



Peugeot 508

Peugeot's next top model

Car review | Peugeot has a new top model. The successor of the 407 should logically be named 408. However, Peugeot's new luxury car promises to be such an improvement over the old model, that it is called 508. And it doesn't stop there: the 508 even replaces the grand luxury model: the 607. According to Peugeot, the 508 offers strong yet frugal engines, modern technology, which is easy to operate, and a fine looking design, which still offers ample space inside. Is the 508 indeed top of class?

If looks are the most important, then the 508 is certainly off to a great start. Peugeot has developed a whole new look especially for the 508. It has sleeker and simpler lines than before and that makes this big luxury car look remarkably elegant.

The designer explains that the lines have been chosen so that the light reflecting on the surface accentuates the shapes. In that way the 508 looks even more dynamic. Also, all lines point at the road, which makes it look like the car wants to move. Despite all this eye candy, the practical side has not been forgotten: in the front and the rear of the cabin the 508 offers more than enough space.



Comfort

The most important reason to name the new car 508 (and not 408), is the fact that quality levels have risen significantly. New Peugeots already feel more robust

than before, but the 508 is even better.

The design of the cabin reminds one more of a BMW than a Peugeot. That's not only because of the dashboard layout, but also because of the type of seats (lots of separate elements to adjust for a perfect fit) and the prominent centre console.



On the centre console a big push/rotate button operates the audio, navigation and communication system. The iPod is supported as standard, but operating it is awkward. The sound quality of the stock audio system is remarkably good. The sound is harmonious, rich and spacious. The optional JBL hi-fi system is more powerful and clear, but one has to be a true music lover to appreciate the difference.

The 508 can be fitted with all the luxury available on modern cars today. A few examples: high beam assistant, keyless entry, electronically operated parking brake, active corner lighting and head-up display. The head-up display is a true asset which makes driving less tiresome. Also, the driver doesn't have to use the "French" speedometer anymore, where the dial only marks 110 and 130 km/h but not common speed limits outside of France. The electronically operated parking brake is not recommendable: it operates so slowly that it becomes annoying.



Optionally, the front seats have a massage function. Up to now such luxury was only available on top-class limousines, not on the average company car. Climate control with four separate zones is also new for vehicles in this segment.

"Of course" the 508 is constructed from the strongest materials available and fitted with many airbags. When it comes to passive safety (=survive an accident) the 508 leaves little to be desired. However, as to active safety (=prevent accidents) the 508 lacks behind compared to its competitors. A system to automatically maintain a safe distance from the car in front or automatically brake for pedestrians is not available.

Handling

Despite the extra space and tons of electronic gadgets, the 508 weighs about 35 kg less than its predecessor (depending on the chosen trim level). Nowadays, low CO2 emissions are key and that is why Peugeot saved as much weight as possible. Also, a lower weight means more responsive handling.



The suspension is remarkably firm for a French car and that surely benefits stability. Also, Peugeot doesn't want to compete too much with its own sibling: Citroën. The Citroën C5 and Peugeot 508 share the same "Platform 3". Thanks to its sporty suspension the 508 has excellent handling, yet real driving pleasure is lacking. Due to its modest weight, the 508 brakes very well.



1.6 e-HDi

For this review two very different versions have been driven: the most frugal and the most powerful diesel engine available. The first of these is the "1.6 e-HDi", which aims for maximum efficiency. At first this 112 PS / 270 Nm strong diesel lacks refinement, but one quickly gets used to this. On highways this frugal diesel performs very well.

In contrast: in city traffic the "508 1.6 e-HDi" seems a bit hesitant when accelerating from a standstill. On

top of that the standard automatic gearbox (in fact a "robotized manual gearbox") shifts so slowly that the car loses momentum while changing gear. Luckily there is a way to manually shift gears using levers behind the steering wheel. In that way the driver can choose the best moment to change gears and the car doesn't slow down while shifting.



Also standard is a stop/start mechanism, which does its job quickly and is hardly noticeable. According to Peugeot, its stop/start system keeps operating at temperatures down to -5 degrees Celsius. An interesting detail is a display which shows how long the engine has been stopped during a trip, so the driver appreciates how much fuel is saved by stop/start.

Peugeot promises the 1.6 e-HDi will do 60 mpg (4.7 litres per 100 km), but that is rather optimistic. Even a very calm drive over an undemanding track (country roads) cost 5.4 litres per 100 km (52 mpg).



2.2 HDi GT

At the top of the 508 range is the "2.2 HDi GT". This most powerful diesel available is always a GT version, meaning it comes with sports suspension which is capable of handling the power of the 204 PS / 400 Nm strong diesel engine.

The 508 has an even firmer suspension than the basic 508 and handles significantly better. On straight roads a certain resistance has to be overcome before actually cornering. On long distances this means the driver hardly ever needs to correct the car, making it less demanding to drive. Once in a corner the steering wheel perfectly reveals what forces are working on the front wheels, so the driver can easily feel what the car is capable of. In tight corners the 508 GT seems to grip like a true athlete and is capable of very high speeds.



The new 2.2 litre four-cylinder diesel engine develops

more power than the six-cylinder diesel from the 407. At low revs this most powerful engine is so quiet it can hardly be heard at all! When revving the engine just a bit, the 508 accelerates almost immediately. The character of the engine perfectly suits the sporty suspension and therefore the "508 GT" truly is Peugeot's new top model.

Conclusion

Peugeot's next top model has delivered its act, now it is time for the judge to give its verdict. Besides the fact that the car is highly appealing to the photographer, it is also roomy and practical inside. Just a few years ago the build quality and trim levels of the 508 were only available on top-class luxury cars. Yet, when it comes to active safety the 508 does leave something to be desired.

Roadholding is fine, with the GT suspension even excellent. The environment hasn't been forgotten either: the "1.6 e-HDi" performs adequately and is economical at the same time. The "2.2 HDi" is not only fast, but offers a lot of driving pleasure on top of that.

In conclusion, the 508 is a leap ahead compared to the Peugeot 407 and that makes it the next top model indeed. ■



Specifications

Peugeot 508 2.2 HDi GT

Size and weight



Length x width x height	479 x 185 x 146 cm
Wheelbase	282 cm
Kerb weight	1.515 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	1.875 kg
Fuel capacity	72 l
Luggage space	515/996 l
Tyre size	235/45R18

Engine and performance



Capacity	2179 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	204 PS @ 3500 rpm
Max torque	450 Nm @ 2000 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	8.2 secs
Top speed	234 km/h
Average mileage	5.7 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	8 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	4.4 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	150 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 28,750
Price base model	Â£ 18,150