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France has brought the world many impressive things; wine, cheese, the first radial tyre to name but a few. In the late 20th Century France has also become one of the best builders of diesel engines in the world—or rather Peugeot has. Peugeot now sell over 50% of their diesel engine production to other manufacturers. Peugeot are new to the Road-Tests.com programme, and there is no better way to start than the programme than with diesel power and in particular the...

Peugeot 307 Hdi

Manufacturer: Automobiles Peugeot SA, France

Engine: 1,560cc t diesel

Gearbox: 5 Speed Manual

Retail Price: NZ\$ 36,990.00



IT NEEDS TO IMPRESS....?:

The 307 is a diesel, and New Zealand has been suffering from giant leaps in the price of fuel. The market is showing a trend towards smaller cars—of which there are plenty—but not a wholesale switch to diesel.

Why not?

That's a question that the European importers of diesel powered cars are all asking themselves. After all there are few vehicles with this level of power and fuel economy that also have high levels of interior appointment. 307 is one of them. Whilst diesel sales are increasing, they are not running out of control.

After the preamble, who does 307 need to impress? In short private buyers who are both cost conscious and environmentally aware (the benefits of diesel vs. CO exhaust) and, probably more so for Peugeot, the fleet buyer.

There are many benefits to diesel power, and, contrary to popular myth, Road User Charges are not a huge cost to carry—far from it in fact. 307 represents not only good fuel efficiency, reasonable running costs (services every 20,000 kms) but also excellent value for money.

What we can do is let you know about the small, but immensely powerful, 307 Hdi—to help you make your mind up

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WHAT IT'S UP AGAINST:

We've taken a decision here. The comparative excludes petrol powered cars—and the hideously expensive European produced diesels. The result? Simply there isn't a huge choice. The list consists of only four diesel competitors—and to be fair the two Italian origin cars have only just launched. Making the sister company Citroen (imported by Citroen NZ, not Sime Darby Automobiles, the Peugeot importer) and the German origin car the (only current) competitors in the small – medium segment. The choice of cars is:

Make	Model	+/-	Make	Model	+/-
Alfa Romeo	147 jdi	+	FIAT	Punto 1.9jtd	-
Citroen	C4 Hdi	-	Volkswagen	Golf 1.9tdi	+

The European diesel car importers are on their own—for the moment—and should be exploiting the sales opportunity. They are trying hard, but they have to convince a public passionately in love with petrol power.

Over the next 12 months there will be more and more European manufactured, or powered, diesel cars coming to these shores. The competition will increase—which is good for everyone. In the meantime, those who are shrewd and with an eye to the financial and environmental will be looking closely at 307. As we are.

THE TECHNICAL THINGS...

Peugeot has begun to take a strong lead in diesel technology. OK the common rail injection is a FIAT invention, but Peugeot has taken it and developed their own purpose built powerful motors.



Peugeot are rightly proud of their environmentally friendly, particle filtered little 1565cc motor. Power is a very respectable 80kW @ 4000 rpm, with noticeable low end torque of 240Nm @ 1750 rpm. The engine is turbo charged with computer controlled direct injection and is compliant with Euro Spec IV diesel. NZ diesel is coming close to Euro Spec IV by the end of the year, so no problems there.

Putting the power to the road is the job of the 5 speed manual transmission, driving the front wheels. The shift is smooth, almost—but not quite—seamless, with medium 'throw'.

Will 307 Hatch fit in your garage? The French are good at presentation and 307 is no exception. It looks smaller than it really is. 307 is a mere 4.21m long, 1.75 wide and 1.53m high, not quite in the super mini class (it leaves that to the sister 206 and 107). The 307 Hatch is compact and, at the same time, spacious.

Weight wise, the 307 tips the scales at 1325kg kerb weight. No GVW given but towing capacity is a maximum 1360kg braked. A highly respectable tow weight.

307 is fitted with 16" six spoke alloy wheels with 205/55R16 tyres fitted. These provide excellent grip and good handling. The full size spare is under the rear load space floor.



Suspension follows most other designs with the usual independent front, consisting of MacPherson strut with anti-roll bar. At the back a glimpse of French engineering at it's best with deformable U shaped cross member located by two arms and a hollow anti-roll bar. Most drivers, including some of the Road-Tests.com team, would be hard pushed to tell the difference between this set up and coil spring / damper suspension. The verdict is that this suspension works fine.

Over the past 20 years Peugeot has come a long way in terms of design, engineering and, in plain terms, building very attractive cars. 307 takes the heritage and shifts it up a notch higher.

How Does It Go?

Outwardly the 307Hdi has little to distinguish it from it's petrol powered sibling, which could have created some expectation issues with drivers. Yes it's a diesel, and all diesel's sound a little rough, and rattle a bit, on start up. Nothing wrong with that—besides on the inside you don't hear the noise very much.

The Road-Tests.com team bumbled off to the first power test. At the bottom of the long uphill drag of an on ramp to Auckland's Northern Motorway, we paused, waited, then simply put foot to floor and anticipated the results. No disappointment here. The diesel simply kicked in, put down it's power and off we shot. Rapidly. Rapid enough to be at the 100kph limit around 6/10ths of the way up the slope. The driver having to keep careful eye on the free revving little motor to prevent exceeding the magic red line (4750rpm). That test was fun and so we set off to repeat the test with four up. No problem. Same fun, slightly slower—but we are talking around 10metres longer to hit the mark. The outcome? This 1565cc turbo diesel packs a punch when it needs to.

Standing start test? Again the 307 can spring surprises. Most motorist's perception is that small equals slow—unless it has GTi plastered all over it—not in this case. The low end torque launches the 307 Hdi off the line with spirit and verve. The rest is up to you to make sure that you don't lose your license. The 307 shows an unhealthy disregard for speed limits and has the capability to go well in excess of 150kph—not, of course, that we did those kind of speeds on the open road.

Steering is accurate. The car is light, so steering should be responsive and precise. It is. Handling with a level of precision that reflects it's rally heritage. The 307 goes exactly where you point it, so if you have a 'moment' rest assured it will be you not the car that created it. Power steering is well balanced; not light, but not over sensitive.

On the 'country road' test 307 demonstrated a liking for understeer, at speed, and by that we mean 'push on' speed. Understeer notwithstanding, the stability of the 307 is good. Little to no body roll, no sudden lurches when changing direction, front end dive minimised under heavy braking. All round the Road-Tests.com team were impressed. Even the Teen Testers were impressed by the comfort and stability.

So 307 can move quickly, even through the twisty bits, handles very well and has excellent stability. How well does it stop? Very well.



Front end is ventilated disc with solid rear discs. Fade is non-existent, heat is whipped away from the brakes keeping them cool and working well—no matter how hard we tried.

So “How does it go?”.

The biggest feature that struck the Road-Tests.com team was the flexibility and power of the engine—and how well the Peugeot engineers have match chassis, suspension and steering to it. Handling is excellent, ride comfort very good. In short; we are impressed.

WHAT CAN I TAKE IN IT?

Peugeot has engineered some interesting little cubbyholes and carry capacity into what is essentially a small – medium sized hatch. Which gives it some quite surprising carry capacity.



Peugeot state boot volume, with parcel shelf in place, as 341 L. Not bad for a car this size. More space becomes available as the rear seats fold forward. The verdict from female members of the Road-Tests.com team on folding the seats flat was simply the best they had come across in a car this size. The rear seat base lifts forward and tilts over, allowing the seat backs to flop down and create a flat load space. One of the team moved two 6’ tall plants in the space—but didn’t take the photo’s to prove it. Apologies to Peugeot, as this really would have shown the carry capacity of the boot space.

As always, though, the Road-Tests.com team carried out the standard load space tests. Golf clubs? Tick—two sets, but with the woods out and laid flat along the top, just. Family shopping for four? Tick. Kit bags and school gear? Tick.

Access to the load space is easy, through the tailgate. The electromagnetic lock activated either by the remote key, or with the hidden handle above the rear registration plate. Peugeot include netting for holding items in place—the net can either go against the rear seat or flat on the floor. A couple of side bins in the back take wine bottles—a must for the French.

Ingenuity is the name of the game for interior storage. Starting with the tray under the passenger seat. Cunningly concealed, but with large volume storage—good for valuables and the like. The usual glove box is in the usual place, ‘drop-in’ bins sit on the top of the dashboard. Doors have bins—with drinks holders incorporated—both front and rear. The centre dash console has a tray under the sound system and one at the bottom of the unit. The now standard sunglasses holder sits in the roof light unit. A neat little bin sits to the right and down from the steering wheel. Handily sized for things like wallets, mobile phones etc. and hidden from prying eyes too.

Instead of the centre arm rest there are bins (small) immediately behind the hand brake. The rear seat passengers get a large pull down arm rest, that opens to provide a tray and drink holders. Pockets are incorporated into the back of the front seats to help out.

No doubt about it, the Peugeot design team have done very well in providing so many storage and carry spaces in a vehicle of this size.

WHAT'S THE INSIDE LIKE?



The inside of the 307 is bright and inviting—even though the interior décor is primarily grey. The doors are effortless to open, well balanced and comparatively lightweight. Enter the car, sit in the cloth seats and make yourself at home.

For a small car there is a lot of ambient light, courtesy of the quite large windows. The variable tone grey trim, complete with polished metal highlights, provide an almost

luxury look and feel to the interior.

Front seats are manually adjusted, and have individual armrests on the inside. No more sharing the centre console rests—now you've got your own! Usual adjustments apply: fore/aft, up/down, tilt and lumbar—driver only. Front seats are comfortable, adjustment—despite being lever operated—gets down to small increments making finding that optimum seat position quite easy. Good news for fleet operators.

Rear seats are equally as comfortable as the front. Yes the seat base is lightweight, but it doesn't detract from the comfort. The middle, 'fifth' seat is for little people only. Adults found it way too cramped for any length of time in the back; let's not forget that this is a compact car. The back seats passed the Teen tests with ease. All five seats have three point seat belts fitted and adjustable head restraints.

The steering wheel is leather, adjustment is manual. The big boss with the proud Peugeot Lion can't be missed—which is more than can be said for the horn. It's not loud. The sound system remote control sits on a large stalk in the lower right quadrant of the wheel. The other stalks manage the lights and wipers—front and rear. Auto is available on the wiper system. Set it and leave is our advice—it works very well. Auto lights can be set through the on-board computer.



The instrument pod is another funky piece of work. The two dial – two gauge layout is fairly standard. The dials and gauges are chrome surrounded. The big display panel in the centre tells you to STOP before you start—to allow the glow plugs to work. The amount of information from this little panel is extensive, and all useful.

The panel dimmer is to the left, the trip reset to the right. And on the end of the wiper stalk! Huh? Well the on board trip computer and display is in the top centre of the dash. The button on the end of the wiper stalk controls the selection of trip/fuel economy read outs—there are three! This display is also the one you use to set the sound system up and the personal preferences on the vehicle; lights etc.



The centre dash console is almost a work of art in itself. Gallic design and practicality abound here. Up top the sound/computer/time display. Then the metal surrounded unit itself. The top row of indicators is seat belt and locks, divided by the Hazard Warning Light button—triangular in shape and bright red. Nice. Air vents come next, then the sound system. Not only a sound system with single CD player, but the control centre for the on-board computer. The system provides good, above average sound. Setting it up takes time so be prepared—in fact setting the car to your personal preferences takes a while so don't do it on the move or at traffic lights.

Then the air-con unit. Split temperature controls for the front seat occupants, direction selection by button, and fan speed either auto or manual. The air con provides clean cold air—down to 15° C—and works effectively.

All-round electric windows are standard—auto down and up for front only, and yes, Teen Tested for safety. External mirrors are electric and the interior is electrochrome.

The usual reverse up the 60m right-of-way test was undertaken. 307 has quite a high rear, comparatively, but with rear wiper—useful in Auckland in May this year—visibility is good. The side mirrors, although slim, provide good rearward vision. 307 passed the test with flying colours. Parking is equally uncomplicated.

307 is efficient, elegant, typically Gallic in presentation and provides comfort and pleasure when sitting in it—either front or back. The level of electronic gizmo's is high for the price point, and, more to the point, functional and useful in this expensive fuel era. Good reason to take the 307 Hdi for a wee test.

AND THE STYLING/DESIGN?



Anyone remember the “blunt front” Peugeots that were rife from the mid-1960's through to the early 1980's? The 504 for example. No? Not a surprise. The designs were not the most advanced. The cars were reliable and those that bought them, loved them.

Since then, Peugeot has got it's design act together—with a vengeance.

Starting with the legendary 205, the designs have simply become modern, imaginative and very, very attractive. The Road-Tests.com team feels that the 307 has a certain sexiness about it; something to do with lights, angles, and the big radiator intake.



The flowing lines, angular lights, which from the front look like feline eyes, soft edges to the angles, all add up to a very good looking car. This version of 307 is updated from an original that is about 4 years old!

The vanity mirrors are large and lit. Internal ergonomics are good; controls are easy to hand, pedals are comfortable, even in the relatively small space they have been given and there is room enough for a fourth pedal foot rest. Despite the severe angle of the windscreen, banging heads on the way in (and out) was unheard of.

307. A car that will take you places in more than one sense.

HOW IT STACKS UP FOR...SAFETY

European NCAP standards (and 307 rates 4.5 stars) are high. Peugeot doesn't have the luxury—or should that be hassle—of competing in the US market, so they have to meet higher safety standards without importing technology from US factories.

Nearly all the European cars we've had through our programme have come with a high level of safety as standard. Peugeot is no exception.

Airbags: Just pause for a moment and recall that 307 is a small – medium hatch. No less than 6 air bags are fitted; driver and passenger front, and these are the 'smart' bags which inflate according to the severity of the impact and in stages. There are also the side and full length curtain bags. 6 air bags. Worth bearing in mind when some larger cars only have two!

Front seats also have pyrotechnic seat belt tensioners and anti-submarine bases. The steering column automatically moves away from the driver in the event of an accident—as do the pedals.

Brakes; Abs is standard, supported by Electronic Brake Force Distribution (EBFD). There is also EBA, in this case Emergency Brake Assist and ESP (Electronic Stability Programme). And if that isn't enough, ASR Traction Control is also built into the 307. All the above combine to keep the 307 stable and balanced under extreme braking conditions. In short the “gizmo's” are designed to keep you out of trouble as best they can.

307 comes with a specifically designed safety cell, incorporating side impact beams and padding and deformable, energy dissipating impact zones. All very impressive.

In the back the seats have force limiting seatbelts (main seats only) and there are child seat anchor points in the rear.

Now one thing we really liked was the ability of the 307 to automatically activate the Hazard Warning Lights under emergency braking conditions. The Road-Tests.com team, once we worked out what was happening, did the usual—plenty of testing. And it worked.

The list appears endless, and Road-Tests.com is happy that it is.

For a car that is this compact, there is a high number of safety features—as standard. 307 has a lot going for it; fuel efficiency, design and most of all a high level of innovative and important safety features.



Nuances, Nit-Picks & Necessities:

THOSE LITTLE THINGS WE THOUGHT WE'D THROW IN...

- The compact 307 has a 60 litre tank. On the basis of the indicated fuel consumption of 6.6L / 100kms you're good for a fraction over 900 kms of motoring. About 400 km more than the petrol version. Makes you think doesn't it?

WE LIKED...

The front seat individual arm rests. They are a nice touch.

The instrument pod telling you to STOP. Why? Because it'll save you money and it isn't just confined to the glow plugs. The STOP covers handbrake and other items too.

The on-board computer. You can set the car up to how you want it—or for fleet use, leave the default settings.

The Hazard Warning Lights activating automatically. So simple, yet such a huge boon to driver (and passenger) safety.

The ingenuity of the interior cubbyholes.

The rear seat fold down design. Simple, functional and above all operable by even the most petite of the Road-Tests.com team. Goes a long way that.

Did we say the glove box was air conditioned? No, well it is, so you can keep those drinks cool as well.

The accessory power outlets in the front and rear—for once they are conveniently sited.

WE DIDN'T LIKE...

The remote sound system controls. Not so sensitive and a bit on the complicated side.

The weak horn. Not sure why the horn is so quiet, especially as most French cities are a cacophony of noise as horns are sounded regularly.

The drink bottle holders—they are not that user friendly and don't take 750ml bottles.

WILL IT BE PARKED IN THE ROAD-TESTS.COM GARAGE?

Not often that a first up evaluation from a manufacturer gets into the Garage—in fact never before. And, sadly for Peugeot, the 307 hasn't broken the barrier. Make no bones about it, the 307 won over even the most cynical of the Road-Tests.com team, but voting wasn't unanimous—and that's our rule everyone must agree.

One thing we will say is that the 307 is parked in the drive.

And we await the 407 with excitement.

How We Conduct Road-Test.Com Tests...

In a phrase...with tenacity and time. The tenacity comes with our recognition that we go after the small things, as well as the large. Things that are understandably overlooked when buying for oneself but do affect the fleet-owner manager juggling the needs of multiple drivers. Things such as ease of adjustment, interior storage, etc. Time, is the time we are given to do that. We have the vehicles we test for at least a week—not a day or a drive round the block! And, yes, that does give us time to test the vehicle under most conditions and with various drivers. So, we do a little bit more, for a little longer. And you get the benefit.