

Peugeot 406

Featuring 1.9LX Turbo-diesel



What's different?

Peugeot's venerable 1.9 Turbo-diesel adds 90bhp diesel economy to the 1.8 and two-litre petrol versions we've already sampled. A 110bhp 12-valve 2.1-litre turbo-diesel is also on offer, with V6 power available soon.

PEUGEOT'S RENOWNED OIL-BURNERS have long since set the standard by which the rest are judged, so we couldn't wait to sample the impressive 406 with diesel power under its bonnet.

The familiar 1.9XUD engine is the smaller of the pair of turbo-diesels the 406 offers, and gains electronic control, exhaust gas recirculation and an oxidation catalyst to meet today's more stringent emissions requirements. Collectively, these measures yield a shade less power than this engine delivered way back in its 1769cc days, but 148 lb ft of torque (peaking at a low 2250rpm) represents a useful spread of pulling power, the exploitation of which is, of course, what driving a turbo-diesel is all about.

There's a fair amount of the usual clattery commotion on start-up and a quite prominent growl under hard acceleration. Once up to cruising speed, however, the underbonnet din fades to an impressive hush. Indeed, up to the legal limit, it's hard to tell that there's an engine at

all under the bonnet, let alone a diesel. The 406 is a heavy girl, however, and together with lanky gearing, its 90bhp can feel embarrassingly lethargic until the blower starts delivering the goods at around 2000rpm. Thereafter, it pulls with impressive vigour until the shutters come down at around 4500rpm. Provided you keep the rev counter half way up the scale, though, 1.9TD proves reasonably swift in all but the traffic lights Grand Prix and cruises with effortless refinement. The downside is that the gear lever needs plenty of stirring to keep the turbo poised for action around town, and the lower gears soon run out of steam in brisk getaways. Overall, though, that's a relatively small price to pay for running this 406.

The diesel's additional hardware adds about 100kg to the noseweight, but, apart from a shade more float over humps and, perhaps, an ever-so-slight blunting of the 406's fluid, responsive helm, it's barely distinguishable from petrol versions from behind the wheel. We had hoped that the increased weight might temper the 406's fidgety low-speed ride over pock-marked roads. No such luck. Like petrol versions, the diesel can feel quite jittery on poor surfaces around town. Once the open road beckons, however, the 406's enthusiasm for bend-swinging emerges, while its class-leading ride pampers driver and passengers alike.

The brakes are reassuringly powerful in normal use, but their over-enthusiastic feel on initial acquaintance never entirely disappears. This can call for a delicate

touch in stop-start traffic, and to curb their over-eagerness in panic stops. An anti-lock system, which would overcome this problem, is standard on top spec versions, but is a £550 option lower down the scale.

While the 406 excels in virtually all other areas, the 1.9TD's ample kerb weight and obliging performance make themselves felt at the fuel pumps. Our 42mpg average is far from disgraceful, but it's several mpg below the class average and around 10mpg short of what the most frugal (*direct*-injection) diesels can deliver. The lighter and higher-g geared Xantia doesn't do appreciably better using the same power unit, however, but the 406's generous fuel tank allows almost 600 miles between forecourt visits.

VERDICT

It's amazing how far family-sized diesels have advanced over the last few years. Yet again, though, Peugeot has delivered one straight for the top of the pile. Its fine chassis, super refinement and roomy, civilised accommodation form a near unbeatable combination, although the slightly fidgety low-speed ride and mediocre fuel economy are less endearing qualities. These minor quibbles aside, it outsmarts the opposition is just about all other areas and, unless hatchback practicality or ultimate diesel economy are of paramount importance, it's the mid-sized diesel we'd make straight for.

PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds

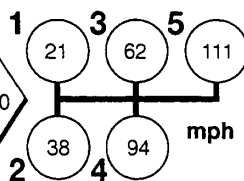
mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS		2.4	5.2	8.8	13.7
IN 5TH GEAR		9.8	16.7	22.4	28.2
IN 4TH GEAR		5.5	9.5	13.5	18.4

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES		22.2/13.0		12.5/8.2	
			16.7/9.5		11.5/9.0

Maximum speeds

REVS PER MINUTE	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
		4400*		4760	4510

*for best acceleration



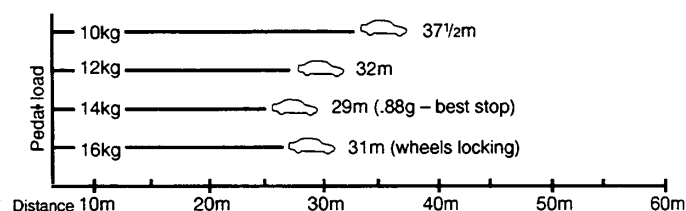
FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade for tests:	diesel
Normal range	mpg
Hard driving, heavy traffic	32
Short journeys in the suburbs	36
Motorway – 70mph cruising	42
Brisk driving, mixed roads	41½
Gentle driving, rural roads	52
Typical mpg overall	42
Realistic tank range*	63 litres/580 miles
*based on fuel gauge/warning lamp and filling station experience	

BRAKES

Pedal feel ●●○○○ Behaviour in an emergency ●●○○○ Handbrake ●●●○○

Dry road stopping distance from 50mph (no ABS)
(A good-to-average best stop is about 28m at 20-30kg pedal load)



Fade test: pedal load required for a moderate (34m/.75g) stop:
10kg at start of test, 13kg at end of test. (Ideal brakes show no change)

FOR THE TECHNICAL

ENGINE

Type transverse four cylinder; iron block and alloy head; 5 main bearings

Size 83 x 88mm = 1905cc

Power 90bhp at 4000rpm

Torque 148 lb ft at 2250rpm

Valves belt-driven overhead camshaft actuating two valves per cylinder via hydraulic tappets

Fuel/ignition electronically controlled indirect-injection diesel with turbocharger, intercooler, exhaust gas recirculation and oxidation catalyst. 70-litre tank, with low-level warning lamp

TRANSMISSION

Type five-speed manual, front-wheel drive

Mph per 1000rpm 24.6 in 5th, 19.8 in 4th

CHASSIS

Suspension front: independent by damper/struts with coil springs and lower wishbones. Rear: triple transverse links, trailing arms and coil springs. Telescopic dampers and anti-roll bars front and rear

Steering power-assisted rack and pinion with 3.2 turns between full locks. Turning circle average 11.0m between kerbs, with 16.6m circle for one turn of the wheel

Wheels 6J steel with 195/65R15 91H tyres (Michelin MXV3A on test car)

Brakes ventilated discs front, drums rear, with engine-driven vacuum servo pump. Electronic anti-lock option (includes rear discs) on L and LX, standard on GLX and Executive