

2015 Mercedes-Benz W218 CLS 350 BlueTEC AMG-Line Shooting Brake Long-Term TEST REVIEW

The most satisfying road-test experiences are those where you really understand why a person would buy this car. You find yourself unexpectedly occupying someone else's shoes, gaining vicarious enjoyment of, say, child-seat friendliness (when you don't have kids) or off-road capability (when you wouldn't even attempt to cross a pothole). But the best tests of all are those where you would happily, decisively – perhaps even immediately – buy the car for yourself. When your job involves driving every type of car it's rare for this to happen; but it happened to me with the CLS Shooting Brake.



Unfortunately, just as the best literature is born of pain and suffering, so the most entertaining road tests are those of cars with a long list of problems and shortcomings – but I'm resolute in my task here. So, whatever is the opposite of shortcomings (long-comings? Long-goings?), well, let me give you a long list of those instead.

The CLS has all the advantages of an estate car without the garden-centre middle-classiness, its undoubted utility (1550 litres of boot-space, seats folded) offset by rear haunches so sexy it would make a coupe blush. Early fears of compromised rear-seat headroom (the roofline tapers like the new media centre at Lords) and lack of shoulder room up front (it looks narrow because of its styling, but is actually 30mm wider than an E-class) were unfounded. Porcelain leather and piano black lacquer trim complete a cabin so swish you'd expect to find it at the top of the stairs on a 747.

The driving part is beautifully judged – set not to stun but to complement. The 3.0-litre V6 turbodiesel engine might not be the sweetest block on the block, being modestly endowed with power (261bhp) and with quite a lump to get off the line, but once moving its 620Nm/457lbft of torque flows like a river in flood. Gifted steering, agile rear-drive chassis and a nine-speed auto 'box which understands the brief, gel like the Barcelona midfield, with similar results. It's the Lionel Messi of motorway cruisers.

We could probably debate the achievement of 38.4mpg at the end of 9021 miles. Good or bad? I'd say pretty impressive, given that the scruff of the CLS's neck was routinely grabbed through gears one to four, and the official mpg figure of 47.1 is close enough to be almost within DRS range. Someone more patient or less late for work

could surely clamber up into the 40s. We spent £1320.40 on diesel but made only 19 visits to the pumps, partly because of the sizeable 59-litre tank.

The other thing that quite often doesn't happen with long-term test cars is that we get the spec right, but this time we did. We correctly turned our noses up at the lesser 2.1-litre four-pot diesel, just in case we needed to pull the skin off a rice pudding at some point, and equally correctly snubbed the massively overpowered CLS63 AMG, a machine so lairy I feared my six bags of garden rubbish might arrive at the council tip a nanosecond before me. As far as the range goes, we're in the sweet spot – made even sweeter by £2605 of extras including the £715 Memory Package and £650 Harman Kardon surround-sound hi-fi. Also, as a Brucie bonus, I tried the facelifted CLS, with its two extra gears, gawdy lighting arrangements and £5 more expensive pricetag, and didn't feel like a saddo iPhone 5 user with 18 months left on his contract. That said, the newer car does get a big-screen info-telly in place of my iPhone-spec screen.



It sometimes feels a bit awkward heaping praise on a car. After all, Mercedes have loaned the CLS to me, and cynics will be convinced that I'm in Merc's pocket, and that I'll get a free CLS in exchange for kind words. Mercedes would never do that. But can I help it if they've got my number?

Whether you look at the Mercedes CLS Shooting Brake as a more practical coupe with five doors and a large boot, or an estate car that places style above practicality, Mercedes has succeeded in creating another niche in the premium sector. To prove it, the Shooting Brake name will extend to two models in 2015 as the CLA gets the swoopy estate treatment as well.

Mercedes has given this CLS Shooting Brake Face-Lift a swish makeover, and this is our first opportunity to drive it in the UK. Gone is old car's two-bar grille and in comes a 'diamond' version, while the front bumper has been re-shaped. At the rear there's a more aggressive-looking bumper and the taillights have been darkened.

In the refreshed CLS Shooting Brake range, Mercedes offers two diesel engines while a twin-turbocharged 5.5-litre V8 petrol is reserved for the CLS 63 AMG S Shooting Brake. There's a 2.2-litre four-cylinder unit but we'd recommend spending an extra £3,305 for the creamy 3.0-litre V6, badged 350 BlueTEC. With a healthy 258bhp and

620Nm of torque, it's the perfect engine for the 1.9-tonne Shooting Brake, allowing 0-62mph to be ticked off in 6.6 seconds.

Refined, flexible and powerful, it's barely audible on the move - even on tickover it's quiet and the stop-start function shuts down and springs to life with little vibration in city situations. The new nine-speed automatic gearbox as well as improve the CLS's sprinting capability, it shifts between ratios even more smoothly that you cannot detect which gear the car is in unless you watch the dash for gears going up and down. Combined economy comes in at 49.6mpg while CO2 emissions are 149g/km.



Choosing which engine to have is the only decision to make, because the new range comes in one specification. All AMG Line cars feature gorgeous 19-inch AMG wheels, AMG bodystyling, lowered suspension, leather upholstery, multibeam LED lights, climate control, internet, sat-nav, heated front seats and a powered tailgate. There's a plethora of optional extras and two extra specification packs too – you can have the boot lined in cherry wood, for instance – but the standard car's generous specification leads us to recommend going for that one.

Flick the paddles behind the wheel and the car enjoys being hustled along on country roads – the nine-speed box is quick to respond and the power delivery is linear. But ultimately the Shooting is a grand tourer and it's perfectly at home at cossetting the driver and passengers in near-silence on the motorway.

The Shooting Brake is more practical than you think, too. It's just 10 litres down on the much more sensible E-Class Estate with the seats up, but once the seats are folded down, the CLS loses some 350 litres. The makeover has made the car even more delicious to own and drive - it's an eccentric choice, but one that always feel special to drive.

But it's no good trying to split hairs in the brave new world of automotive niche-busting. You can see that Sindelfingen is trying to trendify the estate, so let's leave it at that - first pausing, of course, to recognise the headache the arrival of this car must be causing for Audi and BMW. With the A7 and 6-Series Gran Coupe, they've only recently caught up with the CLS ball that Merc started rolling back in 2004, and now they're on the back foot again. It does change things, the CLS Shooting Brake. And not just because parents with three offspring won't be disappointed when they peer into the rear compartment. It's visually dramatic, a versatile car that actively tries to disguise the space inside, although that's hardly surprising, given that Mercedes freely admits that in the give-and-

take tussle between designers and engineers, the designers were allowed to win. It's the reason your luggage has to be manoeuvred over a little lip before it drops into the boot.

But you won't care about that, because you'll have specked your car in Designo Magno Cashmere White matt paint, which makes the darker glass stand out and the window profile look like the cross section of a wing. That's pretty cool. Moreover, the Shooting Brake has a more resolved back end than the 'coupe'.

The CLS Shooting Brake facelift is a unique choice in the market, but one that is obviously proving a success as Mercedes is set to offer the CLA as a Shooting Brake later this year. This makeover – which focuses on cosmetic touches and clever new LED headlights – extends the CLS's unique appeal, while the creamy six-cylinder diesel is the engine to go for. Whether you view the CLS Shooting Brake as a practical coupé with five doors and a large boot, or an estate that places style above practicality, Mercedes has succeeded in creating another niche in the premium class. To prove it, the CLA will get the swoopy estate treatment and Shooting Brake name later this year, too.



The CLS may be based on the now-outgoing E-Class, but the driving experience is more advanced. More mature. More elegant and refined. The CLS cruises as well as you'd hope, with a continental gait that soaks up miles effortlessly. If possible, spec yours with full air suspension – as standard it features conventional steel springs up front and air cans at the back, which gives the ride a very slightly disjointed edge.

Either way, the Shooting Brake handles extremely well. It has nice, natural steering and controls its weight better than the E-Class. Engine choice is limited to a pair of diesels (have the V6 350 if you can as it is smoother, sweeter and swifter than the four cylinder 220), and a single petrol. This could be pointless were it not a 5.5-litre twin turbo V8 with more shove than a rugby scrum and an AMG badge on the flanks.

The driving position is low, and dropping your backside down into it takes a little more care than in most executive wagons on account of the proximity of the pillars. But once you're in, you'll find that this is a cabin with so much else going for it. The high fascia and equally high waistline of the car act to cocoon you in what's a very lavish, luxurious, immaculately hewn cockpit. Quality levels are excellent. And it's beautifully lit. The optional ambient lighting adds real class after dark, and the foot well lamps for the back seats make it easy to spot items that have tumbled from pockets or bags.

How much space has the roofline extension added? You might be surprised. Although it's relatively narrow and shallow, the boot is very long up to the rear seatbacks. Mercedes claims that, seats up, there is more space than in an A6 Avant or 5 Series Touring. We can believe it. As for the standard equipment, there is one trim level - AMG Line. It adorns the CLS Shooting Brake with 19in alloy wheels, sports-tuned suspension, LED headlights, an aggressive body kit and an automatic powered tailgate on the outside as standard, while inside there is DAB radio, LED ambient lighting, heated front sports seats, and Mercedes' Comand infotainment system. But before that, the existing CLS has been made-over – and we've driven it in the UK. In place of the two-bar grille is a 'diamond' version, while the bumper has also been reshaped. At the rear there's a more aggressive-looking bumper and the tail-lights have been darkened. But the big news is the headlamps, which now use Multi-beam LED tech. On full beam the 24 LEDs fan upwards and outwards, giving unparalleled vision. What's more, High-beam Assist – which senses an oncoming car and shuts off the relevant LEDs shining at it – means it's possible to drive at night with the full beams on all the time.



The refreshed Shooting Brake range offers two diesels, plus a 5.5-litre V8 petrol twin-turbo in the CLS 63 AMG S. There's a 2.1-litre four-cylinder, but we'd recommend spending an extra £3,305 for the 3.0-litre V6 in the 350 BlueTEC. With 258bhp and 620Nm of torque it's the perfect engine for the 1.9-tonne estate, delivering 0-62mph in 6.6 seconds.

Refined, flexible and powerful, it's barely audible, and the stop-start springs to life with little vibration. The new nine-speed auto shifts even more smoothly, boosting economy and emissions to 49.6mpg and 149g/km respectively.

This car enjoys being hustled along on country roads; the box is quick to respond and power delivery is linear. But ultimately the Shooting Brake is a grand tourer, and it cossets its occupants in near-silence on the motorway.

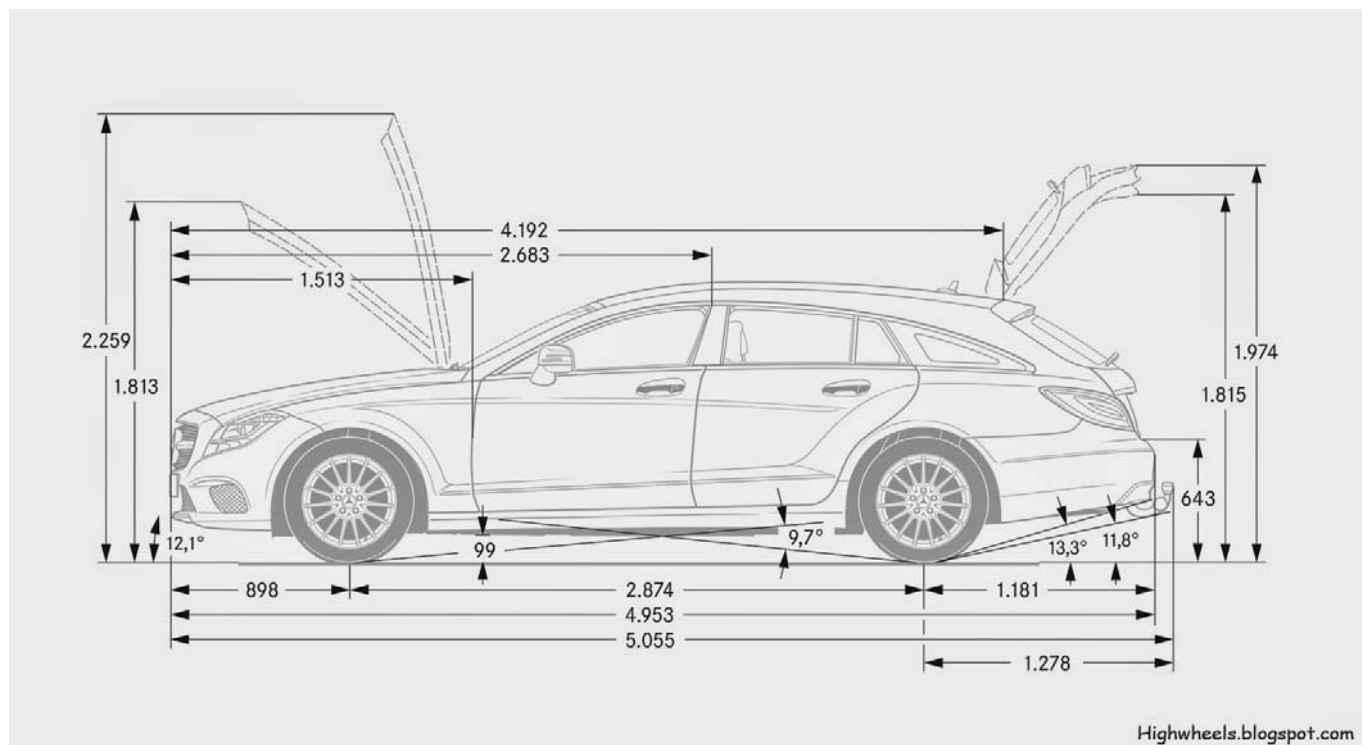
There's only one spec. All AMG Lines have 19-inch rims, AMG styling, lowered suspension, LED lights, heated leather seats, powered tailgate, sat-nav and climate control. There are numerous options, too. The update has made the car even more appealing – it's an eccentric choice, but one that always feels special to drive.

The verdict - More spacious inside than you'd credit and as good-looking outside as you'd hope. Smooth, sophisticated and desirable. The very best that there is.....The Mercedes-Benz CLS Shooting Brake is a new breed of vehicle that fits firmly in the 'sporty estate' club that premium car manufacturers are now keen to exploit. There's clearly something appealing about a fast five-door. It's the classic 'you can have it all' model, offering practicality and performance in one slick package.

Mercedes-Benz isn't holding back on the hyperbole either, claiming that the CLS Shooting Brake is 'automotive independence at its most beautiful'. That's arguable since the concept of 'automotive independence' is as nebulous as it comes, and beauty, well... that's in the eye of the beholder. It's called a Shooting Brake which, to the person on the street, is essentially a coupe with a tailgate. A sort of jumped-up estate, if you will. Inside the CLS there are five

seats but the middle seat is a token gesture and only fit for small people. It's not much more expensive than the Coupe and the go-faster AMG versions are only slightly more expensive than their four-door equivalents.

Quality interior - There's no doubting the CLS Shooting Brake is a classy piece of kit that'll appeal to the well-heeled. There's loads of hand-stitched leather, a luggage compartment lined with high-quality carpet and if you want to really set yourself even further apart from the proletariat you can fit optional designer aluminium loading rails or a curiously described 'Designo' wooden luggage compartment floor. Cherry tree wood has been harvested for the CLS and it combines with the inlaid smoked oak and aluminium rails in the boot. This is the sort of stuff you see on yachts, so if you're moderately loaded you'll feel positively Abramovich-esque if you buy one of these and feel satisfied that your boot looks like a boat deck.



“Another unique niche: elegantly flexible and highly desirable, we're sold on the CLS Shooting-Brake”



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2015 Mercedes-BENZ [W218] CLS350 3.0 BlueTEC AMG-Line Premium PLUS 9-G ESTATE 255-BHP 620-Nm FaceLIFT 5Door Shooting Brake 9-G TRONIC One Owner. with F/MB/S/H. and 13560 warranted miles. Finished in stunning PALLADIUM Silver Metallic[792U] with lavishly sumptuous Crystal Grey Passion Twin Stiche EXCLUSIVE Leather [818A] interior with lashings of Piano Black trim pieces and exclusive AMG floor-mats. This brutal yet beautiful, lively and sybaritic phantom-in-motion with a unique style with elegance is the true and undisputed Sindelfingen stealthy shooting break of all time. It has a distinct image of exclusiveness that goes far beyond the imagination. Socrates once said, "Opinion is nothing more than ignorance masquerading as knowledge". How right he was. This facelift Mercedes-Benz CLS350 BlueTEC AMG-Line Turbo-DIESEL Shooting Brake is such an impressive vehicle with slinky looks of a hatchback coupled with the practicality of a five-door estate that even cynical motoring journalists start reaching for their Advanced Superlatives Handbook. When it was new, this magnificent piece of engineering creation with its 3.0 litre Turbo diesel and built-in extras believed to have cost well over £60k with its high end options and is arguably one of the most luxurious estates - bar none. It combines awesome power with velvet-like refinement, provides ride comfort that is in the magic carpet class and offers more standard equipment than you would find in a top 7 star hotel. It seems almost churlish to mention such standard fitments as air-conditioning, automatic transmission and remote central locking when it has creature comforts that extend to seats with heating and three memory settings together with steering wheel and the mirrors all automatically moving to your pre-set requirements as soon as you sit in your driving seat. Find an open stretch of motorway, floor the throttle-pedal of this sleek torquey 9-speed Turbo-DIESEL and you'll soon know what it means to 'TURBO-BOOST' the time/space continuum. There's a miniscule pause and a gentle jerking sensation as the nine-speed gearbox kicks down and the turbo spools up of this powerful and torquey prime red meat as she roars like the Minotaur gargling rocks. And then this gorgeous Shooting Brake launches itself at the horizon with a single, seamless blast of forward thrust. Any doubt that this sleek and elegant design flamboyance can obliterate time with acceleration dissipates the moment you watch the speedo arc gracefully past 150 mph, it would send the CLS on to speeds beyond imagination.... I guess that's what happens when Sindelfingen decide to stuff a V6-OM642 DIESEL Power Plant with Turbo-CHARGER and Inter-COOLER developing 255 horses and 620 Nm of brutal torque under the bonnet of such a car. Even in these horsepower mad times, it's enough shove to put Mercedes' 3.0-litre V6-powered mental Shooting Break with engine increased performance[MO14] with Exhaust Gas cleaning with Euro-6 Technology, resulting in a sprint from 0 to 60mph in around 6.0 seconds. Her extensive specification includes EXCLUSIVE Package/ SPECIAL Version FX/ SENSOR controlled Mercedes-BENZ Automated HandsFree "ActiveParkAssist" Self-Parking System - Please go to URL link for a demonstration of ActiveParkAssist System=>> http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGFFa6YAHc4 and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W--J-GRFA-Y_/SAT-NAV Pro on NTG4.5/ Reverse Colour Camera with bending guide lines/ Front Colour Camera with Auto Switch system/ DIGI-TV/ HARMAN KARDON Premium Sound system with MultiMedia interface/ Digi-DAB Radio/ Electric TILT / SLIDE Sunroof in GLASS version/ 218-RearVIEW Night Vision Colour Camera/ 233-Autonomous CRUISE Control Plus - DISTRONIC Plus/ 235-Active Park Assist/ 237-Active Blind Spot Assist/ 238-Active Lane Keeping Assist(FAP)/ 23P-Driving Package/ 249-Inside and Outside mirrors automatic Dimming/ 253-RearEND Collision WARNING & PROTECTION System/ 266-DISTRONIC Plus Cross Support system(DTR+Q)/ 268-Expanded BRAKE Assist(BAS+)/ 269-BRAKE Assist Plus CROSS Traffic(BAS+Q)/ 271-Autonomous Brake Intervention Warning for Pedestrian Protection/ Carbon fibre Vinyl protection wrapping to front and rear skirts / DVD movie player/ Front & Rear parking sensors with colour displays/ Park speed sensitive power assisted steering/ Bluetooth GSM Phone controlled via COMAND interface/ Full AMG STYLING Package with Side-SKIRTS and Front Spoiler/ SPORTS Suspension/ CD/DVD player with MP3 facility and music register memory card slot/ ABS+ BAS+SBC/ Comfort running gear/ Auto-dimming interior & exterior mirrors/ Direct START-ECO Start-Stop Function/ AMG Sports Package [950]/ Multi-Spoke 19" Anthracite/Bright Silver Diamond-Cut Highly Polished AMG Alloys with Hi-Performance tyres/ 5-Seat Pack/ Tinted glass/ Automatic High Beam Switch (IHC)/ Software Control for static curve illumination/ Carbon fibre effect protection wrapping to door mirror surrounds /SHIFT by WIRE/ Electric windows with 1-touch facility/ Emergency e-Call system EUROPE/ 6-CD/DVD multi-changer/ ESP + Sport SpeedTRONIC Tempomat/ Rain Sensing wipers/ 9-G Tronic Auto-transmission with F-1 Type Paddles/ Adaptive brake lights/ Electric OPEN / CLOSE tailgate/ Tyre pressure sensors/ Height + Reach + Rake adjustment steering column/ Luxury Multi-Function steering wheel/ Theft Protection System/ SPECIAL version FX/ AMG Floor Mats/ LED daytime running Lights/ Interior Safe-GUARD with Highten Teft Protection System/ BlueTEC Chrome badges to front side wings/ AMG Edition Chrome badge to front grill, Extras list on this car goes on & on.. With superior build integrity, masses of airbags, features such as traction control, anti-lock brakes and Mercedes-Benz' own Brake Assist system it is hard to imagine being in any safer form of transport. In driving terms, this Mercedes-Benz is absolutely impeccable. This sleek, warp-drive-enabled übercraft from the 21st century is a technological masterpiece pure and simple. With her aggressively sneering bending headlights and a shark-like lower grille she portrays such an aggressive stance that she is impossible to ignore by anyone especially as they see her approach them at speed in their rear view mirror..The interior ambience is exclusive and is further enhanced with lavishly sumptuous soft leather seats, well laid-out controls and a generally imperious air. With the use of choice piano black trim and top grade supple leather, Mercedes-Benz has successfully created a drawing-room feel like no other. This, when coupled to impeccable German efficiency and pure functionality, is the creation of the superlative CLS350 AMG-Line Turbo-DIESEL 5 Door Shooting Brake. An incredible car with an unbeatable value. That is the ingenious of SINDELINGEN in living form, which is what makes an everyday reality of this Beauty with Driving Excellence. Why not be part of this incredibly enjoyable driving experience, and be part of Mercedes-Benz's world of luxury.

Table with 2 columns: Make, Model, Registration NUMBER, Chassis (Vin) / Engine No., Date of First Registration, COLOUR [Body / Interior], Number of Cylinders & TYPE, Capacity / Horse POWER / Torque. Row 1: Mercedes-BENZ, CLS350 BlueTEC AMG-Line Premium Plus Shooting Brake 9-G Auto 5 Door Estate, EN64 HTY, WDD2189262A142902 / 642853 41 435892, 12th February 2015, PALLADIUM Silver Metallic [792U] / Crystal Grey Passion Leather [818A], v6 24 Valve, DOHC Turbo Diesel [M642]/ BlueTEC [M20] / EIP [M014], 2987 cc / 255 BHP [189kW] / 457 Lbf-Ft [620Nm]

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