



Peugeot 408

Offering without demand

Review | Peugeot has more than once set the trend by introducing a completely new type of car before there was any demand for it. Now the French manufacturer is trying this again with the 408: a medium-sized car that is a mix of a sedan, a coupe and an SUV. Is this offer of sufficient quality to create new demand?

The demand for medium-sized sedans is negligible, especially in Europe. Yet Peugeot sees the opportunity for the 408 thanks to a unique body shape. The 408 has the sleek, elongated shape of a sedan and the elegant roof line of a coupe. At the same time, extra ground clearance and thickly set wheel arches give it the adventurous look of an SUV.



Like every other Peugeot, the 408 has headlights with daytime running lights in the shape of a claw. And to make the connection with the lion even stronger, the roof line is curved. Highly original is the lower edge of

the tailgate, which leans against the direction of travel.

Space and equipment

At the back of the roof, there seem to be two small cat ears that are much more than just decorative. The hinges of the tailgate are incorporated in these small elevations, leaving more headroom in the back. Thanks to the long wheelbase, legroom in the back seat is excellent.



The 408 looks much bigger than it actually is, and this becomes apparent after taking a seat behind the steering wheel. Head and legroom are good, but the space around the seats reveals that this is a C and not a D-segment car.

Like every new Peugeot, the 408 has an "i-Cockpit". The steering wheel is small and the driver is forced into an active position, so that he or she has better control over the car. Thanks to the small steering wheel, the gauges (or more accurately, the screen on which the speedometer and tachometer appear) can be placed at the top of the steering column. This way, important information is in the driver's field of view and is easier to read.

That screen behind the steering wheel consists of several layers for three-dimensional display. This may seem far-fetched, but in practice it makes the information much easier to read.

In the 408, the central screen is placed slightly lower and slightly more towards the driver than in other

Peugeots. Therefore, it is better within reach and is easier to read. Under the screen "i-Toggles" can be found: virtual buttons the driver can assign functions to.



The equipment is modern and complete, including Peugeot's latest audio, communication, and navigation system. Unfortunately, this first version of this new system has some shortcomings. For example, the entire system temporarily shut down during the test drive, only to happily continue after an automatic restart. Communication with a smartphone via Apple CarPlay or Android Auto is difficult to establish (both wired and wireless) and regularly drops. The audio system of specialist Focal has a clear and detailed sound, but struggles with booming bass.

Handling

The 408 sits on the same platform as the 308 and 508, but has the same wheelbase as the 508. The 408 uses simpler suspension technology than the 508, so it doesn't have the same grand and dignified driving behaviour. However, the refinement in the suspension and steering is even better! Also, "straight-line stability" (requiring very few corrections while driving on the highway) is excellent.

"Anyone who test drives the Peugeot 308, 508, and 408 in succession will almost certainly choose the 408 based on handling"



At the same time, the small steering wheel means that a small wrist movement is enough to steer a significant curve, which gives a naturally superior feeling.

Yet, the most important advantage of the 408 is that it's not an SUV. No matter how advanced the suspension and computer-controlled stability systems of an SUV are, a car with a lower centre of gravity naturally has better driving behaviour, which the 408 proves. Anyone who test drives the Peugeot 3008, 5008, and 408 in succession will almost certainly choose the 408 based on handling.



Plug-in hybrid

The Peugeot 408 is available with gasoline, (plug-in) hybrid, and electric motor options. A automatic

transmission comes as standard on all engines. At the time of writing, only the plug-in hybrid is available, so that is what has been tested. Like almost any other plug-in hybrid, this combination of a gasoline and electric motor makes the 408 stronger, faster, and at the same time more fuel-efficient and quieter than a car with conventional drive. Additionally, Peugeot has done its homework well: the collaboration between the two power sources proceeds harmoniously, and the feeling in the accelerator pedal does not change when one motor takes over from the other.

The 12.4 kWh battery allows the 408 to travel about 60 km completely on electric power. Like a fully electric car, the 408 is perfectly quiet (thanks in part to extra sound-insulated glass). Even when the gasoline motor takes over, the noise level remains exceptionally low. In sport mode, both engines combine their power, and the 225 horsepower version performs excellently. However, since everything goes with great ease, and the noise level so low, the feeling of speed is minimal. For those who are looking for sensation, that is a disadvantage. Those seeking comfort will appreciate the more 408 for this.



Conclusion

With the Peugeot 408, the company is offering a new type of car for which there is currently no demand. However, a test drive of the car shows that the 408 has a lot to offer that could create that demand. This starts with the distinctive appearance and spacious

interior, particularly in the back seat. The iCockpit provides a unique experience, allowing for better control of the car and a clear view of the instruments.

Peugeot wants to attract people away from SUVs with the higher stance of the 408. Despite the higher step-in height, it offers the low centre of gravity and superior stability and refinement of a sedan or coupe. With its dimensions, the 408 is more manoeuvrable and dynamic than traditional larger sedans. Finally, the hybrid drivetrain provides a whisper-quiet ride, excellent performance, and fuel efficiency. ■



Specifications

Peugeot 408

Size and weight



Length x width x height	469 x 185 x 149 cm
Wheelbase	279 cm
Kerb weight	1.791 kg
Trailer	750 kg
Trailer - braked	1.400 kg
Fuel capacity	unknown
Luggage space	471 l
Tyre size	245/40R20

Engine and performance



Capacity	1598 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	225 PS @ 4250 rpm
Max torque	360 Nm @ 500 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	7.8 secs
Top speed	235 km/h
Average mileage	1.3 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	unknown
Mileage extra urban	unknown
CO2 emissions	27 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 43,200
Price base model	Â£ 31,050