

# A fluent style statement

The Renault Fluence was one of the most understated cars when it was launched in 2011. Even though it was a decent package, it didn't find much traction with buyers resulting in sluggish sales. But that hasn't deterred the French carmaker from launching the facelifted variant of the Fluence. And, the refreshed car is more than just aesthetics as we found out on our drive from Bangalore to Ooty.

The Fluence was always a good looking car, which just got better in its latest avatar. The most apparent changes have been carried out at the front end. A redesigned, single-slat grille with the Renault badge now sits on the all-new bumper that also houses the fog lamps with chrome surrounds and LED daytime running lamps above them. The headlights now get projector lamps for better illumination. The other visual change is the new 16in wheels that are now twin five-spoke alloy units. The refreshed looks of the car are now more in tune with Renault's new design language.

Inside, the cabin gets soft feel plastic treatment and the earlier faux wood finish has now been replaced by a metallic finish. The air-con vents get a garnish of chrome, while the instrument console is now fully-digital with a blue hue. On



The facelifted Fluence looks stunning and imposing at the same time



## Renault Fluence E4

Engine: 1,461cc, 4-cyl
Power: 108bhp@4,000rpm
Max torque: 240Nm@1,850rpm
Gearbox: 6-speed manual
Wheelbase(mm): 2,703
LxWxH(mm): 4,618x1,813x1,488
Top Speed: NA
0-100kmph: NA
Price: Rs 15.49lakh (ex-showroom Delhi)
<b>On sale Now</b>



Left: The cabin has a look of understated elegance, though some might find it a bit dull. The instrumentation is fully-digital and is pleasing to the eye. Below left: The key is in the shape of a card and fits into a slot like in an ATM machine



The 1.5-litre engine suffers from turbo lag at lower revs but makes up for it as the revs climb. The gearbox is smooth and precise



The Fluence was always a capable car, but failed to strike a chord with buyers. Renault hopes that will change with the facelifted version

the safety front, the Fluence gets ABS, EBD, ESP, four airbags and parking sensors. Other features include start-stop system, automatic wipers and headlights. Like the outgoing model, the Fluence continues to pamper the rear seat passengers with rear air-con vents and sunblinds. Thanks to a long wheelbase of 2,703 mm, there is plenty of room to stretch the legs, but the sloping roofline does eat into the headroom at the back.

The Fluence continues to be powered by the 1.5-litre diesel engine of the old producing 108bhp@4,000rpm. So the problem of lack of low-end torque remains unaddressed. The turbo lag is evident up till 2,000rpm and there is a delay before the power is transmitted to the front wheels through a six-speed manual gearbox. But once the torque kicks in around 2,300-2,400rpm, the drive is a breeze. What is impressive is the handling and the ride quality of the car. The gearbox is crisp and slots very nicely. If only the clutch had been a little soft, the car would feel even better to drive in traffic. The steering feels weighted at high speeds and the feedback is impressive as well. Renault cars are one of the best when it comes to ride quality and the Fluence is no exception. The suspension is nicely sprung, absorbing undulations on the road with ease returning a pliant ride.

## What we like

**Handling and looks** The Fluence handles as well as it looks. Sharp and precise.

## What we don't

**Heavy clutch** The clutch is a bit too heavy for a city sedan.

## What surprised us

**Space** There is no dearth of space inside: be it seating space or the enormous boot that can take a substantial amount of luggage.

## Verdict

The Fluence is a well-packaged sedan. The company hopes that it would now appeal to a wider audience. Good looks, a long list of features and acres of interior space will attract buyers from the premium sedan segment. It offers good ride quality and handling.



Kingshuk Dutta

★★★★☆