

FIRST
DRIVE

Peugeot 607

Featured model: 2.2Hdi Automatic



TRY AS THEY MIGHT, FRENCH CAR makers have never managed to lure buyers of prestige cars away from their Mercs and BMWs, Volvos or Jaguars.

The 607 is Peugeot's latest effort; it's a big car with up-to-the-minute technology, whether you look under-bonnet or inside, at all the mod cons.

We tried the latest 2.2-litre diesel, married to the automatic gearbox, which is the way that most cars in this sector are bought.

The limitation is that this engine has only four cylinders, but to compensate, it uses a contra-rotating balancer shaft, to avoid nasty vibes. It works well with the auto's torque converter, but we think Audi's V6 diesel with Multitronic (a continuously variable transmission) works better.

The conventional stepped automatic in the 607 spends a lot of its time in second and third gears off main roads, and its downchange for overtaking can seem protracted. Still, the mpg figures are respectable enough and the special emission control (including a particulate trap) is commendable – with taxation benefits, as well.

Frankly, we were disappointed with the 607's road manners. The suspension feels too fretful and disturbed by sharp-edged, secondary road faults and although it corners well enough, the meaty steering feel is accompanied by some free movement. It certainly lacks the tranquility of the Citroën C5 over the bumps.

Inside, the seating and trim leave little

cause for complaint. Rear legroom isn't massive and there's a centre hump, but generally, passengers feel pampered.

The large boot is as long as it's wide, even before the seatback is flipped forward. Opening the wonderfully counterbalanced lid will defeat anyone who hasn't read the instruction book – you press the O in the 607 badge. There's still a load sill to negotiate, but the spare wheel is now inside this Peugeot, below the floor.

The price is substantial, but so is the equipment; however, some features irritate in practice because artificial intelligence is still no match for the human sort. Automatic headlamps, wipers and even the climate control all fail the test, doing the wrong things at times. The cruise control is unwieldy, too, and our car's trip computer was over 6 per cent pessimistic – it couldn't even agree with the (accurate) main distance recorder.

VERDICT

Not lacking the glitzy showroom appeal so important in this image-conscious sector, the 607 misses the mark when it comes to operations. Even the impressive 2.2 diesel is punching above its weight here, and in most other respects, the benchmark BMW 5-Series has nothing much to worry about from this new rival.

AT A GLANCE

considering size, price and rivals

Controls/displays	★★★★○
Handling/steering	★★★★○
Comfort	★★★○○
Space/practicality	★★★★○

BRIEF SPECIFICATION

engine	2179cc, DI diesel, 16 valves; 136bhp/235 lb ft with turbo and balancer shaft; 80-litre fuel tank
drive	4-speed stepped automatic, front-wheel drive
suspension	front: inverted MacPherson struts with integral coil springs Rear: independent four-link location with coil springs
tyres	225/55R16V (Pirelli on test car)
brakes	ventilated discs front, solid discs rear with brake-assist/ABS
0-62mph*	13.0sec
max speed*	125mph *maker's figures
official (combined) mpg	39.2
AA test results (typical)	38
worst/best	25/45

VITAL STATISTICS (cm)

length x width (folded mirrors)	487x184
front- legroom	81-112
- headroom (with sunroof)	94-100
rear - typical legroom	102
- typical kneeroom	76
- headroom	93
- hiproom	135-138
load space (all seats in use) (litres/cu ft)	595/21
load length (seats up/folded)	117/193
load width	114
load sill height (inside/outside)	16/71
boot/load aperture height	43/46

LIKES ...

door mirrors fold with door locking
accurate speedo with 30/50/70 markings
hazard lamps work when you brake hard

and GRIPES

top gear delayed to 60+ in S mode
no air con fan boost if engine off
indicators too quiet (OK with V6?)