

PEUGEOT 504

Rarely does a motoring journalist return fully satisfied from the test of a new car. Admittedly, he may have been well fed by the manufacturer who introduced the new model, but, no, the test of that "X707" was not really up to the standard of the meal and PR reception. "Perhaps they can do better next time," you say. "After all, thousands of engineers are paid to make a good seat, a car brake or handle well, and there is still hope, even if too often too many manufacturers or engineers are still making the same mistakes, to the point that an average good motorist wonders sometimes if the people behind the project of a new car have ever driven or even ridden in it."

The Peugeot 504, however, can be rated with such general excellence in the categories of road handling, general performance, braking, steering, gearbox, seats, space, comfort and looks, that I am pleased to report this was one of the very few times I have returned from a test fully satisfied. I am particularly glad to write these lines because I have never been very excited about Peugeot products. They have always been good ones, strong and durable, but there was not enough excitement for my taste as a sports-motoring journalist. The new 504, while not being absolutely outstanding in all the above departments, is nevertheless a vast departure from Peugeot tradition for the "enthusiast-driver."

Smartly designed by Pininfarina, the 504 is a four-door genuine sedan with a wheelbase of 107.7 inches and overall length of 177 inches. A well-appointed and well-finished car, it can accommodate five persons — four in full comfort, thanks to a wide armrest separating the two back passengers. Seats, back and front, are intelligently designed to give

With one model change, the French traditionalist not only comes out of the past, but leaves most of its competitors behind.



By Bernard Cahier

excellent back and lateral support with a good deal of comfort. They are available with real leather or cloth. Both front seats are fully reclining and have unusual built-in, adjustable headrests which not only add to their comfort, but to their safety as well.

Driving position and visibility are both very good, but aesthetics of the dash are lacking. Peugeot personnel call the rather unattractive padded steering wheel the "chocolate bar," and the dash is a sort of "modern bare," with a shiny plastic chrome strip being somewhat annoying when the sun is just right.

The key to the 504's impressive performance is the new 1796cc (28.7 cubic inch) fuel-injected, four-cylinder, aluminum-head engine that develops 103 hp at 5600 rpm. It is set at 45° in the engine compartment. A hemispherical head,

carbureted version is also available. It develops 87 hp at 5500 rpm. Except at maximum rpm, the car is quiet, with low road noises and a near absence of wind noises. Performance is on the lively side, and the injected version has no trouble in surpassing its advertised top speed of 105 mph. In fact, I achieved 107 mph with a 0 to 60 figure of just under twelve seconds, and a quarter-mile time of less than eighteen seconds. The engine is remarkably flexible and well balanced, and power comes on quickly and cleanly. Using the engine up to maximum rpm, first gear will go to 30 mph, second to 55 and third to 75.

Road handling is superb — among the very best in its field — all attributable to completely independent suspension. The 504 is just as much at home on winding roads as it is on fast bends, and at high speed it has fine stability with very healthy reactions to lateral winds for a car of 2645 pounds.

Power disc brakes on all four wheels (with load activated braking compensator) are particularly well balanced and well modulated, and direct rack and pinion steering is very smooth, with a turning radius of 35.7 feet giving the 504 delightful docility around town.

The all-synchronized four-speed column shift is very quick and positive, and is definitely one of the best of those located in this position. An automatic is also available.

Sold at the right price between a cheap two-liter and an expensive one, the 504 becomes a welcome newcomer that can be taken as a standard by many more manufacturers. It is a car in which you feel at home immediately, and which gives you full confidence plus a great amount of driving pleasure on any type of road.

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