

TAILGATE WATER LEAK - MANY CARS!

Water ingress is 'well-known problem' in the back of estates and hatch-backs. Often the first sign is wet carpets under the rear seats or in the rear footwell, by which time the foam backing of the load-space carpet will be very soggy (in places)! It's usually said that the underlying cause is water leaking past the rear wiper spindle; in our family experience of 10 estates/hatches (including 3 Xantias), the more likely culprits are leaks around the tailgate light units (including the high-level brake light) and the weather-seal around the tailgate. On all except early (LHD) Xantia estates, Citroen addressed the problem of leaks via the rear wiper motor with a moulded nylon water shield stuck to the inside of the tailgate with sealant, and with rubber seals on everything passing through it or the inner tailgate moulding, a practice adopted by other manufacturers. As prevention is better than cure, get into the habit of parking the car nose-up on slopes so that rain-water doesn't collect against the bottom of the tailgate seal.

BUT: The cause of many water leaks is some Ham-fisted Harry who disturbs the shield (to get at the rear lights, wiper motor or tailgate lock) and then fails to put it back with sufficient care, or deliberately splits it (as with mine). The solution is obvious and dead simple, re-fit the shield properly. This is DIY job requiring no great knowledge or skill, just time and care. For Xantias, the only tools needed are T20 and T30 Torx (star) bits, plus a can of white grease and a tube of silicone sealer or automotive mastic. Your local automotive factor will stock all these at a fraction of high street prices.

While you can still easily get behind the water-shield, take the opportunity to lubricate the lock mechanism with white grease - don't use anything else. When re-fitting the shield, remember that the shield must be completely watertight - when the tailgate is lifted, any water inside will run from bottom to top, and then back again as the tailgate is closed. Where the old sealant is reluctant to re-stick, completely remove it, plus several inches either side. Carefully repair any splits in the shield with automotive sealing tape or 3M duct tape making sure there are no gaps where water can run out even when the tailgate is up. Reseal the shield to the tailgate moulding with mastic or silicone sealer - better messy than leaking, it won't be visible when the trim is replaced. If the shield is missing, you're going to have to try and get a reasonably sound one somewhere.

Remove all three tailgate light units in turn. Wipe clean the rubber seals and the mating surfaces of the tailgate with a wet rag. Polish the painted surfaces with body wax - it makes it water repellent - but don't be tempted to wax the seals (the wax solvent may attack the rubber). Refit each light unit, being careful to tighten the fasteners evenly - don't over-tighten! If a seal is buggered, you can make your own: remove old seal from the light unit, cover the mating surface on the tailgate with cling film (make sure it's smooth), apply a thin even bead of silicon in place of the seal, replace the light unit and gently do up the fasteners just enough to squash the silicon bead all round to roughly the same thickness as the old seal; let the silicon set properly before undoing the light unit to remove the cling film, reconnect the wiring and replace the light unit doing it up a bit tighter this time.

At the risk of stating the obvious; make sure you dry out the carpets and footwells thoroughly and then keep a careful eye on them until you can be sure the leak really is fixed. Our Xantias lived outside on a sloping drive - always nose up so that if a seal does leak slightly, the water tends to run out not in!