



Peugeot 208 Régénération

Review | "Régénération" is Peugeot's way of indicating that the brand has reinvented itself. The last generation of Peugeots were appealing and good to drive, but they were neither exciting nor innovative. The 208 is advertised as the first of a new generation of Peugeots which are ground breaking, daring and desirable. Did Peugeot succeed?

Almost every new car is introduced as if it is the best invention since the wheel itself. According to the brochures almost every car introduces a new dimension in driving and almost every car is the best in its class. In short: the test drive with the 208 starts off with some scepticism.

For photography's sake the test car is a three-door, top of the line "Feline" version in the wonderful colour called "Blossom Grey". When fully taking in this beauty, the reservations are quickly replaced by admiration. Compared to the competition, the 208 has a much stronger personality. Peugeot shows even more guts by making the 208 smaller than its predecessor: the 207 (rest assured, this doesn't go at the expense of the cabin space).

When looking at the details, again the 208 pleasantly surprises. For example, the grille isn't flush mounted and instead seems to hover above the nose of the car. A chrome strip accentuates the shoulder line and ends in a charming curve near the rear window. LED side lights are placed above the headlights, like eyebrows, rather than inside.

All of these elements distinguish the 208 in a positive way from its main rivals, without making the car so radically different that it deters potential buyers. The only downside of this odd design is the poor visibility to the rear; a parking aid is therefore a must, rather than a luxury.



Cabin

Once behind the steering wheel, the 208 is even more

innovative and the last trace of scepticism is gone. Within the limits of a compact, affordable car Peugeot managed to really change the game.

The angles between the seat, steering wheel and dials is unusual. To add to the special ambiance, there's lots more glass, giving a great feeling of spaciousness. The driver sits up relatively high, looking down at the dashboard. This gives a great feeling of control. A pleasantly small steering wheel pierces into the cabin, almost forcing the driver in an active (and safe!) sitting position.



In most cars the dials are placed directly behind the steering wheel; the driver looks through the steering wheel to read the speedometer. In the 208, the dials are placed more towards the windscreen so the driver looks at them over the steering wheel. This makes them easier to read and mimics the effect of "head up display" (projecting information on the windscreen).

Audio and navigation

The display for the satnav, car kit and audio system appears to float above the centre console, but is in fact firmly mounted to the dashboard.



All dialogues are shown on a virtual sphere. With the push of a button the driver selects the relevant part of that sphere. After a short while all oddities of the 208 turn out to be an improvement, but this doesn't go for the audio and satnav. Even after several days of driving, operating the radio remains something of a mystery.

The many inputs in the dashboard confirm that the 208 is a modern car. As standard the 208 is fitted with two (!) USB connections, an AUX input and a 12 volt socket. Although invisible, Bluetooth is available as well. He who drives a 208 will never again have an empty battery in their laptop or phone.



Three cylinder

Another innovation is Peugeot's 1.2 litre three-cylinder petrol engine. By opting for three cylinders, rather than the usual four, the engine has less internal friction making it more efficient. Also, it requires less parts, making it lighter and cheaper to build. The downside of a three-cylinder engine is its less than smooth character.



Peugeot managed to suppress the latter very well. It's only when going flat out that the characteristic three-cylinder rattle is audible. Next to that, the clutch requires some getting used to. On the other hand: in city traffic it is hardly noticeable that this is the base engine.

On the open road the "208 1.2 VTi" noticeably has to work harder than other engines, yet performance is still adequate. Because the small engine has to work so hard, it is almost impossible to drive as efficiently as Peugeot promises the car is capable of.



Four-cylinder

By comparison, the more traditional 1.6 litre four-cylinder engine is an all-rounder that simply does everything the way it should. This does mean the four-cylinder is less outspoken. The "1.6 VTi" (120 PS) even performs well at low engine speeds, which is why the test drive took only 5.4 litres per 100 km (52 mpg).

The only problem with this engine is the gearbox. 120 km/h (75 mph) in fifth gear means 3,500 rpm and that is simply too much. It makes the car tiresome at long distances. This power train almost literally screams for a six-speed gearbox (or a longer fifth gear).

Diesel

The best engine, but also the most expensive, is the 1.6 litre diesel (115 PS). The "1.6 e-HDi" has obviously been "tamed" in every possible way to improve efficiency. By its very nature it is so strong that performance is still good. Even at low revs this diesel is torque-strong, while at high engine speeds this lion delivers a serious bite.



Also thanks to the stop/start system, a shift indicator and a trip computer, the test drive cost just 4.6 litres per 100 km (61 mpg).

Handling

Especially in combination with the smaller engines, it is noticeable that Peugeot took reducing weight seriously (on average the 208 weighs 110 kg less than a comparable 207). This makes the 208 more agile and safer, because a light car is also easier to bring to a standstill.

Roadholding is good and safe, as can be expected from a modern car. The suspension is neither too soft nor too firm and will appeal to a large audience. In the end it is the combination of all factors that makes the 208 a remarkable car to drive. This starts off with the seating arrangement, a small steering wheel and is completed by fair performance and excellent handling.



Conclusion

Did Peugeot manage to build a compact, affordable car that is also innovative and even desirable? Yes, without a doubt! And Peugeot didn't limit itself to just its looks or its technology. What is even more admirable is that Peugeot managed to build a car with a strong personality, without alienating itself from the general public.

Its stunning looks are just the first way in which the 208 charms the customer. For a car in this segment, the 208 has an exceptional charisma. This cabin doesn't just look good, it is also innovative. Just the way the driver sits behind the steering wheel makes the 208 special, the electronics do the rest. All engines perform well, while the three-cylinder deserves a special mention for its lively character. The term "Régénération" is not just marketing talk, it describes this new Peugeot perfectly well. ■



Specifications

Peugeot 208 1.6 e-HDi (115 PS) Feline

Size and weight



Length x width x height	396 x 174 x 146 cm
Wheelbase	254 cm
Kerb weight	1.080 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Fuel capacity	50 l
Luggage space	311 l
Tyre size	195/55R16

Engine and performance



Capacity	1560 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/
Max power	115 PS @ 3600 rpm
Max torque	270 Nm @ 1750 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	9.7 secs
Top speed	190 km/h
Average mileage	3.8 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	4.6 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	3.4 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	99 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 17,445
Price base model	Â£ 9,995