

CURVY COUPE

The ultimate guide to buying Peugeot 406 Coup

[1997-2003]

It offers Ferrari styling for family hatch prices – but what should you look out for on this French fancy?

Pictures: Tom Wood



Running costs

CUT-price servicing through Peugeot's Express Fit is a way to keep running costs low. There are 65 centres, and all are attached to the main dealerships. Visit www.peugeot.co.uk for a list of their locations.

SERVICE INTERVALS: Petrols need attention every 20,000 miles or two years, HDi's every 12,000 miles or two years. There are two minor services followed by a major for the HDi. Petrol models alternate.

SERVICE COST: A minor service is £140 on 2.0 and 2.2 petrols, £160 for HDi's and £255 for the V6. All major services are £300, except on the 2.0-litre petrol, which will set you back £350.

Model	Insurance group	Pence per mile	Percentage price retained after three years	CO ₂ emissions (g/km)/tax band
2.0 S	15	65.8	42	206/Band F (£190 p/yr)
2.0 SE	15	72.6	42	206/Band F (£190 p/yr)
2.2 SE	15	72.6	40	210/Band F (£190 p/yr)
3.0 V6	18	82.2	37	238/Band G (£210 p/yr)
2.2 HDi S	15	64.7	42	168/Band E (£160 p/yr)
2.2 HDi SE	15	70.2	42	168/Band E (£160 p/yr)

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Richard Dredge

LIKE finding a designer suit on the shelves at your local supermarket, the Pininfarina-styled Peugeot 406 Coupé set new standards for family car makers – and if stories on the bush telegraph are true, it's no surprise why.

Rumour has it the model was originally pencilled as part of a bid to tempt Ferrari into the cut-price supercar market. But when the designs failed to sell, the stylists passed them to Peugeot.

Never before had such a beautiful machine cost so little. And now, it's even better value, with a usable car yours for £2,500. With only 10,709 sold here, exclusivity is guaranteed – and as the 406 is also good to drive and well equipped, its beauty goes more than skin deep.

History

- Jul 1997:** Coupé arrives with a choice of 2.0 or 3.0-litre V6 petrol engines.
- Jun 1999:** Facelifted version debuts, with same engine options as before.
- Dec 1999:** Power hike for 3.0-litre V6 ups output from 194bhp to 210bhp.
- Oct 2000:** All models get brake assist, while ESP is fitted to 3.0 V6 flagship.
- Dec 2000:** Sat-nav introduced as standard on 2.0 SE and 3.0 V6 variants.
- Jun 2001:** 2.2 HDi diesel arrives.
- Mar 2002:** Bigger 2.2 petrol engine replaces the previous 2.0-litre unit.
- Jun 2002:** Black and Silver specials appear, based on 2.2. Boast half-leather trim, 16-inch alloys and better stereo.

Prices

THE classifieds are full of 1997 Coupés at around £2,500, but mileages will be well into six figures. Spend double that to get a 70,000-mile 2000-2002 model. If you want a diesel, you'll need at least £6,000. Buy one of the last HDi cars in SE trim and you can pay up to £13,000.

What to look for

IF you opt for the thirsty 3.0 V6, ensure it has leather for an easy resale. But whatever you pick, check the electrics, as faults are common. Post-02-platers have more reliable multiplex wiring. It's also worth joining the 406 Coupé Club (www.peugeot406coupe.com), as this is full of fans ready to pass on advice.

Recalls

- THESE recalls relate to all Peugeot 406 models, including the saloon and estate – call the firm on 0845 200 1234 with the chassis number for specific queries.
- Dec 1998:** Possible road wheel failure.
- Mar 1999:** Bonnet safety catch issue.
- Feb 2000:** Brake pedal assembly fault.
- Jan 2001:** Possibility that rear suspension fixing bolts may shear.
- Aug 2001:** Potential chafing of brake servo vacuum pipe.
- Apr 2002:** Possible reduction in braking assistance, plus engine problems.
- May 2003:** Water in cooling fan.

- Sept 2003:** Incorrect wiring of side airbags and seatbelt pre-tensioners.
- Feb 2006:** Fuel leak within engine.

Owner comment

KERR Nice from St Albans, Herts, is smitten – he's on his third V6 Coupé. "Aside from a few niggles, my car has been great," he said. "I use a Peugeot Express Fit outlet which charges far less than a main dealer, but gives excellent service. "The V6 is fabulous, and not as thirsty as you might think – I average around 30mpg. Yet even when it's driven hard, my 406 Coupé never misses a beat."

Our verdict

THE Peugeot 406 has already been replaced – which means prices are low. Wait a while and they will soften even further, but it will become harder to find cherished examples. Mainstream cars that look as good as the 406 Coupé are a rare thing, so now's the time to grab the opportunity to get behind the wheel of something so good-looking at such a cheap price. With a decent boot and room for four in the cabin on offer, too, you won't have to totally sacrifice practicality for style.

We like...

- Fabulous looks
- Frugal HDi powerplant
- Impressive driving dynamics
- High level of standard equipment

Watch out for...

- Ordinary cabin sourced from 406 saloon
- Thirsty V6 engine
- Unreliable electrics of early cars
- Average build quality

Alternatives

Toyota Celica

(1999 to present)

- Great handling
- Solid build quality and impressive reliability
- Strong performance
- Rev-hungry engine
- Tiny rear seats
- Lack of image



Hyundai Coupé

(1997-2002)

- Exceptional value for money
- Strong reliability
- Good to drive
- Coarse engines
- Lack of image
- Interior quality



Checklist



Switchgear

THE cabin is pretty bland and the indicator stalks in particular are poorly engineered, and may break in the hands of ham-fisted owners. Fortunately, more durable replacements are available from Peugeot dealers.



Brakes

BREMBO brakes, as fitted to diesel and V6 models, squeal badly. Regular removal of brake dust from the calipers with an airline helps reduce the noise, so try this if your car draws unwanted attention when you come to a halt.



Engine

CHECK the radiator for rust and the hoses, which can perish and crack. These can both leak coolant. Elsewhere, diesel cambelts need renewing every 96,000 miles or eight years – for petrol models, it's every 80,000 miles or eight years.



Air-con

ENSURE the air-con is working as it should, as problems are common. When you get back from a test drive with the engine up to temperature, try all the settings and check all is well whether it's set to 'hot' or 'cold'.



Suspension

IF there's a clonking noise from the front end as you corner, the most likely cause is the anti-roll bar bushes having worn out – they're a cheap and easy fix, though, so don't be put off if that's what is making the noise.