Peugeot Expert LWB 180 Professional Plus – Van Road Test

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Robin Roberts test drives a large and thoroughly versatile load carrier…

Sometimes, it's what you cannot see very easily which really impresses about a new vehicle, such as the Peugeot Expert LWB Professional Plus.

This award-winning big van comes with a very good pedigree and blends utter practicality with useful performance.

It was launched and went on sale in 2016 but its popularity and good design has won awards and kept it up to date.

There are close to fifty versions of the Peugeot Expert in three essential trim versions as well as platform cab and crew-van in standard and longer wheelbases.

Its diesel only engines get six speed manual or automatic transmission and power runs from 95, 120, 150 up to 180 hp, so there really is something for everyone.

Our test model was the more powerful in a longer wheelbase and with highest trim level, ideal for long mileage and high capacity use. The Expert Long is the biggest in the range and appeared in 2017.

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The powertrain was a delight with good pulling power from low revs, strong delivery mid-range and an utterly composed character on country or dual carriageways.

It was generally a quiet engine, the changes were very smooth up or down the box and it was very economical due to its flexibility and gearing.

I liked the feel from the brakes underfoot and the parking brake securely held it on our regular test slope even when heavily loaded. The steering was also light and easy but it’s a big van to turn around and you need room to manoeuvre.

But this is where our test van’s secret weapon came in very handy, a reversing camera which let you inch up to anything. Now reversing cameras have been a regular feature or option on cars for several years but I always maintained it would be even better when offered on a van where the solid sides and door mirrors can hide an obstacle or person at the rear, and some pedestrians will cross behind a reversing van as we know.

The Expert’s camera image was integrated into the windscreen mounted mirror and it really was clear and in my book a definite must-have. It’s standard on the Professional Plus but I believe should be fitted across the range.

The van’s other features included park assist, automatic lights and wipers together with folding heated door mirrors but it also came with optional air conditioning, advanced navigation, lane departure alert and window bulkhead which added £1,340 to the price.

Behind the wheel the instruments' display was big and clear, with lots of sensibly placed warning lights, the usual stalk and wheel mounted controls and a very effective a/c system in the wide high cabin.

It would take three abreast with adequate legroom and it boasted a lot of oddments space as you might expect in a workhorse van.

Vision was very good with low waistline, a deep windscreen, big wipers and big mirrors, and that excellent camera of course.

The ride quality was comfortable and you could hear it coping with the road surface as it smoothed out the bumps and it handled safely and predictably. It didn't seem too troubled by cross winds either.

Twin back doors opened very wide to reveal a knee-high floor and access was eased by having twin side sliders but on our test van we managed to somehow detach one from its upper runner and had to coax it back on track, which to us seemed very shallow for the carrier wheel.

Capacity was very good, it could be accessed from back or either side and there were a few tie down hooks and holes to assist.

It was good to drive over longer distances as well as urban duties and our average fuel consumption was approximately 45 mpg, which was good considering how hard it was worked at times. Rising engine noise was sometimes noticed, the road rumbles were ever present.

VERDICT

While it may not have the sharper handling of some rivals, its practicality and comfort far outreaches its shortcomings, and that camera system is a must-to-have.

For: Powertrain, comfort, room, visibility, handling, practicality.

Against: Noise, turning circle, sliding door issue (see text).

WHEELS-ALIVE FAST FACTS

Peugeot Expert LWB 180 Professional Plus

Price: £28,015 (OTR £34,573)

Mechanical: 177 hp four cyl 1,997cc BlueHDi, 6 speed auto

Max Speed: 106 mph

0–62 mph: 10sec

Combined MPG: 45

Insurance Group: 39E

CO2 emissions: 163 g/km

Warranty: Thee years/100,000 miles

Sizes: L 5.31 m (17.42 ft), W 2.21 m (7.25 ft), H 1.90 m (6.23 ft), Long Wheel Base 3.27 m (10.73 ft)

Loadspace: 6,600 litres (233 cu.ft)

Payload: 1,311 kg (2,890 lb)

Kerb: 1,689 kg (3,724 ft)