



Peugeot 106



If you're thinking of buying a used Peugeot 106, we can help. We've delved into our breakdown, warranty and vehicle inspection service statistics covering the last few years and have come up with what you need to know if you're planning to become the second owner.

PEUGEOT'S PINT-SIZED 106 FIRST ARRIVED in the UK in September 1991. It was meant directly to replace the slightly bigger 205, but so successful was that older star of the eighties that the two cars were sold together until the 205 was eventually phased out in 1997. By this time the new, facelifted 106 had been announced, but this survey covers the original model.

It started out as a three-door hatchback (five doors followed in December 1992) with a range of 954cc, 1124cc and 1360cc petrol engines. These were joined in November 1992 by a 1.4 diesel, which two years later grew up to be a 1.5-litre oil-burner. The big-engined 1.6 made its debut in mid-94. Along the way there have been some entertaining derivatives for the keener driver, including the lively 100bhp 1.4XS and the dashing 1.3 Rallye.

Limited editions abound (would you believe 10?), mostly based on the lower-powered petrol models and

the two diesels. In fact, the smaller engined cars have always been the best sellers, proving entertaining enough to drive and acceptably frugal (exceptionally so in the case of the 60mpg 1.4 diesel). Except for the fussy 1.0 litre, they're reasonably quiet, too, but the 106's main drawback is that it lags behind some of its rivals when it comes to accommodating all the family. Try before you buy.

The main points to look for...

Engine and cooling system

The 106's set of well-tried engines proves durable and generally reliable, although we've noted a significant number of faulty cylinder head gaskets, particularly on the 1.4 petrol, and especially on the diesel models; watch for this and also look for oil seepages generally. Valve gear noise is acceptable, provided it's not excessive. Because early, carburettored models could suffer from a stiff choke and misfires until warmed up, it's important to make sure there are no cold-running hiccups on a test drive. Fuel injection overcame this, but ignition problems aren't unknown on petrol models, so make sure the car starts and runs properly. The camshaft drive belt should be renewed every 72-75,000 miles, according to model year; try to establish that this has been done on older/high-mileage cars.

The waterworks don't cause many worries, but see that there are no coolant seepages from the hoses and

around the thermostat housing joint. Surface rust on the exhaust system is to be expected, but make sure there are no "blows" or paper-thin pipework, or damage to the pricey catalytic converter.

Transmission

Expect the gearchange to feel a mite notchy into first and reverse, but otherwise the shift should be fast and fumble-free, with no crunchy synchromesh. (The basic model's four-speed 'box has a sweeter action, incidentally.) Gearbox gremlins aren't prevalent, however. Our survey revealed quite a few clutch problems, though, so make sure the pedal action is light and progressive, and there's no slip or judder. Oil leaks aren't a major problem, but it's as well to check the driveshaft gaiters for splits and leaking lubricant. Even if the gaiters are sound, it's important to ensure that the constant velocity joints don't knock or clonk under load or on full lock.

Suspension, steering and brakes

Anyone hoping for the lightness of power steering around town or when parking will be disappointed – it isn't available; fortunately, though, the 106's steering is easy and responsive on the open road. Pulling to one side, unevenly worn front tyres and a steering wheel that isn't on straight indicate a car that's been "kerbed" and needs its steering geometry reset – there's a lot of it about. Having checked for that, take a look underneath to see that the damper struts are free from oil leaks and that the steering rack and ball joint gaiters are sound.

Be suspicious if the brakes are noisy; this could be just surface rust on the discs, but the discs and pads may be worn and need replacing. Check the brake pipes for corrosion and see that the handbrake operates correctly.

Electrics and instruments

Faulty electrics crop up quite frequently on the 106. Starter motors and alternators don't give as much trouble as some, it's fair to say; it's the heater fan motor that's the worst culprit. Indicator switches play up, too, as do central locking systems and elements in the heated back window, which are sometimes damaged and fail to work. There was a recall on 1996 models to reposition the ignition switch harness to prevent it from fouling the steering column coupling. It's as well to ensure that this has been done.

The instruments appear to be pretty reliable, except for the speedometer that may well operate noisily and have a flickering needle. Test that the trip meter works correctly, as well, when making your general accessory and lighting checks.

Bodywork

Impeccable paintwork and even shutlines typified the 106 when new, even though the panelwork felt a bit flimsy. Rust resistance is reasonably good, but watch

for bumpers that are shedding their paint (cheaper models have matt plastic ones) and stone chips that have been neglected. If fitted, make sure that the sunroof isn't jammed and doesn't leak or rattle; see, too, that the doors and locks all behave as they should. Loose door mirrors and headlamps have featured in our findings, and it's worth checking that the wheelarch/engine bay splash shield is secure.

Costs and servicing

With more 106s available and the advent of the new model, prices that were on the high side are now looking more reasonable. For reassurance, buy from a Peugeot dealer operating the Lion used car scheme, offering inspection, warranties and an exchange plan. Servicing demands aren't too onerous: a 1/2-hour short service at 6000-mile intervals and the bigger 12,000-miler averaging 2 1/2 hours a time. Remember, though, that diesels need midway oil changes. There are 402 dealers in the UK. Nobody beats Ford on parts prices, but the 106's are a lot more reasonable than those of practically all its supermini rivals. Likewise, most models aren't expensive to insure, although the XS and Rallye are in group 10–11.

So to sum up...

The accomplished little 106 offers a vast range of models from the remarkably frugal to the entertainingly quick, and makes a sound secondhand buy. Remember, though, that while cheaper models represent quite keen value, their equipment levels are less impressive; the entry-level models lack a split folding back seat, rear wash and wipe and a radio, for example. Paying a little more for a limited edition version of a "cheapie" results in a higher spec, while later models have flat-spot-free fuel injection and a better build quality, though there's then a catalyser to consider. In short, the baby Pug is an appealing little supermini – just make sure that you can live with its limited accommodation.

We can't tell you which model to choose, but once you've found a car you like, we can provide reassurance by arranging a comprehensive check anywhere in the country by one of our Vehicle Inspection Engineers. Call 0345 500 610 for details of fees or to arrange an inspection. For longer term peace of mind we can also offer mechanical breakdown insurance. For further information, call AA Warranty Services on 0800 269 798.