

Handsome is

... as handsome does. Tim Barnes-Clay thinks the Peugeot 508 SW Active HDi 163 might change your mind about estate cars



Mention estate cars and some people switch off immediately. They're not interested in 'ugly' family load-luggers and they won't be impressed when you tell them how your station wagon can cart an old washing machine to the tip. However, the new Peugeot 508 SW might help them change their minds.

The new offering from the French car-maker has a solidity that reflects the aspirations of elegance, robustness and high quality. At the front, the car illustrates the development of the marque's latest stylistic codes, with a single grille rendered in a 'floating' style and piercing headlamps with LED tubes visible both by day and by night. At the rear, the SW has a composite feel, with a red band that lights up when the rear lights are activated.

Inside, the simple and chic style of the fascia, the materials chosen, the meticulous finish, the durability and the technologies deployed – such as the colour 'head-up display' – add to the exclusive ambience of the passenger compartment. The seats are supportive, and the driving position is good.

On the negative side, the button count on the steering wheel could do with being reduced and it took me ages to work out where the 'head-up display' height adjustment control was. (It turned out to be in a drawer near my right knee.) My other minor criticism is that the handbrake gets in the way. It's too long and feels too close

to the gearstick. I knocked the knuckle of my little finger on it every time I put the car into reverse. Mind you, I do have big hands, so it could just be me.

Other than a few minor cabin niggles, the whole driving experience is satisfying. Under the bonnet, the 508 SW diesel, on test here, benefits from an engine offering 1997cc and a power output of 163bhp. It is positioned particularly well in its category, both in respect of fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions, but also in terms of performance and responsiveness. It's quite a heavy car, but it's still capable of reaching 0-62mph in 9.6 seconds and thundering on to 140mph, where legal.

Add a maximum braked trailer weight of 1790kg to all that pulling power and the 508 SW HDi 163 makes a good towing car. In addition, the Peugeot's kerb weight is 1681kg, putting it in 4x4 territory. Ideally, any trailer should have a laden weight of not more than 85 per cent of a car's kerb weight, so, for example, the French oil-burner could tow a typical 900kg horsebox with a normal 500kg horse in it without any problem.

In summary, the values Peugeot places on the 508's high quality of build, purity of design and efficient product performance are obvious. The comfort of the surroundings and the dynamic, practical, driving experience are all virtues that will help retain a high level of desire in the 508 for the journey ahead in all who drive it. **V**



PROS 'N' CONS

- Stylish ✓
- Quality build ✓
- Pulling power ✓
- Handbrake X

FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 140 mph
- 0-62 mph: 9.6 seconds
- Combined mpg: 56.4
- Engine: 1997cc, 4 cylinder, diesel (High-pressure Direct Injection)
- Max. power (bhp): 163 at 3750 rpm
- Max. torque (lb/ft): 255 at 2000 rpm
- CO₂: 130 g/km
- Price: £22,230 On the road