

Peugeot 307

Featured model: 1.6 Rapier 5 door



PEUGEOT'S ALTERNATIVE TO the Ford Escort, the 306, was always regarded as a benchmark model in its heyday. Maybe not for quality or finish, but in dynamic terms, it was a cut above the average, especially as a diesel. Great things are therefore expected of its replacement and this hatch has hatched with a distinctly different look, very akin to the new Honda Civic.

The idea of the build-'em-tall, cab-forward styling is to find more room inside, with seat cushions higher off the floor; this means that no-one has to sit semi-recumbent.

It works, too, with an unusual-for-Peugeot loftier driving stance that's spoilt only by inadequate lumbar support. Actual dimensions at the back (for people and luggage) are little improved on the 306, but it's comfortable, none the less.

Lots of oddments room compensates for a modest load deck with a high rear sill, but the full-size spare wheel is accessed from inside now.

It's well known that Peugeot is good at suspension design, but we confess to some disappointment with our test car's jittery ride – maybe the LX on 65 series tyres will be more compliant than our Rapier. There's no criticism of its steering or cornering prowess, however.

We're impressed by the generous array of safety features that are standard on even the cheapest 307, but on test, we found the brakes' pedal response too light when there isn't an emergency.

This engine is an improvement over the old 1.6/87bhp version in the 306, in terms of both performance and refinement; however, the fuel consumption isn't improved and motorway thirst is especially disappointing.

The price of the 307, model for model, is significantly higher than for its identically powered Citroën counterpart, the Xsara. Yet convenience items like see-you-home headlamps, automatic climate control, front foglamps and velour upholstery, all standard on Xsara LX, don't feature on the equivalent 307.

VERDICT

Some of us are old enough to remember the original Sunbeam Rapier – a sporty, eye-catching version of the Hillman Minx. This Rapier 1.6 trades that same sporty image for the LX's more scuffproof bumpers and greater creature comfort around the cabin (passenger's seat height adjustment and armrests, for instance). Whichever you choose, the 307 will please in many respects, but rankle in others. An indifferent ride, gearshift and fuel economy head this list. However, we like the package, the engine performs with reasonable manners and it's an enjoyable car to hustle. Almost a success.

AT A GLANCE

considering size, price and rivals

Overtaking ability	☆☆☆☆○○
Space/practicality	☆☆☆☆○○
Controls/displays	☆☆☆☆○○
Safety	☆☆☆☆○○
Handling/steering	☆☆☆☆○○
Comfort	☆☆○○○○
Fuel economy	☆☆○○○○

SPECIFICATION

engine 1587cc, 4-cylinder, petrol; 110bhp at 5750rpm, 110 lb ft at 4000rpm; belt-driven double overhead camshafts, 16 valves

transmission 5-speed manual, front-wheel drive; 20.0mph/1000rpm in 5th, 15.7 in 4th

suspension front: independent damper/struts with integral coil springs.

Rear: torsion beam (dead) axle with trailing links, coil springs

steering hydraulic power assistance; 2.9 turns lock-to-lock; 10.9m diameter turning circle between kerbs (15.3m for one turn of the wheel)

brakes ventilated discs front, solid discs rear, with standard anti-lock and emergency brake-assist functions

wheels/tyres 6in alloy with 205/55R16V tyres (Continental) on test car; 195/65R15T on 1.6 LX; full-size steel spare

LIKES ...

wide variety of interior trim choices
lots of clever, lined oddments spaces
rear headrests retract into backrest
accurate speedo reads 30, 50, 70mph

and GRIPES

no heat/vent fan with engine off
indicators too quiet
no proper lining below rear cushions
centre info display "lost" in sunlight

THE 307 RANGE

size and type lower medium (mid-priced) tall hatchback

trim levels Style, Rapier, LX, GLX, XSi
engines petrol: 4 cylinder/1.4 litre/75bhp, 4/1.6/110, 4/2.0/138. diesel: 4/1.4/70; 4/2.0/90, 4/2.0/110

drive front-wheel drive, 5-speed manual; 4-speed stepped automatic available on 1.6 and 2.0 petrol (with sequential-shift manual mode) versions

OVERTAKING ABILITY ★ ★ ★ ○ ○					
<i>Short gearing used to avoid lethargy at lower speeds in the gears. Reasonably willing at low and high revs, but not the best</i>					
acceleration in seconds	through gears*	④ th gear	⑤ th gear		
20-40mph	3.3	9.0	13.4		
30-50mph	4.0	8.4	12.4		
40-60mph	5.0	8.6	12.4		
50-70mph	6.3	9.0	13.6		
30-70mph	10.3	17.4	26.0		
max speed in each gear (*using 6250rpm for best acceleration)					
gear	①*	②*	③*	④*	⑤
speed (mph)	28	53	75	98½	113

SPACE AND PRACTICALITY ★ ★ ★ ○ ○			
<i>More comfort and rear space than bold figures suggest. Harder to place front bumper than rear one when parking. Under-seat drawers don't restrict rear footspace</i>			
<i>in centimetres (5-door hatch)</i>		inside	(† without sunroof)
outside		front	- legroom 84-107
length	420		- headroom 97-103†
width - inc mirrors	200	rear	- typical leg/ 95/
- mirrors folded	179		kneeroom 71
height (no roof bars)	152		- headroom 97
load sill height	19/		- hiproom
(inside/outside)	70	load space (all seats in use)	
steering		(litres/cu ft)	390/13.7
turns lock-to-lock	2.9	load length	70-144
turning circle (metres)	10.9	full length to fascia	245
easy to park/garage?		load width	106
	★ ★ ★ ○ ○	load height (to shelf/	52/
		to top of aperture)	84

CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS ★ ★ ★ ○ ○
Nice driving position, but more lumbar support needed for driver, and short passengers complained that their cushion was too long - LX height adjuster would help. Gearchange obstructive on our car



HOW THE 307 5 DOOR COMPARES	engine cyl/cap/power (no/cc/bhp)	revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	fuel economy (mpg)	brakes - best stop from 50mph (m/kg)	maximum legroom - front (cm)	typical leg/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	steering turns/ circle (m)	overall length (cm)
PEUGEOT 307 1.6 16v	4/1587/110	3500	10.3	26.0/17.4	37½	26½/12*	107	95/71	2.9/10.9	420
Renault Megane 1.6 16v	4/1598/110	3280	10.2	23.7/16.6	41½	26/55*	107	97/69	3.5/10.65	413
Honda Civic 1.6i	4/1590/110	3560	10.5	24.5/17.8	42½	26½/16*	107	102/76	2.8/11.6	429
Vauxhall Astra 1.6 16v	4/1598/100	3440	11.2	23.6/16.3	41½	26/21*	108	99/75	3.1/10.4	411
VW Golf 1.6	4/1595/105	3540	10.3	23.3/17.3	38½	27½/18*	111	95/71	3.1/10.4	415
Previous 306 1.6 (1994)	4/1587/87	3350	11.6	27.0/18.7	38	30½/20	106	97/67	4.1/10.65	403

*with ABS

SAFETY ★ ★ ★ ○ ○	
<i>Impressive range of aids includes automatic hazard flashers in heavy braking, automatic tailgate locking (at 6mph) and active front head restraints. Six airbags, too</i>	
braking	
pedal feel	★ ★ ★ ○ ○
in emergency	★ ★ ○ ○ ○
handbrake	★ ★ ★ ○ ○
dry road stopping distance	from 50mph (with brake-assist/ABS)
pedal load	distance
unhurried 10kg	31½m
sudden 12kg	26½m best stop
+4kg ie 16kg	27m ABS on

EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS
 Peugeot 307 not yet tested

SECURITY FEATURES	
central locking	✓
remote control	✓
auto window closure	✓
deadlocks	✓
alarm	0
immobiliser	✓
luggage security	★ ★ ★ ○ ○
✓ standard	0 factory option * not available

HANDLING AND STEERING ★ ★ ★ ★ ○
Adroit, ideally weighted steering response with lots of grip, but still a trace of 306's lift-off tail-happiness



COMFORT ★ ★ ○ ○ ○
Rapier on 55-Series tyres squanders bump suppression in the cause of grip. Effective heat/vent distribution, but not prolific in output. Engine quiet enough but busy at 70mph

FUEL ECONOMY ★ ★ ○ ○ ○
Despite disappointing results here (not as good as higher geared Xsara), tank filling and range are exemplary. No pronounced thirst in warm-up phase, either

type of use (air conditioning off)	AA test (mpg)
urban (17mph average/heavy traffic)	25
suburban (27mph average/6.4 miles from cold start)	32½
motorway (70mph cruising)	34½
cross-country (brisk driving/20 miles from cold start)	38½
rural (gentle driving/20 miles from cold start)	45
typical mpg overall	37½
realistic tank capacity/range	56 litres/460 miles
official mpg (urban/extra urban/combined)	29.7/48.7/39.2
CO ₂ emissions 169g/km	car tax band C