



# Peugeot 205



If you're thinking of buying a used Peugeot 205, we can help. We've delved into our breakdown, warranty and vehicle inspection service statistics covering the last few years and come up with what you need to know if you're planning to become a second owner.

HE 205's IMPRESSIVE RIDE AND handling, overall refinement and sheer fun-atthe-wheel factor, established benchmarks that until recently this small Peugeot's rivals have been striving to equal, let alone beat. Newer superminis like the Corsa, Polo and Fiat Punto may now offer more space, but despite their more up-to-date designs and superior packaging, the 205 is still regarded as something of a yardstick in its class.

Engine options range from a basic one-litre up to the tearaway 1.9GTi, along with 1.1-, 1.4- and 1.6-litre petrol units. There's also a diesel, which was followed by a turbo-diesel, too. The three- and five-door hatchback line-up also offers an automatic and even a cabriolet, so there's plenty of choice. The fuel-injected GTi models are fast, fun and frisky, but, as with any sporty secondhand purchase, it's worth spending time to find a tidy, well cared for example, preferably with a full service history.

# The main points to look for: Engine

Noisy valve gear is fairly common and, in time, many examples will have acquired the odd leak or two under the bonnet. Check for signs of a blown head gasket, especially on 1.4 and GTi models, while coolant leaks can also occur.

Other potential troubles include fuel leaks and oil fouling around the carburettor. A loose air cleaner and a displaced or missing hot air pick-up pipe are also not uncommon. The exhaust should last for several years or around 30-50,000 miles, but leaky joints are quite common and, even without any leaks, GTi exhausts tend to sound "chuffy". Uneven idling isn't unusual on the GTi, either, but look out for potentially serious fuel injection faults, which could prove troublesome or costly to fix.

Check the radiator for leaks or damage, especially on a GTi or the more vibration-prone diesels; such problems occur from time to time, and it's a pricey item to replace.

## Transmission

Provided it's correctly adjusted and hasn't been abused, the clutch doesn't give too many problems, but GTi pedals are pretty heavy, while a stiff or creaky action probably means a new cable is needed. Test for

weak synchromesh in the intermediate gears and check that the gear linkage isn't too worn or sloppy on older, high-mileage cars. But don't be too concerned if the gears sound a bit whiney and clattery at idle on lower-powered models, as this is typical. It's also worth checking the driveshafts for split or perished gaiters — a stitch in time here could save a big bill for driveshafts or constant velocity joints later.

#### Suspension, steering and brakes

We've noted uneven tyre wear on quite a few of the 205s we've inspected, so look to see how evenly the front tyres are wearing. Check front hub bearings for wear or play, and look for rear brake cylinder leaks. Examine the front brake discs for excessive rusting or scoring, and if you can get underneath, the metal brake pipes should be checked for rust, especially towards the rear on older cars. Split or fraying outer handbrake cables can be a problem, and it's not unusual to find that the front brake pad wear-sensor wiring is damaged or disconnected.

#### **Electrics and instruments**

The starter motor and alternator head the list of potentially expensive electrical items attacked by gremlins. The heater fan motor shows an above-average failure rate, too. Front and rear wiper motors can also give trouble, while blocked screenwasher jets and leaking or detached pipes aren't uncommon.

Courtesy lamps and door switches are known to play up, and we've also discovered hazard-warning lamp switches that stick in the on position. Also, more than a few heated rear windows don't work because of loose or broken connections or damaged elements.

#### **Bodywork**

The 205's bodywork is reasonably durable, but inspect vulnerable areas such as the sills, wheelarches, weatherstrips, front valance, the lower edge of the tailgate and around the fuel filler for stone chipping and blistering, and around the door locks for signs of careless key-work.

Keep a sharp look out for accident damage, repainting or signs of a generally hard life, especially on sporty and GTi versions; and don't forget the spare wheel cradle – a seized thread or a missing spare wheel isn't uncommon. It's also worth lifting the boot carpets to check for signs of any water ingress. Finally, make sure that the door pockets and check straps are sound – they're a bit fragile, and check that the central locking, if fitted, is working – the actuators can be pricey to replace.

### Costs and servicing

With good fuel economy, competitive parts prices and insurance reasonably cheap on all except the GTi models, 205s don't cost an arm and a leg to run. Still-keen demand keeps secondhand prices fairly buoyant,

especially for the more sought-after diesel and sporty versions. This is great if you're selling, but not such good news if you're buying. Under the bonnet, there's reasonable scope and accessibility for DIY attention, but items such as the fuel injection are best left to a dealer.

#### So to sum up...

The 205's smooth, accomplished road manners, endearing character and cute look still take plenty of beating. However, the state of the art has moved on, and the pick of the crop now leave it looking a little dated in areas like safety and all-round roominess.

Avoid the baby one-litre versions if performance is much of a priority; pick a 1.1 or, better still, a 1.4-litre five-door as a good value-for-money all-rounder. The diesel's energetic performance combined with mile-stretching fuel economy can make the dearer (and thirstier) turbo-diesel more difficult to justify.

Finally, don't despair if your budget won't stretch to a coveted GTi version; although not as quick, the XS and GT versions are almost as much fun, but not only are they more affordable, they come with a much more reasonable insurance rating, too.

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.