be crucial. The top-spec car we drove is estimated to cost around ₹11-12 lakh, ex-showroom. Renault did not confirm this but if that is the case, we can look at a starting price of just under ₹10 lakh for the base models. If the Lodgy does indeed come for this price, expect the Indian MPV segment to see some change of order.

#### The numbers

Lodgy 108bhp

4cyl, 1461cc, turbo-diesel, 108.6bhp, 245Nm, 6M, 1368kg, 185/65 R15, 19.98kpl (claimed), 50 litres fuel tank, ₹13.5 lakh (estimated, on-road)

#### The verdict

A wholesome MPV that gives a balance offering of space, comfort and on-road dynamics. Hopefully, will be priced well too.

Girish Karkera



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