2018 Peugeot 308 1.2 Allure hatchback – Road Test

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David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) test-drives Peugeot's 2018 model year 308 five door hatchback...

The Peugeot 308 range of C-segment (lower medium) five door hatchbacks and SW estates arrived in the UK for first deliveries in September 2017 and heralded in a range of minor styling changes, even more fuel-efficient petrol engines and better infotainment and connectivity functions.

They now all have the Peugeot i-Cockpit taken from the award winning 3008 SUV with its 9.7-inch touchscreen, connected 3D navigation with TomTom live updates and voice

recognition for radio, navigation and telephone functions. The upgraded infotainment function includes MirrorLink, Apply CarPlay and Android Auto.

Prices for the five door hatchbacks start at £18,570 for the 1.2 PureTech 110 hp model and range through to £28,590 for the GTi 1.6 turbo petrol 270 hp version. The SW estates start at £19,520 for the 1.2 PureTech 110 hp and rise to £28,240 for the GT 2.0 litre BlueHDi 180 hp turbodiesel with the new eight speed automatic gearbox.

Specification levels for the hatchback are Active, Allure, GT Line, GT and GTi. The SW estates have the same levels except there is no GTi version. As is usual with most manufacturers these days there is a wide range of extra cost options and personalisation packs and one item most customers will need to consider is the Drive Assist Pack which includes automatic emergency braking and costs from an extra £400 – which should be fitted as standard.

When it comes to the choice of engines there are the award winning 1.2 litre PureTech three cylinder turbo units with either 110 or 131 hp and the 1.6 THP four cylinder turbo petrol 205 and 272 hp units. For diesel customers there are the 1.6 litre BlueHDi 99, 120 hp and 2.0 litre 150 and 177 hp units. All have Stop/Start function as standard.

Arriving shortly is a new 1.5 litre BlueHDi 130 hp, four cylinder turbodiesel unit which will replace the 1.6 litre units in due course. The 2018 Peugeot 308 is the first model to have this new PSA Peugeot-Citroen Group engine which has CO2 emissions of only 96 g/km.

There is no doubt that the Peugeot 308’s sales segment has taken a bit of a downturn with the public switching their desires to the fast growing mid-sized SUV segment and the same applies to smaller B-segment Supermini sized class of vehicles where compact SUVs are also in demand. Still the competition in lower medium sector of hatchbacks remains strong with the recent introduction of the new VW Golf combined with the Ford Focus, SEAT Leon, Vauxhall Astra, Toyota Auris, Nissan Pulsar, Kia Cee’d, Hyundai i30, Renault Megane, Honda Civic and in particular my choice – the very roomy, well equipped, comfortable and

capable Skoda Octavia.



In its favour the Peugeot 308 has mild exterior styling changes that include a smart new and less deep front grille flanked by sleek lights, and there are revised front and rear bumpers. The new rear end looks on the chunky or stubby side but it does allow easy access to a large rear boot giving 470 litres (16.60 cu.ft) of luggage space and up to 1,309 litres (46.23 cu.ft) with the 60/40 split rear seat backs folded down. The 308's overall length is 4,253 mm (13.95 ft). However, having this large boot does detract from the leg space on offer for rear seat passengers. With the front seats moved back there is very limited rear seat legroom.

Up front inside the 308 the new i-Cockpit retains the twin area design with a good quality dashboard trimmed with soft-feel coverings. The fascia is minimalist with not many controls and switches, making it look very uncluttered. The downside is that many of the most used controls have to be done via the touchscreen and whilst there are shortcut buttons either side of the screen you still need to mess about to adjust the most used functions such as the heating, ventilation and air-con control functions. This is frustrating and errs on the side of not being totally road-safe when driving (Kim adds… I feel this is dangerous too…). There is the usual small diameter steering wheel with the instruments viewed over the top of the wheel which, being tall, I like but I gather shorter drivers have issues with seeing the dials. The seats are generally comfortable and supportive but being tall it does take some adjustment to get the steering wheel adjustment and position and height of the driver's seat in the most comfortable position. Overall the interior retains its high class visual appeal.

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There has been a general upgrading of specification throughout the range and my test drive model, the likely best-selling 1.2 litre PureTech 130 hp turbo petrol with Allure specification, would be my choice, especially as it was combined with the six speed automatic gearbox. The on-the-road price is a reasonable £21,640 but, and there always is a but these days with new cars, there was a long list of extra cost options fitted. These included the Driver Sport Pack at £370, Driver Assist Pack at £500, Keyless Entry with Stop/Start button at £350, City Park with Blind Spot monitoring at £400, larger 18-inch alloys at £300 and the Visio 180-degree reversing camera at another £200, so the final price added up to a hefty £23,760.

By not delving into the options list the Allure spec level is still well equipped and includes electric parking brake with hill-hold function, front and rear parking sensors, electric folding door mirrors, electric front and rear windows, leather effect and cloth upholstery, sports style front seats with longer cushion bases, panoramic glass roof, 17-inch alloy wheels, halogen foglights and, carried forward from the standard spec level, are such items as air-con, alarm, sat-nav, automatic lights and wipers, the enhanced infotainment and

connectivity functions and the 9.7-inch touchscreen.

That's the styling and specification packages, now for what really counts – the engine and auto gearbox. The PSA Group's new technology PureTech engines are recipients of numerous Engine of the Year awards. In this particular version the 1.2 litre, three-cylinder turbo petrol unit is the pick of the bunch. It is a real joy to drive, it's responsive, it's quiet and it's fuel-frugal even with the auto gearbox. With 131 hp and more importantly 230 Nm (170 lb.ft) of torque available from 1,750 rpm, remember this is a petrol unit – not a high-torque diesel, the top speed is 124 mph and zero to 62 mph takes 9.8 seconds. I've driven this engine in other Peugeot/Citroën models and for me it always comes out the best option and the one I always end up recommending. The added bonus this time around is that it was mated with the six-speed smooth-changing automatic gearbox and that just made the driving experience even better. No matter whether it was pottering around town in stop-start traffic, driving on winding country roads or accelerating and cruising on motorways, this combination is the real-deal. Officially the Combined Cycle fuel consumption is 57.6 mpg but my test driving returned 42.2 mpg which normally I would say, compared to the official figure, was not good enough. However for real life driving and driving refinement with the auto box it's a figure I could live with and not feel short-changed. With CO2 emissions of 112 g/km the VED road tax cost is £160 First Year rate and then £140 after that. The growing number of company car drivers choosing petrol over diesel powered models will not find the 21% Benefit-in-Kind tax rate too off-putting. The manual version with 107 g/km has a BiK tax rate of 20%. Insurance is Group 17E.

As for overall ride comfort it was generally good although my test car had the larger 18-inch wheels which I wouldn't recommend. With their thin strip of rubber low profile tyres they couldn't absorb impacts from poor tarmac surfaces or potholes. On smoother roads they were ok but the ride felt jittery at times. Stick with the 17-inch wheels and their higher profile tyres is my advice. The handling was sure-footed and cornering predictable. The small diameter steering wheel isn't to everybody's choice but I liked it and it does sharpen up steering responses and gave accurate steering lines through corners, and it helps easy parking in tight spaces.

VERDICT

Overall perhaps the latest Peugeot 308 hatchback overall is not the most accomplished or roomiest car in its sector, but the engine and gearbox combination certainly is as good as it gets and that has to be a major consideration for today's customers.

For: Brilliantly responsive petrol engine and automatic gearbox combination which is smooth, responsive and can be swift when driving dictates, improved infotainment and connectivity functions, reasonably good equipment level, classy front interior design, large boot, updated smart exterior styling, comfortable ride most of the time.

Against: Restricted rear seat legroom for a family car, too many most-used controls have to be operated via the touchscreen, larger optional 18-inch wheels harm the ride comfort over poorer road surfaces, automatic emergency braking should be standard fit these days – not an extra cost option.



Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

2018 Peugeot 308 Allure 1.2 PureTech 130 automatic, five door hatchback.

Price: £21,640 (£23,760 as tested with options fitted).

Engine/transmission: 1.2 litre, three cylinder, direct injection turbocharged petrol 131 hp, 230 Nm (170 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm, six speed automatic.

Performance: 124 mph, 0–62mph 9.8 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 57.6 mpg (42.2 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 112 g/km, VED road tax £160/£140, BiK company car tax 21%.

Insurance Group: 17E.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,253 mm (13.95 ft), W 1,804 mm (5.92 ft), H 1,457 mm (4.78 ft), boot/load space 470–1,309 litres (470–46.23 cu.ft).

Warranty: Three years/unlimited mileage.