

M6

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AUTOCAR

Peugeot's new 307 vs Focus vs Golf



We name
Britain's
best hatch



Family scrap

SHOOTOUT PEUGEOT 307 GLX vs FORD FOCUS 2.0 vs VW GOLF GTi

The new Peugeot 307 fancies it can offer radical solutions to the family motorist, so are its rivals well beaten? Colin Goodwin decides

When a new Peugeot arrives and scoops class honours, it tends to stay put on the throne. When the 306 appeared in 1993 it immediately became our class favourite. It took a car as brilliant as the Ford Focus to knock it off the top spot, and that didn't happen until 1998. Now the Peugeot 306 is being replaced by the 307 and the question must be: is it the pick of its class, like its predecessor was for five years, and if so, will it enjoy a lengthy reign?

To find out, we hit the road with a 2.0-litre Peugeot 307 in GLX spec; a Ford Focus 2.0-litre Zetec; and a VW Golf fitted with a 2.0-litre eight-valve engine and labelled 'GTi' in the sales brochure, though ours wears no such badge.

All are in five-door form and fitted with optional kit. The Golf, at £15,425, adds only a £245 paint option, whereas the £14,960 Peugeot has metallic paint, a 'visibility pack', leather and electric rear windows. The Focus also has metallic paint, leather seat facings, an uprated CD player, sunroof, side airbags and an alarm, boosting its price

from £14,495 to £16,545.

A few years ago a hatchback with 138bhp under its bonnet would have been badged a GTi, not a GLX; so would one that could accelerate to 60mph in a claimed 9.7sec and reach 127mph. The Focus has 128bhp which, though not as impressive as the Peugeot's output, is vastly superior to the Golf's 115bhp, and strong enough to pull the Ford to 60mph in only 9.0sec – a tribute to its lighter weight.

Why VW thought of attaching the GTi badge to a model so underwhelming that it does 0-60mph in 10.5sec must remain a mystery.

From the inside the new Peugeot feels like a mini-MPV that has sunk on its springs. The windscreen base is further away from you than it is in a conventional hatchback; switch on the clap-hands windscreen wipers and it feels even more the junior people carrier. Although the 307 is actually taller and longer than

its rivals, it doesn't feel much bigger inside, however. Nor is rear legroom noticeably superior, but the Peugeot can claim more headroom than the others.

The 307 GLX's interior scores a couple of aesthetic demerits as well: the fake-wood trim is pretty ghastly but fortunately absent in other versions; and the optional leather is also rather tacky. It covers seats that feel like park benches; and not in the

hard-but-good-for-the-spine way, either. Not what you want in a car that has a jiggly ride, even on motorways.

That's the confusing thing about this version of the 307.

Everything about it, from its badge to the wood and

leather, says staid and middle-aged, while the tendency of its performance and dynamics is to offer a mildly youthful urge.

The eccentric GTi label apart, the Golf feels exactly what it is, the cooking version of the range. The engine is by far its least impressive feature. Not only is it underpowered, but

“From the inside, the Peugeot feels like a mini-MPV that has sunk on its springs”



307 feels like a mini-MPV to drive



Focus has unbelievably good chassis



Golf fails to deliver its GTi promise



Peugeot looks good but disappoints; flexible Focus is best of the three; anaemic Golf is let down by engine

FACTFILE

PEUGEOT 307 2.0 GLX

FORD FOCUS 2.0 ZETEC

OUR
CHOICE

GOLF GTi 2.0

HOW MUCH?

Price	£14,960	£14,495	£15,425
On sale in UK	June	Now	Now

HOW FAST?

0-60mph	9.7sec	9.0sec	10.5sec
Top speed	127mph	125mph	121mph

HOW THIRSTY?

Urban	25.9mpg	24.4mpg	25.4mpg
Extra urban	45.6mpg	39.8mpg	44.8mpg
Combined	35.8mpg	32.5mpg	34.9mpg

HOW BIG?

Length	4202mm	4152mm	4149mm
Width	1730mm	1702mm	1735mm
Height	1510mm	1430mm	1439mm
Wheelbase	2608mm	2615mm	2511mm
Weight	1219kg	1146kg	1194kg

ENGINE

Layout	4 cyls in line, 1997cc	4 cyls in line, 1988cc	4 cyls in line, 1984cc
Max power	138bhp at 6000rpm	128bhp at 5500rpm	115bhp at 5200rpm
Max torque	140lb ft at 5500rpm	131lb ft at 4500rpm	125lb ft at 2400
Installation	Front, transverse, front-wheel drive	Front, transverse, front-wheel drive	Front, transverse, front-wheel drive
Ignition and fuel	SAGEM BBC 2.2 ignition Magneti-Marelli fuel injection	Ford electronic ignition, sequential fuel injection	Electronic ignition, sequential fuel injection

GEARBOX

Type	5-speed manual	5-speed manual	5-speed manual
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SUSPENSION

Front	MacPherson struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar	MacPherson struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar	MacPherson struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar
Rear	Torsion beam, coil springs, anti-roll bar	Multi-link, coil springs, anti-roll bar	Torsion beam, coil springs, anti-roll bar

STEERING

Type	Rack and pinion, power assisted	Rack and pinion, power assisted	Rack and pinion, power assisted
Lock to lock	2.8	2.9	3.0

BRAKES

Front	283mm ventilated discs	258mm ventilated discs	288mm ventilated discs
Rear	247mm discs	258mm discs	232mm discs

WHEELS AND TYRES

Size	6.5Jx16in, alloy	6Jx17in, alloy	6Jx15in, alloy
Tyres	205/55 VR16 Goodyear	195/55 VR15 Goodyear Eagle NCT5	195/65 VR15 Continental Contisport

VERDICT

Claims to offer radical new solutions for its class. It doesn't.	Inspiring all-rounder. Excellent blend of comfort and sportiness.	Very well made, comfortable, but act is ruined by ancient 8v engine.
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