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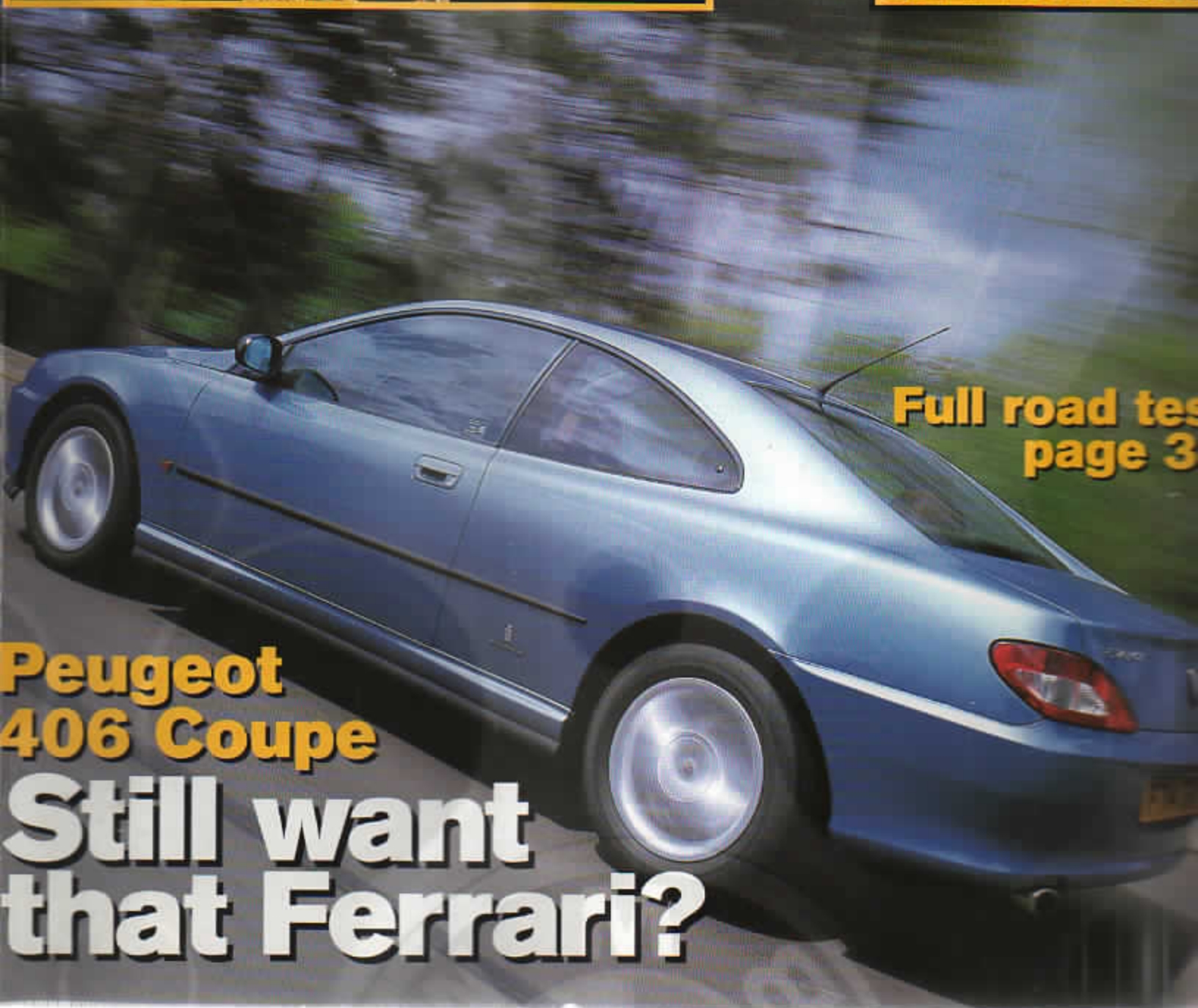


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**Full road test  
page 3**

**Peugeot  
406 Coupe**

**Still want  
that Ferrari?**

# Peugeot

## 406 COUPE

**MODEL TESTED** 3.0 V6 SE **ON ROAD PRICE** £26,420

**TOP SPEED** 141mph **30-70MPH** 7.1sec

**0-60MPH** 7.4sec **60-0MPH** 2.9sec **MPG** 19.8

**FOR** Styling, space, price, handling, ride, refined performance

**AGAINST** A bit thirsty, engine lacks any true V6 charisma

The Peugeot 406 coupe has one simple role to fulfil: to look sexier than the handsome saloon on which it is based.

If you agree that Pininfarina's styling department has succeeded in this brief, there would appear to be little else standing between this car and total class dominance. Until the Mondeo-based Ford Cougar arrives next year, there isn't, in theory, another car to touch this one dynamically.

As it happens, the news that Peugeot has resisted the temptation merely to fit a new body over an established set of underpinnings to save itself time and money, couldn't be much worse for the competition. On the surface, that's how things may appear, but once you look beyond the range of engines to the steering, suspension, chassis, brakes and much of the interior, all of which have undergone substantial improvement, it soon becomes obvious that the 406 coupe is rather more than just a saloon wearing a smart suit.

And yet the price remains distinctly saloon-like. The top-spec 3.0-litre V6 SE tested here will cost £26,420 when it goes on sale in October, but the entry-level 2.0-litre version will sell for £6000 less and will benefit from the same styling. Alfa Romeo, Fiat, Honda and BMW take note.

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AUTOCAR  
**ROAD  
TEST**



Pininfarina's designers have added style without taking away too much rear seat space



## ● Design & Engineering

**S**ergio Pininfarina must be feeling pretty smug right now: his famous Turin car design and manufacturing business has just scored a hat-trick. In 1993 the Pininfarina-built Fiat Coupe set a new style standard among "affordable" coupes. Then, one year later, Alfa Romeo stole its crown with the gorgeous Pininfarina-styled GTV. Now, with the Peugeot 406 coupe, Pininfarina has eclipsed them both.

Approach the new Peugeot from any angle and you'll be struck first by its squat, broad-shouldered stance, then by the sheer sophistication of its faultless curves and finally, as you get closer, by its perfectly scribed windows, lights and shutlines. There are no fashion-sensitive styling gimmicks here, just fabulous proportions and meticulously developed surfaces.

Up front, heavily raked A-pillars twist sinuously into a subtle bonnet bulge which plunges forward to a simplified version of Peugeot's corporate grille and ultra-slim headlights – which recall the 1988 Oxia concept car and 905 Le Mans racer.

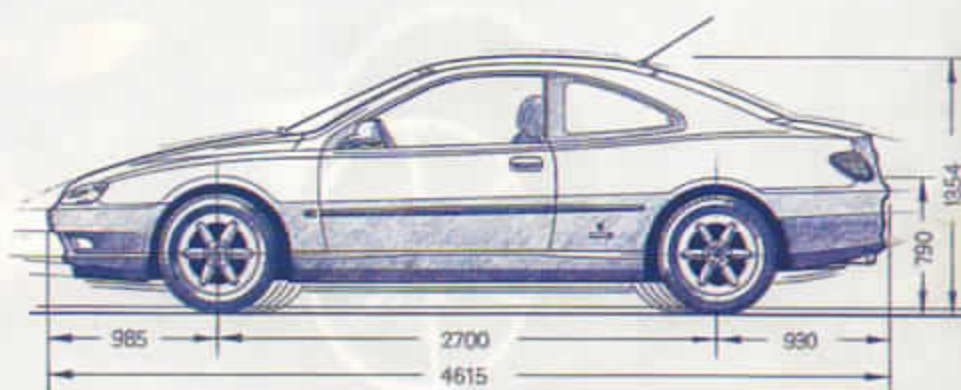
From behind, the 406 coupe looks similar to the 306 cabriolet (also a Pininfarina design), only wider and more rounded in plan. Unusually, the rear window is slightly recessed between the C-pillars, which form buttresses as they descend on to the short bootlid to give the car a smoother profile.

In the past, Pininfarina has been accused of borrowing styling cues from cars it has created for other clients – the Alfa Romeo 164 and Peugeot 605 bear more than a passing resemblance, for example – and there is some evidence of this in the 406 coupe. Peugeot and its customers are



Striking lights are inspired by Oxia concept car

## ● Vital Statistics



Body 2dr coupe Cd 0.32 Front/rear tracks 1511/1525mm Turning circle 11.1m Min/max front leg room 880/1160mm Min/max front head room 780/860mm Interior width front/rear 1515/1450mm Boot length seats up/down 1050/1620mm Min/max boot width 990/1120mm Boot height 365mm Loading height 790mm VDA boot volume 390 litres/dm<sup>3</sup>



Gear knob turned in aluminium – a stylish touch



Slim headlights reminiscent of 905 sportscar's

unlikely to complain, however, since their new coupe shares some of its surface characteristics and shutline arrangements with the Ferrari 550 Maranello. Unfortunately for Ferrari, the considerably less expensive Peugeot is the more elegant design overall.

Externally, the 406 coupe shares nothing with its four-door stablemate, but Pininfarina didn't have an entirely free hand. The front-wheel-drive V6 powertrain, rack and pinion steering and strut front/multi-link rear suspension with variable damping are all carried over. So, too, are the floorpan, front bulkhead, inner front wings and underbonnet crash



Doors and mirrors are bespoke to the coupe



Sizeable boot contains a full-size spare wheel

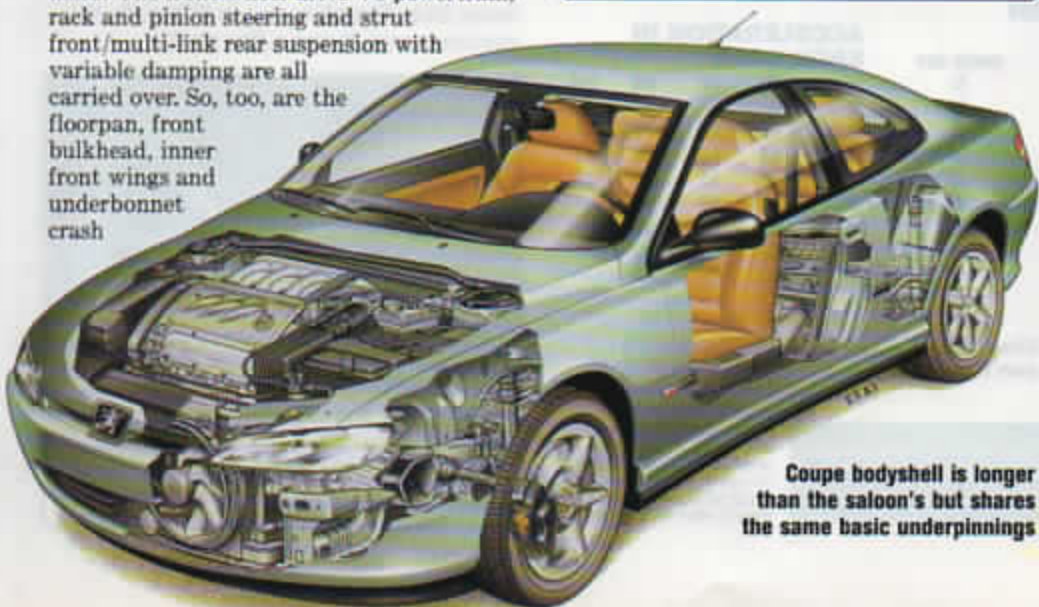


structure. As a result, the coupe rides on the same 2700mm wheelbase as the saloon and is just 60mm longer at 4620mm.

Overall height is down 40mm to 1350mm – due in part to a 12mm ride height reduction – and width is up 15mm to 1780mm. To compensate visually for the extra width, new forged aluminium suspension arms ensure that the coupe's lovely 16in alloys properly fill the wheel arches by adding 36mm to the rear track.

Inside, the coupe is spacious but strictly for four and gets superb Recaro bucket seats front and rear. Leather trim is standard on the seats and doors and there are lots of stylish touches. The gear lever, for example, is turned from solid aluminium and the rear coat hooks fold flush with the headlining.

**A styling and packaging masterpiece – a potential future classic ★★★★★**



Coupe bodyshell is longer than the saloon's but shares the same basic underpinnings

## ● Economy

We knew from experience of this engine in the 406 saloon that economy was never going to be the coupe's strong suit. So it proves. Despite fairly long overall gearing and a reasonably slick 0.32 Cd figure, we couldn't persuade it to return more than 19.8mpg overall, rising to a best of 27.8mpg over our preset touring route. Even compared with the more powerful and markedly quicker Fiat Coupé Turbo, such results are disappointing.

The only encouragement comes from the V6's worst return during its time in our hands. When it's being driven hard, the V6's economy does not tail away as rapidly as that of a four-cylinder turbo engine, for example. That's also why we recorded such consistent results fill on fill. And the maximum range from the 15.4-gallon tank is a useful 430 miles.



Lusty 3.0-litre V6 is very refined, but thirsty



**Big V6 is a little too keen on unleaded, but at least the touring range is long ★★**

## ● Performance & Brakes

There is no unusual or especially cutting edge technology employed in the coupe's 24-valve 3.0-litre V6 engine. Nor is there anything radical about the kerb weight, which at 1464kg provides the 194bhp 406 with a power-to-weight ratio of 132bhp per tonne, just a shade more than that of a BMW 320i.

And yet the V6 coupe is no slouch, believe us. Although it lacks much of the guttural snarl of other, more vocal V6 engines, majoring instead on smooth-spinning refinement and near-silent mid-range operations, there is never any doubting its potential as a ground coverer. The performance may well be deceptive but it is always strong and always responsive.

The reason for this is that Peugeot wasn't aiming to create a raw and noisy sports car in this instance, which is why you'll not find short, close gearing and a rasping exhaust note. Rather, Peugeot has chosen a fairly wide set of ratios for the five-speed manual gearbox, as well as a top gear that allows 23.1mph for every 1000rpm in fifth, considerably more than a Ferrari F355 manages in sixth. It's also why you'll spend as much time making full use of the 197lb ft at 4000rpm as you will wringing the engine out to its 5500rpm red line, a crank speed at which the V6 neither feels nor sounds as content as it does 2000rpm earlier.

What can't be argued with are the bald statistics, which make impressive (if not



Body control and grip are markedly improved over the already fine handling and riding 406 saloon

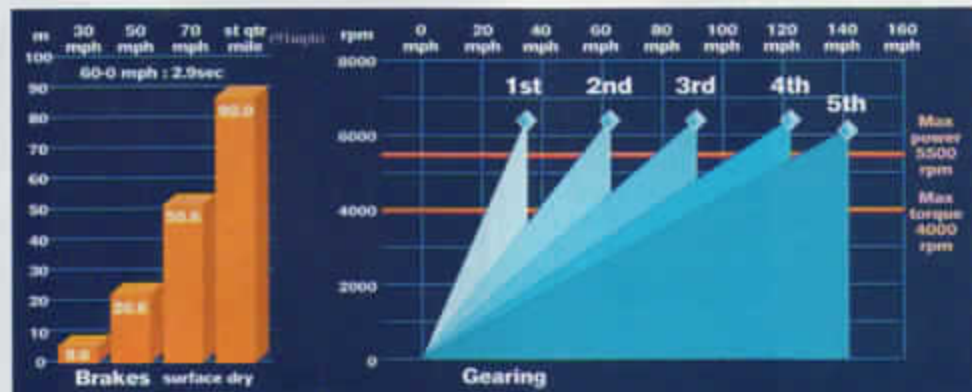
exactly reference material) reading. By scrabbling its way to 30mph in 2.8sec, to 60mph in 7.4sec and on to the ton in 19.3sec, the 406 deals a convincing blow to the likes of the Ford Probe and Vauxhall Calibra V6s, but it struggles in vain to keep

up with the Fiat Coupe Turbo and Honda Prelude VTEC, the two big-hitting affordable coupes of the moment.

It fares marginally better against such rivals when flexibility becomes the measure, its lusty V6 carrying it to a 50-70mph top gear time of 9.1sec (Fiat a storming 6.2sec). But make the competition one of top speed and although the 406's 141mph may seem impressive in isolation, compared with the 149mph Fiat it is easily outgunned.

Subjectively, the underlying impression is of a car that is a good deal more refined than it is racy. The gearchange is light and fast but lacks any real mechanical fluidity, while the throttle response from the V6 is sharp enough to please, but never enthrall. To be blunt, we'd expected a 3.0-litre V6 coupe produced by Peugeot to feel and sound just a touch more exciting, and be a little less subtle in its approach, than this.

There are no such complaints concerning the big new four-pot Brembo brakes, which possess feel and ultimate stopping power in equally impressive measure. Even on an unusually poor surface they hauled the big coupe from 60mph to rest in 2.9sec. In the circumstances, it was a fine result.



### ENGINE

Layout	6 cyls in vee, 2949cc
Max power	194bhp at 5500rpm
Max torque	157lb ft at 4000rpm
Specific output	66bhp per litre
Power to weight	132bhp per tonne
Torque to weight	135lb ft per tonne
Installation	front, transverse, front-wheel drive
Construction	aluminium alloy head and block
Bore/stroke	87/83mm
Valve gear	4 valves per cyl, dohc
Compression ratio	10.5:1
Ignition and fuel	Bosch 7.0 engine management

### GEARBOX

Type	5-speed manual
Ratios/rev per 1000rpm	
1st	3.07/5.5
2nd	1.78/9.5
3rd	1.15/14.2
4th	0.90/18.8
5th	0.73/23.1
Final drive ratio	3.15:1

### BRAKES

Front	305mm ventilated discs
Rear	290mm discs Anti-lock standard

### MAXIMUM SPEEDS

5th gear	141mph/5100rpm
4th	122/6500
3rd	92/6500
2nd	62/6500
1st	36/6500

### ACCELERATION FROM REST

True mph	sec	speedo mph
30	2.8	31
40	4.2	42
50	5.7	52
60	7.4	63
70	9.9	74
80	12.4	84
90	15.3	94
100	18.3	106
110	23.8	107

### WEIGHT

Kerb weight	1464kg
Distribution ltr per cent	53/47
Max payload	450kg

### ACCELERATION IN EACH GEAR

mph	5th	4th	3rd	2nd
10-30	-	-	5.2	3.6
20-40	8.8	6.9	4.9	3.1
30-50	8.9	6.9	4.8	3.1
40-60	8.9	6.8	4.6	3.4
50-70	9.1	6.6	4.8	-
60-80	9.7	6.8	5.2	-
70-90	10.1	7.2	5.7	-
80-100	11.1	7.9	-	-

Standing quarter mile 15.9sec/91mph Standing kilometre 28.0sec/117mph  
30-70mph through the gears 7.1sec



The performance figures were taken at the Millbrook Proving Ground with the automatic running 3300 miles. AUTOCAR test results are protected by world copyright and may not be reproduced without the editor's written permission.



Lack of drama makes performance deceptive

Performance is more refined than racy, but impressive nonetheless ★★★★★

## ● Handling & Ride

**A**lthough the 406 saloon's basic layout of struts at the front and a multi-link arrangement at the rear has been retained, Peugeot's chassis engineers have executed a number of modifications to make the coupe's act even sharper through the corners.

The ride height has been lowered by 12mm through the fitment of retuned springs and dampers, while the tracks have been widened front and rear, all of which have in turn affected the steering. Not only that but the brakes have also gone up a size and now incorporate four-pot Brembo calipers – and there are bigger 215/55 ZR16 Michelin Pilot tyres hugging unique alloys at each corner.

It would be surprising if a company as au fait with these matters as Peugeot carried out such modifications without the required results, and so it proves. Even by the lofty standards defined by the fine handling and riding saloon, the coupe is a marked improvement, displaying an urgency to the way it turns into bends in particular that simply doesn't exist in the already sharp four-door.

But this is no sports car, make no mistake about that. The intention was always to create a car that could soak up the bumps as well as it could dismiss

challenging B-road bends, and it is this astoundingly wide-ranging blend of attributes that best characterises the 406 coupe's handling personality.

Drive it along a rutted and rippled back street and the suppleness it possesses – good enough to separate occupants from intrusions that would smack their way into the cabins of a Vauxhall Calibra or a Ford Probe – leaves you in no doubt that refinement is a priority, aided in this instance by the fitment of Peugeot's optional electronic damping control system.

On the other hand, the handling suffers not one jot because of this ability to smooth away interferences. Although the speed-sensitive Servotronic steering remains too light in weight and feel for our taste, it is accurate enough to allow millimetric placement of that gorgeous nose through fast bends. And because body control has been improved to such a degree compared with the saloon, corners can be attacked with a confidence that few other front-drive coupes could absorb. Thank the fabulous location of the rear end, the big grip from the chunky Michelins and the fine sense of natural balance for that.

The other aspect that separates the 406 from just about every other rival on sale is the ability of its suspension to absorb noise.

### SUSPENSION

Front MacPherson struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar  
Rear multi-link, coil springs, anti-roll bar

### STEERING

Type rack and pinion, power assisted  
Turns lock to lock 3.0

### WHEELS AND TYRES

Wheel size 7.0Jx16in  
Made of cast alloy  
Tyres 215/55 ZR16  
Michelin Pilot HX  
Spare full size

Not even some BMWs are so quiet when pattering along B-roads. As much as anything, this provides the Pug with a nature beyond its financial station in life.



Adjustable dampers help ride/handling trade-off

Sharper and better controlled than the saloon, without hurting its ride ★★★★★





## ● Comfort, Equipment & Safety

**P**eugeot has not skimped on the 406 coupe's interior – far from it. The front seats are tailor-made by Recaro and trimmed in beautiful leather in the case of the top-specification SE, while the door inserts, aluminium-topped gear lever, chrome-edged dials and leather-bound steering wheel have each been altered for use in the coupe.

The overall impression is of a car that shares the same DNA as the saloon inside, but beyond the slightly cheap-looking centre console and the basic shape of the dashboard, there is little else the two have in common – in look, in feel, even in smell.

Even more important than Peugeot's success in giving the coupe a markedly improved interior ambience compared with the saloon is the amount of passenger space it has been able to sustain inside. Up front, you won't notice much difference apart from the fact that the seats are electrically adjustable and are a good deal more comfortable and supportive on any given journey. It's in the back where the miracles start. Normally we'd expect a significant reduction in rear seat space in a saloon-based coupe, but in the 406 it simply hasn't occurred. Admittedly, head room has been squeezed slightly and there's fractionally less leg and luggage room, but overall this is

still a proper four-seater, roomier than any BMW 3-series or Audi A4.

It is also almost as well made as these

icons of quality, only the choice of shiny plastics on the console and interior door caps letting the side down visually.



1 Chrome-rimmed dials lift the regular 406 fascia on to a different level visually... 2 ...as do the fabulous leather-covered Recaro seats 3 Air conditioning is standard on the top-spec SE version 4 Pity the centre console hasn't changed. It looks a bit out of place in the otherwise handsome cabin 5 Electronic dampers are operated by a dash-mounted switch 6 Leather-lined wheel looks great, adjusts for height and reach



Only fractionally less space here than in saloon

Although the UK specification is yet to be determined, Peugeot claims the coupe will be generously equipped, this SE version coming with air conditioning, full leather, 16in alloys and a remote control stereo as standard. All 406 coupes will also come with factory-fitted twin airbags and anti-lock brakes. Twin door bags will be optional extras.



Roomier than some saloons, stylish and well equipped for the money ★★★★★

## Market & Finance

**G**lamorous and desirable, the 406 coupe will really attract the showroom browsers. But it's more than just bait for 306 prospects. Fact is, the new car is also affordable, a snip at just £20,120 for the 2.0-litre model with sunroof. Indeed, the 2.0-litre coupes are the best buys. Looks come first with coupe buyers, and the 406 looks the same in either V6 or 2.0-litre guise. The 2.0-litre car will go down a storm with used car buyers, too, most of them private punters who will welcome the model's lower running costs.

Not that the V6 models should be avoided. It's just that £26,420 for the V6 SE taps the outer limits of what people are prepared to pay for a Peugeot. That said, the 406 coupe may come to be regarded as a brand in its own right – a car to be considered in the same breath as a BMW 323i or 328i coupe.

Furthermore, September's Volvo C70 2.3 20v is expected to cost about £35,000. If Volvo can ask that sort of money, Peugeot can certainly ask – and get – £10,000 less for the arguably prettier V6 coupe.

Hugely desirable, but 2.0 version will be a better buy due to easier resale ★★★★★

## The Autocar Verdict



**T**here is one quality about the Peugeot 406 coupe that stands out like a beacon, and that, of course, is the way it looks. Although styling is an entirely subjective matter and is not something we'd usually comment about so strongly in a road test, in this instance we feel it's important to mention, especially since the pivotal appeal of any saloon-based coupe is its ability to woo clients visually. You could even argue that the looks of such a style-dependent car are every bit as important as the price, performance, handling or ride. And if that's the case, it doesn't really matter how the 406 coupe fares elsewhere when the shape alone is so successful.

The agonising truth for the 406's rivals, however, is that it is equally strong on the dynamic front, totting a blend of serene refinement and effortless performance with a genuinely startling chassis balance that, in our experience, not even the legendary Volkswagen Corrado VR6 could match in most give-and-take driving.

It's not perhaps as raw or exciting as some folk around here would have liked, the new 3.0-litre V6 engine displaying a near-silent nature across its wide power band that is ever so slightly at odds with the rest of the car's personality. But as a total package the V6 coupe is crushingly complete. And very grown up.

What also separates it from other mass market coupes is that it feels and drives like a very different animal from the saloon on which it is based. You can detect the family genes in the way this car rides and steers, and from the way it sounds, but the traces are more remote than you'd expect. It's as if Peugeot decided to take the saloon and eradicate all the soft edges, take away all the compromises that had to be engineered in to keep the general market happy. Not that there were ever many of those in the first place.

Finally, there's the practicality to consider. Normally this plays a minor role in the fundamental appeal of a coupe. Not here. Peugeot has not only crafted a beautiful shape out of the 406 but it has also done so without sacrificing much cabin space. In the rear seats and boot, this car is smaller than the saloon, but not by much. The bottom line is that it can still be used by four adults and their luggage. Unlike many rivals.

Until Ford enters this class with conviction, the gorgeous 406 coupe is unbeatable. By some margin.

## What It Costs

List price	£25,780
On-the-road price	£26,420
Total as tested	£26,580 approx
Cost per mile	65.7p

### EQUIPMENT

(bold type denotes options fitted to test car)

Automatic transmission	£800 approx
Metallic paint	£245
Airbag driver/passenger	●/●
Anti-lock brakes	●
Alloy wheels	●
Alarm/immobiliser	option/●
10-speaker RDS stereo/CD autochanger	●/●
Electric sunroof	●
Digital air conditioning	●
Remote central locking	●
Electric/heated/leather seats	●/●/●
Electronic damping	£900 approx
● standard – not available	

**INSURANCE GROUP** 17 (est)

**WARRANTY** 12 months/unlimited mileage mechanical, 6 years anti-corrosion

### SERVICING

Major 18,000 miles, 1.8 hours  
Interim 9,000 miles, 1.1 hours

### PARTS PRICES

Oil filter	n/a
Air filter	n/a
Brake pads front/rear	n/a
Exhaust (excluding cat)	n/a
Door mirror glass	n/a
Rear tyre (each typical)	£125.00
Windscreen	n/a
Headlamp unit	n/a
Front wing	n/a
Rear bumper	n/a

Beautiful to look at, great to drive ★★★★★