

Peugeot 306 Sedan

Featuring 1.8SR



SALOON VERSIONS OF ALREADY established hatchbacks are often difficult to nail. The car makers' PR departments often talk about a bigger car, a more prestige-conscious clientele and give a general impression that the saloon has only tentative connections with the hatchback that may (or may not) share its model name. So, the Golf turns into a Vento, the Tipo a Tempira and, in this case, the 306 becomes a Sedan.

What you get

This saloon version is almost 10in longer than the hatchback and weighs nearly 50 lb more. Its power units replicate those in the hatch, except that there's no 1.4 at present, and all the trim options move downwards one position to fill the gap. This means that it's a top-trim-only 1.8XT hatchback, but an intermediate-trim-level saloon with the same engine, as tested here. Yet there's only £175 saved by opting for a boot lid rather than a tailgate.

Loading up

It's a good boot, although there's a sill to navigate. The boot lid is cleaner to handle than the hatchback's tailgate, and with independent locking and seat releases inside the boot, security of contents is high. Peugeot's rear suspension minimises wheelarch intrusion and the sides are carpet-covered. There's a flat floor and automatic illumination is provided nowadays, even when the lights are off.

The rear seat backrest is asymmetrically split and yet also boasts a centre armrest, as well as a fully-fledged trio of lap and diagonal seatbelts across the rear bench. None has height adjustment and we found the latching mechanism too insistent – sometimes we had a struggle to unreel the belts to put them on. The clasps were easier to locate.

The one-piece back cushion doesn't hinge forward – the backrests merely flop on top of it – but they are carpet-covered too. Consequently, you need to be a little judicious about what sort of cargo you carry,

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PERFORMANCE

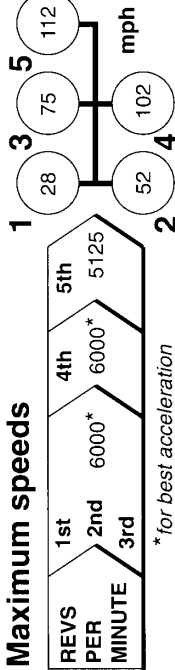
Acceleration time in seconds

STANDING START	0-30mph	0-60mph	1/4 mile
	3.8	11.2	18.4

mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS		2.0	4.3	7.5	11.4
IN 5TH GEAR		6.1	12.2	18.1	24.8
IN 4TH GEAR		4.2	8.1	12.4	17.1

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES		12.4/8.6	12.0/8.2		12.6/9.0

Maximum speeds



FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade for tests: unleaded Premium, 95 octane

Normal range	mpg
Hard driving, heavy traffic	28
Short journeys in the suburbs	29
Motorway – 70mph cruising	36
Brisk driving, mixed roads	36
Gentle driving, rural roads	41 1/2

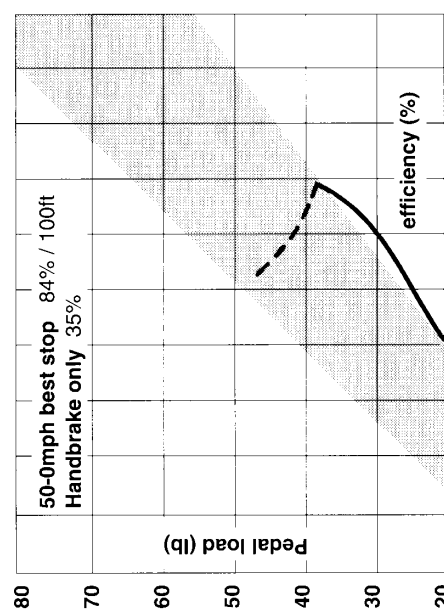
Typical mpg overall	35 1/2
Realistic tank range*	54 litres/420 miles

* based on fuel gauge/warning lamp and filling station experience

SAFETY

Brakes (without ABS)

How pedal loads affect braking



Braking efficiency shown as a percentage of gravity (ie 100% = 1.0g)
Ideally the braking curve should be a gentle sweep and lie within the shaded zone of this graph. If it's above, the brakes are too heavy; if it's below, they are too light – although this is more acceptable on cars with ABS. When the curve becomes broken, the wheels are skidding.

Fade test How hard use affects braking (ideal brakes show no change)
Pedal load needed for 75% stop (lb)

At start of test	After constant use	After severe use
29	29	29

Safety features

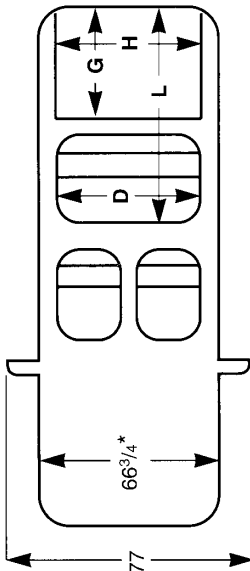
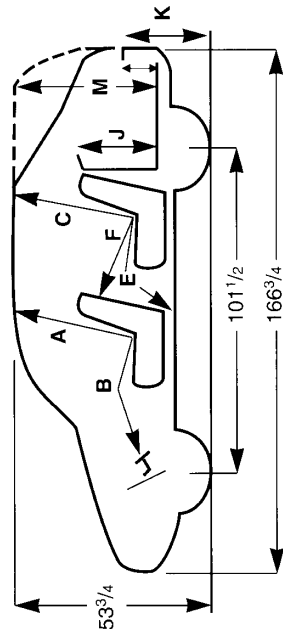
Assessed on their effectiveness and convenience (the more black blobs the better)

Seatbelts	front ●●●●○	rear ●●●●○
Head restraints	front ●●●●○	rear ●●●●○
Interior	safety padding ●●●●○	driver's airbag? ☒
	other airbags? ☒	side impact protection ●●●●○
Fuel	anti-spillage measures ●●●●○	comprehensive and convenient ●●●●○
	engine immobilised? ☒	

Key ☒ standard on test car ☐ factory-fitted option ☒ not available

MEASUREMENTS

Dimensions (inches)



* with mirrors folded

Inside (inches)

A Front headroom (with sunroof)	35-36	G Load length	37
B Front legroom (min - max)	34-41 1/2	H Load floor width (min - max)	45-59
C Rear headroom	36 1/2	J Load height	18-19
D Back seat width (between armrests)	50 3/4	K Sill height (inner/outer)	61 1/2/26
E Typical rear * legroom	37	L Load length	64
F Typical rear * kneeroom	26 1/2	M Load height (to tailgate hinge)	NA

* "Typical" represents the mean measurement behind the driver's seat set at 39in legroom and the passenger's seat set at 41in

because there's no front seatback protection or reinforcement.

When the car is used as a conventional saloon, the back seat is disappointing – it lacks the cosy support of a 405 and is deficient in legroom, even when compared with its natural counterparts, Astras and Escorts.

Performance and economy

The 1.8-litre engine comes from the 405 and is also used in the Xantia. Of an entirely different design from the 1.6-litre 306's, it's a pleasant unit, being obligingly flexible around town yet sounding crisp and purposeful when its acceleration is used. Motorway cruising is reasonably subdued and multi-point injection with electronic management has certainly improved this engine's starting and throttle response compared with its earlier days with carburettors.

Statistically speaking, its performance and economy reveal scant advantage compared with our previously tested 1.6 hatch. Remember, however, this saloon's extra weight and its slightly taller gearing in 1.8 guise. Overall, though, there seems to be little real incentive to opt for the 1.8 Sedan if the (cheaper) 1.6SL's trim meets your needs.

All Sedans have power steering and it certainly perks up the model's cornering response, as our previous test predicted. The suspension's strong roll-resistance makes the 306 agile and rewarding through the bends, with ideal effort at the helm, but those anti-roll bars interfere with the car's directional composure over undulating roads. Consequently, it feels as if there's a boisterous crosswind buffeting the car.

At the wheel

We appreciated the velour trim and found the driver's lumbar support adjuster a welcome improvement – even if it does prod a bit higher than the lumbar area for most except the very tall. Otherwise, you seem to pay quite a lot extra with not much to show for it in the SL/SR comparison. (Incidentally, you can no longer buy a 1.6XL five-door – like our previous good-value test car – only a 1.4XL or a 1.6XR.)

The SR, despite its extra expense, still needs rear courtesy lamps, better door mirrors and cabin-controlled headlamp beams. Also, its rear window shelf is too high for unobstructed rear vision – in spite of the helpful rear wiper. This shelf is unsuitable for oddments – they shoot forward in heavy braking, so there's not much room for rear passengers to stow their bits and pieces.

The ignition keyhole is rather tricky to locate and with the keypad immobiliser as well, short journey motoring can be somewhat fraught. The car is easier to enter and leave, thanks to the remote-control handset.

VERDICT

It's rather expensive for what you get, its rear seating is disappointing and the bigger 1.8-litre engine's acceleration and refinement aren't conspicuously superior to those offered by the 1.6. Having said all this about the 1.8 Sedan, we cheerfully confirm that the 306 is a rather nice car to drive; so for those up front, one offered as a company car is hardly likely to disappoint.

HOW THEY COMPARE	Engine cap/power (cc/bhp)	Max speed (mph)	30–70mph through gears (sec)	30–70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel economy (mpg)	Brakes best stop (%g/lb)	Maximum legroom – front (in)	Typical leg/kneeroom – rear (in)	Steering turns/circle (ft)	Overall length (in)
Peugeot 306 1.8SR Sedan (4 door)	1761/103	112	11.4	24.8/17.1	35½	89/38	41½	37/26½	3.3/35 (p)	166¾
Hyundai Lantra 1.8CDi Saloon	1836/124	119	10.1	21.0/15.8	34½	90/30	43	37¾/26½	3.0/34½ (p)	171¾
Rover 416Si (4 door)	1590/111	114	10.4	25.5/19.0	34	94/50	42½	39/28	3.4/34½ (p)	172
Citroën Xantia 1.8LX (5 door)	1761/103	113	12.4	24.3/16.3	35½	94/25	42¼	40½/29	3.2/34¾ (p)	174¾
Fiat Tempra 2.0ie SLX (4 door)	1995/115	118	11.2	25.6/17.0	31	89/60	42	40/28½	3.1/35 (p)	171½

(p) power assisted

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

As for 1.6XL Hatch (see R9354) except for:

ENGINE

Type and size 83.0mm bore x 81.4mm stroke = 1761cc; all-alloy block and head

Compression ratio 9.25:1

Valve gear shim-adjustable bucket tappets

Maximum power 103bhp at 6000rpm

Maximum torque 113 lb ft at 3000rpm

TRANSMISSION

Clutch pedal load: 23 lb

Gearbox ratios: first 3.45, second 1.85, third 1.28,

fourth 0.97, top 0.76 and reverse 3.33:1

Final drive 3.94:1 to front wheels

Mph per 1000rpm 21.8 in top; 17.1 in 4th

Rpm at 70mph 3200 in top gear

CHASSIS

Steering power-assisted rack and pinion with 3.2 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 35ft between kerbs, with 57½ ft circle for one turn of the wheel

Wheels 5½in steel with 175/65R14 82T tyres (Pirelli P2000 on test car)

Brakes ventilated discs front