
Peugeot 408 driving report: fine-tuning for the fastback Frenchman

Von Frank Wald

Peugeot has given its 408 a facelift. And in fact, the term says it all. Because apart from the usual touch-ups at the front and rear, the 4.69 meter long fastback saloon has hardly changed at all. And why should it, as it still cuts a fine figure, even if it doesn't necessarily have the "wow effect" that Peugeot's marketing lyricists attach to it. However, the sleek Frenchman with its sporty, elegant shape and slightly higher ground clearance is still a stand-out in the SUV-influenced compact segment.

The front in particular shows what Peugeot means by model care. The previous long LED strips, which gave the car a kind of vampire bite, have disappeared. Instead, there is now a three-claw light signature in the redesigned grille, while the main headlights have been positioned lower in the bumper and almost disappear when switched off. At the rear, the light theme is repeated in the familiar claw design. The 408 is also the brand's first model to feature not only an illuminated brand logo at the front, but also illuminated Peugeot lettering at the rear. Another new feature is the "Flare Green" metallic paint finish, which alternates between green and yellow depending on the incidence of light and costs nothing extra.

On the other hand, almost nothing has changed on the side line and the bodywork itself, which also explains why the intervention appears smaller from the outside than it sounds in press documents. Peugeot has spared itself expensive changes to the bodywork and instead opted for cosmetic corrections. This is understandable, as the silhouette with its flat roofline, raised waistline and slightly higher ground clearance is still sufficiently distinctive four years after its market launch to ensure that it doesn't get lost among the Tiguan and its peers in the C-segment. And this is still the real strength of this car. The 408 is neither a classic saloon nor a real estate car, not an SUV and also not a coupé in the strict sense. It is a fastback with a crossover feel for all those who want to sit higher than in a flat saloon, but don't want to order a rolling high seat.

In the interior, Peugeot follows the same principle as on the outside: don't reinvent, but polish up. The familiar i-Cockpit remains, i.e. the small, low-mounted steering wheel and the displays arranged above it. New materials, modified surfaces and, depending on the trim, Alcantara or embossed aluminum details are intended to give the interior a more upmarket feel, while a 3D instrument cluster is fitted as standard in the top model. This looks neat and, at best, feels like a premium promise. At the same time, the i-Cockpit remains an issue that is likely to continue to divide drivers. Those who harmonize with the seat position and steering wheel adjustment get an independent perspective on what is happening, while those who are unlucky are more likely to look at the steering wheel rim than at the instruments. This, too, is now almost part of the brand essence.

The central touchscreen and the familiar i-Toggles, i.e. freely assignable direct selection buttons, also remain part of the concept. This is fundamentally cleverer than purely menu-nested touch surfaces, as important functions can be accessed more quickly. However, the infotainment of the 408 is still of the "French-style" variety, i.e. it should react a little more decisively to inputs in places. The TomTom navigation system in particular can get on your last nerve with its limping and sometimes inaccurate display.

Less spectacular than the external touch-ups are the changes under the bodywork. Peugeot continues to offer the 408 with three electrified drive systems: a hybrid, a plug-in hybrid and a purely electric version. In the electric E-408, the hardware essentially remains the same, but benefits from better aerodynamics according to Peugeot. The battery stores 58.2 kWh net, the WLTP range is up to 456 kilometers, the standard consumption is 14.7 kWh per 100 kilometers. On our first test lap over land and on the freeway, the on-board computer displayed around 16.8 kWh - still a decent figure for a car almost 4.70 meters long.

In terms of performance, the electric package with 157 kW (213 hp), 345 Newton meters of torque and 7.2 seconds from 0 to 100 km/h is more than enough. And a top speed of 160 km/h does not make for a sports sedan, but it does make for a relaxed and speedy touring car. The quiet drive in particular fits in well with the basic character of the 408, which is less of a cornering machine than a comfortable long-distance car. If only there wasn't the shortcoming with the charging performance.

With a maximum of 120 kW DC, the E-408 does not charge catastrophically slowly at the fast-charging station, but it is visibly below the level of some competitors. Peugeot states 30 minutes for the jump from 20 to 80 percent. Although the facelift adds useful electric functions such as battery preheating and vehicle-to-load with up to 3.5 kW, there is still room for improvement with AC charging at 11 kW. Those who regularly cover long distances will quickly come across more impressive figures from the competition. After all, a Plug & Charge function should also be available from summer 2026.

The plug-in hybrid therefore fits the character of the 408 as a cultivated touring car much better. Its system output will increase to 240 hp or 176 kW with the facelift and the electric range is specified at up to 85 kilometers. The technical basis for this remains familiar: 1.6-liter petrol engine with 180 hp, 92 kW electric motor, seven-speed dual clutch, front-wheel drive and a drive layout that sounds like a very targeted answer, especially for commuters and company car drivers. On our first drives, this version made the best impression. The interplay between the turbo petrol engine and electric motor is smooth, the noise insulation is impressive and even on 20-inch wheels, the suspension comfort conveys a pleasant sense of calm. The steering is precise without feeling nervous and the car sits firmly on the road even at higher speeds. The WLTP consumption is specified as at least 12.9 kWh and 6.0 liters with a discharged battery.

And that could be the case very often - at least on long journeys. Peugeot is also weak in terms of charging performance here. While the Tiguan & Co now allow their plug-in hybrids to be fast-charged with up to 50 kW, which means that even a short coffee break on the road is enough to top up the energy storage, the 408 only charges its 17.2 kWh battery with 3.7 kWh in a single phase, or with 7.4 kWh for an extra charge (500 euros). For an electric range of just under 80 kilometers, this means seven and a half hours at an 8A household socket or around two hours at the 11 kW wallbox and public charging station. That's not even enough time for a hearty lunch.

The mild hybrid base model with a 1.2-liter three-cylinder petrol engine and 145 hp (107 kW) system output manages completely without a plug. If required, the 408 can sprint to 100 km/h in 9.4 seconds, whereby the effort is acknowledged with a clearly audible three-cylinder growl. From a rational point of view, this may be the sensible choice in view of the lower entry-level price and fuel consumption (5.1 liters). Emotionally, however, a three-cylinder engine in such a large and strikingly styled car remains a slight break in style.

That leaves the question of price, and Peugeot has left even that virtually unchanged, at least in terms of the base prices: 40,970 euros for the hybrid, 46,300 euros for the E-408, 47,600 euros for the plug-in hybrid. This means that the electric version is even positioned just below the plug-in hybrid, which is not a matter of course in comparison. It is pleasing that Peugeot has not used the model update for a discreet price increase, as is usually the case in the industry. (aum)

Data Peugeot 408 Plug-in-Hybrid 240 e-DSC7

Length x width x height (m): 4.69 x 1.85 x 1.74

Wheelbase (m): 2.79

Drive: Plug-in hybrid with 4-cylinder petrol engine, 1598 cc, front-wheel drive, 7-speed dual clutch

Petrol engine output: 180 hp (132 kW)

Electric motor output: 92 kW (125 hp)

System output: 176 kW / 240 hp

Max. Torque: 360 Nm

Top speed: 233 km/h

Acceleration 0 to 100 km/h: 7.5 sec.

WLTP average consumption/b. discharged battery: 2.6-2.9 liters/ 6.0-6.2 liters

Energy consumption: ~~12.9-13.2 kWh~~

Electric range: 79-77 km

CO2 emissions: 56-60 g/km

CO2 class /with discharged battery: B / E

Unladen weight (EU)/ payload: min. 1781 kg / max. 419 kg

Towing capacity: 1290 kg

Trunk capacity: 415-1483 liters

Base price: 47,600 euros

Images for article



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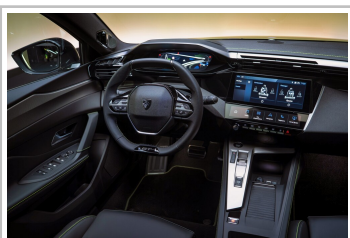


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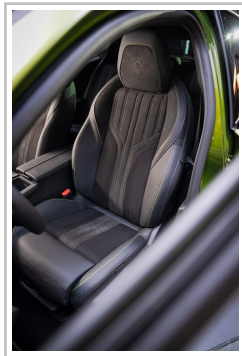


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