

BUYING A USED...

Peugeot 406 Coupé

With Ferrari-like styling, room for four adults and amazingly low running costs, the 406 Coupé comes top of the class. So which is the model to go for?

STORY RICHARD WILSHER PHOTOGRAPHY PETE GIBSON



Boot space Unlike some coupés, the 406 is blessed with a family-sized boot

Rear seats Even adults can travel comfortably in the back

WHY DO I WANT ONE?

You only have to look at the car shown here to understand why the Peugeot 406 Coupé has been a consistent favourite of ours since its launch in May '97. Not only is it one of the best-looking coupés but it's also a joy to drive.

Designed and built by Pininfarina in Italy (responsible for the way current Ferraris look), it has all the style of an Italian thoroughbred at a much more realistic price.

But the real surprise is how practical the 406 Coupé is. With four adult-sized seats, a sensible boot and the underpinnings of Peugeot's 406 saloon, this is one coupé that can fit into most lifestyles without costing an arm and a leg. Servicing every 20,000 miles and 30mpg-plus fuel economy means pop star-style ownership without the bank balance to match.



WHICH MODEL DO I BUY?

Coupés come with a choice of two engines: a 2.0-litre four-cylinder with 137bhp and a 3.0-litre V6 with either 194bhp or 210bhp (post '99). A new diesel engine has just been added to the range but you won't find any on the used market just yet.

Both petrol engines come with the option of an automatic gearbox, which adds a couple of seconds to the manual's 0-60mph times of 10.4 and 7.9 seconds. Top speeds are 130 and 150mph respectively.

Equipment on the 2.0 is good, but SE trim adds electric seats and mirrors and rain-sensing wipers. Major service costs are about 50 percent higher on the 3.0, and it will cost more to repair later on.

High mileage 2.0-litre cars start at around £8500 at supermarkets but we'd go for a 98S 25k mile 2.0 SE dealer car – and haggle over the £11,000 price.

WHAT ARE THEY LIKE TO DRIVE?

The 406 Coupé looks even better in the flesh than in the photographs. And once you're behind the wheel the cabin feels vast. You also enjoy excellent visibility and a fine driving position. All the controls are logically situated while standard power steering and a gentle clutch make it a doddle to park and drive smoothly. The good ride and generous equipment levels, including air-conditioning and good quality stereo, make the 406 coupé the ideal long-distance car.

The 3.0-litre manual is an absolute stunner and something of a performance bargain, while the auto is a relaxed high-speed cruiser. The 2.0 SE is rather more sedate but in many ways nicer to drive. The trick is to change up at around 5000rpm and use the terrific ride and handling to make quick, effective progress with the minimum of fuss.

ARE THEY RELIABLE?

The running gear is as tough as old boots. It was designed to cope with leaden-footed fleet drivers doing thousands of miles a year in their company 406 saloons, and there is no reason why the same drivetrain shouldn't last just as well under the prettier bodywork of the coupé.

If anything, it is less happy on short trips, which is why we recommend the yearly going over. Modern cars don't like irregular use, and air-con needs a check for leaks, and a possible top-up, every two years.

The most common problem involves the central locking system (never leave the key in any car as some occasionally lock themselves), while coolant loss from leaking hoses or damaged radiators causes the majority of breakdowns. Investigate any sudden rise in coolant temperature immediately.

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR?

Stone-chips on the nose, headlights (£281) and windscreen (£158) are the most frequent minor blemishes. The rear of the doors often suffer from car park dings and the seat and seat belts are susceptible to scuffs and tears. Tyre wear should be even, as the 406 suspension is so strong it needs a big bang to put it out of alignment.

Check for oil drips, red power steering fluid leaks or traces of green antifreeze as this could spell long-term trouble. Also look for salt corrosion and seepage from the radiator.

Find out when the MoT is due and get an emissions certificate. Avoid early '97 3.0-litre cars with brake vibrations – an expensive job to fix – but stiff manual gearchanges due to water contamination are easier to cure.

How much to pay

98R 2.0	73k miles	£9000	Dealer
98R 3.0	54k miles	£14,500	Peugeot dealer
98S 3.0 Auto	12k miles	£14,000	Private
98S 3.0	38k miles	£12,800	Supermarket
99T 2.0 Auto	9k miles	£12,800	Supermarket
99T 3.0	22k miles	£15,500	Private
00W 2.0	11k	£15,300	Peugeot dealer



Latest V6s produce 210bhp, good for 146mph in top

Door edges
Long, frameless doors prone to car park damage

Running gear
Drivetrain from saloon is as tough as old boots

Alloy wheels
All come with alloy wheels as standard



Suspension
It takes a big thump to knock the tracking out, but check the tyre wear is even

Driver's seat
Leather and fabric can suffer from scuffing but seatbelts should be immaculate

Windscreen
Always check for chips and cracks

Foglights
Low position close to the road means lights are vulnerable to stone chipping

Performance

Engine 2.0

Layout 1998cc, 4 cyls in line, DOHC 16 valves

Max power 135bhp @ 5500 rpm

Max torque 135lb ft @ 4200 rpm

0-60mph 10.4sec (manual) 12.3sec (automatic)

Top Speed 129mph (manual) 125mph (automatic)

Fuel economy 33.6mpg (manual) 32.8mpg (automatic)

Engine 3.0

Layout 2946cc, 6 cyls in vee, quad cam 24 valves

Max power 194bhp @ 6000 rpm (210 post '99)

Max torque 201lb/ft @ 4000 rpm (210 post '99)

0-60mph 7.9sec (manual) 9.3sec (auto)

Top Speed 146mph (manual) 144mph (automatic)

Fuel economy 28.2 mpg (manual) 26.3mpg (automatic)



BUYING USED PEUGEOT 406 COUPÉ

Styling

Coupé designed and built by Pininfarina in Italy

Engine choice

406 Coupé comes with either a four or six-cylinder engine

Image

The badge says Peugeot but the looks say Ferrari



HOW MUCH WILL IT COST ME TO RUN?

Not much. With an average fuel economy of 33.6mpg for the 2.0-litre and 28.2mpg for the V6, day-to-day running costs are surprisingly affordable. Services are due every 20,000 miles and alternate between £105/£195 for the four-cylinder cars and £125/£295 for the V6s. But these are fleet oriented intervals, for private use you should have the small service every year, irrespective of mileage.

If you're looking at a high-miler, a major service including a cambelt change should be done at 80,000 miles and costs £400-£600. Insurance (Primo plc) for a 35-year-old in Milton Keynes costs £567 for the 2.0-litre with a £150 excess, and £740 for the 3.0 with a £300 excess.



Alloy wheels are standard



Gearbox

Manual shaves 2.0sec off automatic's 0-60mph times

Chrome

Instruments get special sports treatment

Airbag

Standard fit for driver and passenger

Leather

SE versions get leather wheel and seats



Rear window Back screen is set into the flying buttress

Subtle badge No clues to give away whether you're driving the 2.0 or 3.0-litre

Emissions Older cars will soon be due for an MoT, including the new emissions check

SPECIAL THANKS TO
Peugeot UK 02476 884000
Stacey's Peugeot, Bridgwater,
Somerset 01278 458363 for parts
and service information
Primo plc 01702 348261 insurance

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I LOOK AT?

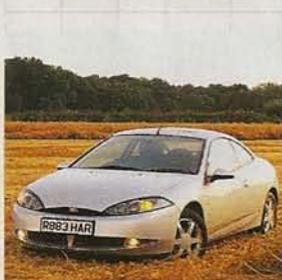
The 406 2.0 SE Coupé you see here is for sale at £15,600 with two years of its warranty remaining. At this price it comes out pretty well against the main opposition. It may cost a little more to buy but its good looks and fine handling means it will be worth more when the time comes to sell.

The Ford Cougar looks good, if you like its new-edge styling, and heavy depreciation means prices for nearly new cars are tempting. But despite the promotional efforts of Dennis Hopper, the 2.0-litre is embarrassingly slow. The V6 is better but no match for the sweet-handling 406. Prices start at £8500 for a three-year-old 2.0-litre, rising to £13,500 for a W-reg V6.

The Honda Accord Coupé offers understated grace, good interior space and profound reliability, but this US-built version has lost the flair of its British built saloon counterpart.

Hyundai has come on in leaps and bounds recently and the pretty coupé is arguably its best car yet. Attractive, cheap to run and fun to drive (if a little rough around the edges) it's an interesting alternative. Only trouble is, they don't do a V6, just a 1.6 or 2.0-litre four.

RIVALS



Ford Cougar
Depreciation from new makes it a great used buy



Honda Accord Coupé
US-built Coupé majors on interior space, reliability



Hyundai Coupé
Cheaper alternative from Korea gets four cylinders

HOW DO OWNERS RATE THEM?

Wanting a coupé, but needing space for their six-year-old to travel in comfort for several years to come, Wendy and Peter Beddall of Bewdley narrowed the choice down to the 406.

Although the 2.0-litre made sense, their past love of hot hatches meant they were prepared to take a hit on the running costs of a 3.0-litre. They found a silver 00X Coupé V6 SE for £18,500 at a local Peugeot dealer. It had covered 10,000 miles and came with a two year/50,000 miles warranty. A spot of hard bargaining and the car was theirs for £17,500.

They cover around 12,000 miles a year and are still delighted with it. Overall they get around 25mpg and plan to keep it for at least another three years.



Beddall's 406 was £17.5k

Running costs

Servicing 2.0/3.0

20,000 mile service
£105/£125
40,000 mile service
£195/£295
80,000 mile service
(with cambelt change)
£399/£597

Peugeot recommends private owners have their 406 serviced every year, whatever the mileage

Fuel (2.0/3.0)

10,000 miles
£1190/£1418

Insurance

For a 35-year-old male living in Milton Keynes

2.0 £567 with compulsory £150 excess
3.0 £740, £300 excess

Depreciation

Retained value after three years

2.0 45 percent
3.0 40 percent

Cost per mile

2.0 53.3p/mile
3.0 67.2p/mile

Original road test

Peugeot 406 Coupé
3.0 V6 SE road test
published on 7.5.97

VERDICT

The 406 Coupé is one of those rare cars that is fun to drive and beautiful to look at, but doesn't drain your wallet or cramp your style. It seats four in comfort, cruises at 100mph-plus and still returns sensible fuel economy. Find a good used 2.0-litre example and you'll be the envy of the neighbourhood.

AUTOCAR

