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**COTY 2018**  
**Shortlist**  
**revealed**



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# Grande Nouvelle

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## Tim Barnes-Clay

Peugeot's only UK saloon is the 508, and it competes in a segment that has been dwindling for a decade. So why bother launching a new version?

Well, Peugeot feels its executive model still has a role to play in the automotive arena. The new 508 isn't making a quiet entrance though – it's been given a 'louder' look and, technically, the car is not a proper saloon anymore. It now has a five-door coupe-like body, making it one of the most attractive vehicles the French company has made for a long time.

But can the 508 compete with the likes of Audi, VW and BMW? We took it for a drive in and around Monaco to find out.

Peugeot has shaken things up in the executive car segment. The all-new 508 is an undeniably handsome car. It was never ugly, but the fastback styling for 2018 has made this a vehicle you'll want to see parked outside your house or place of work. The 508 now has an aggressive nose with a prominent upright grille, frameless doors and LED headlights. Wheels that fill the wheel arches

complement the rakish look. All this gives the car a real kerbside presence.

Room in the front is abundant, and the 508 boasts good-sized storage for bottles in all door pockets. There's also a couple of cup holders up front, and a smaller lidded storage area sandwiched between the front seats.

But the fastback styling has come at a cost – and that is rear headroom. There's space for two adults – and there's a handy centre armrest with cup-holders, but if you're six-foot tall or over you'll feel your scalp touching the headliner. It's not just the sloping roof, though. The small door windows and limited knee room also rain on the parade.

The new Peugeot's boot has a cargo capacity of 487 litres, which is 14 litres more than the old model. What's more, packing items into the load space is easy, due to the boot lid of old being replaced by a hatchback-style tailgate.

The 508 is 4,750mm long, 1,859mm wide and 1,403mm tall. That makes it longer and wider than a 4,640mm BMW 4-series Gran Coupe. Another potential challenger, the Volkswagen Arteon, is longer at 4,862 mm, 12mm wider at 1,871mm.

It's surprisingly also taller than the 508.

You can select from Active, Allure, GT Line, GT and First Edition trims, and all come with a good spec list. That said, it's easy to see why most consumers will side-step the base-level Active cars and go for the even better kitted-out GT Line, as tested here.

Active models come with an eight-inch sat-nav screen and are fitted with fabric seats. Allure models onwards add a 10in infotainment display, ambient lighting and semi-leather seats. However, GT Line models sport a faux-leather finish on top of the dashboard and add contrasting stitching to the half-leather seats. The GT-Line also contains gentle blue mood lighting, which is particularly soothing on an evening drive.

On top of all the kit above, the GT and First Edition models get full leather seating, but whichever trim level you go for, the cabin of the new 508 is a pleasing place to be. The small i-Cockpit steering wheel, as seen in other Peugeots, gives the 508 a lively feel.

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The car also has paddles attached to the steering column, allowing you to shift gears if you don't want the automatic box to do it all for you.

In Monaco, we were handed the keys to the 508 GT Line 2.0-litre BlueHDi 160. It was a rational step for us to focus on this engine because Peugeot reckons, despite it being a diesel, it'll be one of the most popular-selling 508s in the UK. Most 508s are fitted with an eight-speed automatic transmission, as ours was. Only the cheapest 1.5-litre diesel uses a six-speed manual gearbox.

The fresh 508 is very competent and doesn't force its relatively potent ability into your face. Aside from a twitchy ride around the narrow streets of Monaco, we found the new Peugeot to be an athletic alternative to its German opponents. Once out of the congested sovereign city-state and on the motorway heading to Nice, our diesel test car was hushed, fast and planted.

The unity of the 2.0-litre engine and slick-changing automatic box makes for a dynamic, comfortable and confidence-inciting ride. The suspension is not excessively soft like the former model's was, but it doesn't jar you either. When we swung off the motorway

on to twisty coastal roads, the 508 did a great job of ironing out road imperfections.

Until a Euro NCAP rating is revealed, we can't be conclusive on how the new 508 ranks for safety. Nevertheless, autonomous emergency braking is factory-fitted across the line-up. Furthermore, active cruise control, which helps to reduce tiredness on long commutes, is built-in to the line-up's upper trim levels. So, as long as its body proves resilient in a collision, the 508 should be a safe car. Indeed, we'd place bets on it getting a five-star safety rating due to the fact Peugeot's recent models have obtained this top score.

There are several engine choices available on the new 508, comprising three diesels: a 1.5-litre 130PS, and a pair of 2.0-litres with either 160PS or 180PS. There's a couple of petrols, too, both with 1.6-litre units offering 180PS or 225PS. A plug-in hybrid will join the line-up in 2019.

The GT Line BlueHDi 160, as tested, will do a claimed combined mpg of 62.8, while emitting 120g/km of CO<sub>2</sub>. This is competitive for this size of car. While circumnavigating the roads of the French Riviera, we managed to get mpg in the mid-50s. Therefore, anticipate 50+ mpg when fully-laden and on UK soil. Zero to 62mph is achieved in 8.4 seconds, and the top speed is 143mph.

## verdict

**T**he new 508's exterior build-quality looks to be rock solid, but the same can't be said for the interior. Yes, it's refined, and the fit and finish looks great, but pull at any bits of the cabin, and some things wobble that wouldn't in a BMW, Audi or VW.

Okay, maybe we're picky, and to be fair, the 508 is so new that we can't 100% evaluate what its quality and reliability will be like. But what we can tell you is that Peugeot has a solid reputation for making durable cars.

It's competitively priced, too. £31,050 will buy you the GT Line 2.0-litre BlueHDi 160 we tested, while Audi's A5 Sportback SE 2.0 TDI 150PS will set you back £33,665. VW's Arteon in Elegance TDI 2.0 150PS DSG spec is priced at £34,905, and BMW's 4 Series Gran Coupe 420d SE costs £35,075.

Peugeot also uses diesel and petrol engines that are based on established technology, so this incarnation of the 508 should prove dependable. Extra assuredness comes in the form of a two-year/unlimited-mileage warranty. Add its capable driving dynamics to the mix, and the car seems well-matched to its target markets. All in all, there's no reason why the new 508 shouldn't be a big seller in Britain.

## data

PRICE as tested	£31,050
WARRANTY	24 months / unlimited miles
INSURANCE	--
VED BAND	G

## performance

ENGINE	1,997cc, 4-cyl, 16v turbodiesel
TRANSMISSION	8-speed auto, FWD
POWER	161bhp
TORQUE	400Nm
0-62MPH	8.4sec
TOP SPEED	143mph
COMBINED ECONOMY	62.8mpg
CO <sub>2</sub> EMISSIONS	120g/km

## dimension

LENGTH	4,750mm
WIDTH	1,859mm
HEIGHT	1,403mm
WHEELBASE	2,793mm
LOADSPACE	487 litres
FUEL TANK	55 litres