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Peugeot 504 and Toyota Celica GT Tested
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ROAD & TRACK

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DAVID J HILLIAMS III
5079 BACKSMITH DR
COLUMBIA MD 21044



PEUGEOT 504

A comfortable, intelligently designed sedan, but it still lacks power



PEUGEOT HAS BEEN selling cars here for a long time but like the other large French automakers, Renault and Citroën, has never built up much sales volume. Too bad, because in a lot of ways the Peugeot 504 is a very charming car. The 504 is the only model Peugeot sells in the U.S. now, the smaller 304 having been dropped from this market in 1973. It's available in either four-door or station-wagon body styles with a choice of engines: a 2-liter, overhead-valve, gasoline four cylinder or a thrifty 2.1-liter, four-cylinder Diesel. Although we tested the gasoline-powered 504 station wagon as part of a wagon comparison test in July 1974 this is our first look at the sedan since February 1972 when we compared the 504 with three other family sedans: Audi 100LS, Saab 99E and Volvo 144E.

Actually the 504 has changed only slightly in the past three years. A padded steering wheel is an appreciated comfort feature and a tachometer has been installed where a large clock used to reside (the clock has been relocated to the center of the dash), but only a real Peugeot fanatic could get excited over the other changes introduced this year: redesigned road wheels and recessed outside door handles. Our real reason for testing the car was to see if performance had improved with the addition of six more horsepower (5 bhp in California) and almost a full-point increase in compression ratio.

Unfortunately, it hasn't. Any gains here have been offset by a 275-lb increase in curb weight so although our current test car managed to clip 0.3 sec off the quarter-mile time of the

1972 504, it was nearly a second slower to 60 mph. So the 504 is still a leisurely performer and the driver has to be willing to keep his right foot pressed to the floor and make maximum use of the slick shifting ZF 4-speed to keep up with traffic. Anyone interested in the optional 3-speed automatic would be wise to try it first; it may be barely adequate by American standards. The engine is smooth enough in operation but it does let you know that it has only four cylinders as it is not as silky or as well isolated as we expect from a car of the 504's refinement. It will rev to 5000 rpm willingly but begins to sound strained and feel rough as it approaches 6000 rpm. Out on the highway it's a totally different story; here the 504 is relaxed and almost soundless except for a booming 4-cylinder resonance right around 65 mph.

Even if the performance isn't up to our expectations, Peugeot deserves credit for meeting 1975 emission regulations in all 50 states without a catalytic converter. The federal version has only exhaust-gas recirculation while California models require a thermal reactor and a throttle positioner (to hold the throttle open during deceleration) in addition to EGR to meet that state's stricter emission standards. Despite the implications of ever tightening emission controls, fuel economy hasn't suffered either. This latest car returned 21 mpg in our usual test compared to 20 for the 1972 version. Good work Peugeot.

One new engine feature is a semi-automatic choke similar to Mazda's. The driver has to pull it on for a cold start but it automatically shuts off when water circulating through the



PHOTOS BY ROBBIE BELL

cylinder head reaches the proper temperature. This is a fine idea as some drivers will forget the choke is on even with a yellow warning light like the Peugeot's staring them in the face. But in practice the choke left a lot to be desired. On our car it shut off too quickly causing the engine to stumble and sputter until fully warm, and once off, not even a Hercules can pull it back into operation. When the engine warms up, driveability is very good; we noted none of the carburetor problems that plagued earlier 504s and only an occasional, light, muffled backfire when shutting off the engine.

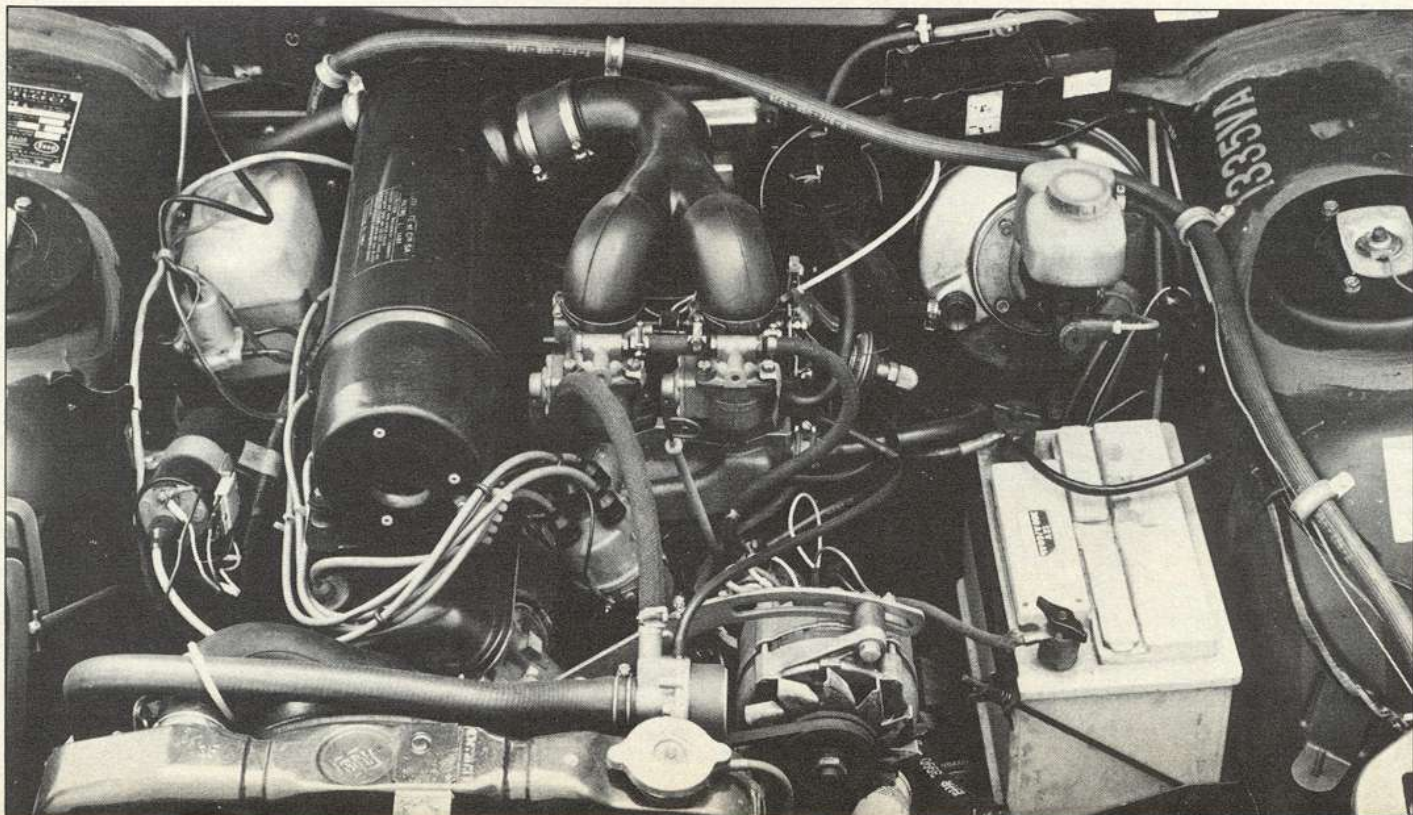
If performance is not a 504 virtue, comfort certainly is. The individual front seats are wide and comfortable with just the right amount of firmness. There are the usual adjustments for reach and rake and the seat tracks are curved to suit both the long and short of leg. Generous leg and headroom is provided in the back and a wide fold-down center armrest makes the form-fitting seats unusually comfortable for two passengers and still, folded up, leave room for the occasional extra passenger.

The state of the art in car ventilation has improved a lot in recent years and this is one area where Peugeot hasn't kept pace. The 504 puts through a lot of air if its blower is used and a window is at least cracked; this comes through ducts under the dash and a dash-top vent, parts of which are pulled up to control the air direction. But it's not possible to direct all the upper air toward one side of the car or the other, and this can be a critical matter on a hot sunny day. Our test car's optional air conditioning was most effective, however. Set it to maximum cooling and turn the fan to the high position and



the four underdash vents put out enough cold air to form icicles.

Except for the turn indicator lever being on the right side of the steering column and an overabundance of gaudy-looking and glare-reflecting chrome and satin-finish stainless on the dash, we can't fault the instrument and control layout. All instruments are positioned for easy reading and are clearly marked except the speedometer which only indicates speed every 20 mph in odd intervals (10, 30, 50 mph, etc) with even intervals of kilometers per hour indicated on the inside of the





dial. Very confusing. A lever on the left side of the steering column turns on the lights and there's a clever little button at the end of this stalk for wipe-wash controls. Press gently and the wipers are actuated at their high-speed setting (this is really handy for light rain and misty conditions); push harder and two streams of water spray the windshield while the wipers continue sweeping. All this is independent of another 2-speed wiper switch on the dash.

The 504 is an incredibly fine riding car, no surprise as this is so often a strong point with French cars. Peugeot has combined high quality Michelin XAS radials with gobs of suspension travel and good body isolation to tune out almost every trace of harshness. And with no detriment to handling. There's moderate understeer and considerable body lean but the XASs give the 504 good cornering power on the skidpad and impressive, predictable control during transient maneuvers. The steering is accurate and precise, though slower than we like and a bit on the heavy side at parking-lot speeds, but few cars are affected less by bumps, ridges or culverts when being driven hard. At high speeds the 504 has a sure-footed, stuck-to-the-road feel as it neither porpoises nor wallows.

Changes to the disc brake pad material have not only improved stopping distances (55 ft shorter from 80 mph despite the weight increase) but have also eliminated the grumbling and squealing during light brake applications noted in earlier 504s. This has been accomplished with a slight tradeoff in fade: 20 percent for the current model vs none for previous 504s.

Like most French cars the Peugeot 504 has a personality all its own. If you can forget its performance shortcomings and its somewhat odd-looking, slanted-off trunk lid and concentrate instead on its comfortable, roomy interior and voluminous trunk combined with moderate exterior dimensions, its superb ride and sophisticated specifications (independent rear suspension and 4-wheel discs are standard) and a reputation for being a sturdy, dependable car you'll probably find the 504 enjoyable to own and drive.

PRICE	
List price, all POE	\$5845
Price as tested	\$6614
GENERAL	
Curb weight, lb	2965
Weight distribution (with driver), front/rear, %	54/46
Wheelbase, in.	108.0
Track, front/rear	56.0/53.5
Length	182.8
Width	66.7
Height	55.3
Fuel capacity, U.S. gal.	14.8

CHASSIS & BODY	
Body/frame	unit steel
Brake system	10.75-in. discs front and rear, vacuum assisted
Wheels	steel disc, 14 x 5
Tires	Michelin XAS, 175HR-14
Steering type	rack & pinion
Turns, lock-to-lock	4.5
Suspension, front/rear	MacPherson struts, lower lateral arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar/semi-trailing arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar

ENGINE & DRIVETRAIN	
Type	ohv inline 4
Bore x stroke, mm	87.9 x 81.3
Displacement, cc/cu in.	1971/120
Compression ratio	8.4:1
Bhp @ rpm, net	87 @ 5500
Torque @ rpm, lb-ft	110 @ 2900
Fuel requirement	regular, 91-oct
Transmission	4-sp manual
Gear ratios: 4th (1.00)	3.89:1
3rd (1.37)	5.33:1
2nd (2.11)	8.21:1
1st (3.56)	13.85:1
Final drive ratio	3.89:1

CALCULATED DATA	
Lb/bhp (test weight)	37.8
Mph/1000 rpm (4th gear)	19.4
Engine revs/mi (60 mph)	3100
R&T steering index	1.54
Brake swept area, sq in./ton	263

ROAD TEST RESULTS	
ACCELERATION	
Time to distance, sec:	
0-100 ft	4.4
0-500 ft	10.7
0-1320 ft (¼ mi)	20.1
Speed at end of ¼ mi, mph	65.0
Time to speed, sec:	
0-30 mph	5.0
0-50 mph	11.4
0-60 mph	16.7
0-70 mph	24.1
0-80 mph	36.4

SPEEDS IN GEARS	
4th gear (5100 rpm)	96
3rd (6000)	82
2nd (6000)	53
1st (6000)	31

FUEL ECONOMY	
Normal driving, mpg	21.0

BRAKES	
Minimum stopping distances, ft:	
From 60 mph	179
From 80 mph	284
Control in panic stop	good
Pedal effort for 0.5g stop, lb	35
Fade: percent increase in pedal effort to maintain 0.5g deceleration in 6 stops from 60 mph	20
Overall brake rating	good

HANDLING	
Speed on 100-ft radius, mph	316
Lateral acceleration, g	0.668
Speed thru 700-ft slalom, mph	53.5

INTERIOR NOISE	
All noise readings in dBA:	
Constant 30 mph	62
50 mph	69
70 mph	79

SPEEDOMETER ERROR	
30 mph indicated is actually	25.0
60 mph	55.5
70 mph	65.0

