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Wheels: The Peugeot 508's Glass Roof Illuminates Car Travel

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This car may look like a normal station wagon, yet well-designed features like a spacious trunk make it stand out.

Editor's note: Wheels is a section featuring car reviews.

A Panoramic Glass Roof is a Necessity.

Only the other week, I tested the Mazda CX-5 and bemoaned how dark the interior was compared to the Nissan Qashqai. The reason was that the Mazda lacked the expansive glass roof of its competitor, making it really dull even on a bright summer's day.

Peugeot, unlike Mazda, knows the importance of such a luxury and has been duly incorporating this into its designs for sometime. The 508SW benefits from an expansive 1.62 square meter tinted glass roof which is 25 percent larger than the one fitted to the 407 SW. It makes such a difference, especially when the sun is beating down and temperatures regularly

exceed 30 degrees Celsius, as it did in Russia over the summer.

Facts at a Glance

Peugeot 508 SW GT HDi 200

Price: 1,591,842.13
rubles
0 to 100kph: 8.4
seconds
Top speed: 223 kph
Combined Economy:
20.3 kpl

Source: Peugeot

This roof really does transform the passenger experience, so much so that my two-year-old daughter Harriett thoroughly enjoys looking out of it during a long journey. The numerous branch-covered roads eventually send her to sleep.

I drove the 508 station wagon when it was first launched and marvelled at the high specification and its sheer style, as you can see in the video at testdrives.biz. But I do believe that Peugeot has surpassed itself with its SW estate version. Gone are the days of ugly station wagons. This is a joy to behold. Head on its masculine, purposeful and sporty front end is enough to make even the most hardnosed BMW driver pull over when he sees it appear in the rear view mirror. There is no part of its design that I can criticize; I even like the trunk, which is quite an achievement for a station wagon. The pearlescent white paintwork undoubtedly adds to its appeal.

When you are struggling with two little children, the last thing you want to do is fiddle about trying to find your car keys and then have to unlock the vehicle. With the Peugeot, as long as the key is on you it will automatically unlock with two pulls of a door handle. Sumptuous luxury is found inside, and there is a massive amount of room, too. The trunk swallows our tandem stroller and is large enough to cope with a week's worth of holiday luggage, although admittedly the security cover has to be left at home because the stroller is too large to pull it over. The two girls have bags of room in the back, which is just as well because the floor provides added luggage space.

A driver could not be happier, as long as they are not enduring Moscow's horrendous traffic jams. The Peugeot driver is provided with an electrically adjustable seat complete with massage function, for those particularly stressful journeys. Needless to say, it comes in very handy when we are confronted with an hour-long traffic jam due to a major road traffic accident. The blistering temperatures require the quad air conditioning to be on for the duration of our week together, and we find it to be effective and equally as importantly, efficient. It does not noticeably affect the fuel economy, as we are able to travel nigh on 965 kilometers on the tank. This is pretty impressive for a 2.2-liter, 200 brake horsepower diesel. Cruise control, a speed limiter and a smooth six-speed automatic gearbox all contribute to its average 20 kilometers per liter reading.

The roads begin to free up and with a clear highway ahead of us, it is possible to begin to put the 508SW through its paces. When sports mode is engaged, the revs increase and it shoots out of the blocks like a fine thoroughbred. An approaching bend does not present a problem either, in the way that I first anticipated, and with minimal roll it hugs the corner and comes out the other side with aplomb. By virtue of the fact that it is a large station wagon, it is cumbersome, but its design tackles and generally overcomes this issue. There are occasions where it is tricky to see all the way over the hood and reversing does require perhaps a little greater concentration than in smaller cars.

Often, those who buy station wagons do it out of necessity and in the past have had to forgo any sporty appeal in favor of load-carrying ability. Thank goodness for the Peugeot because now parents of a certain age can still enjoy an eight second 0 to 100 time while carrying a large stroller. Try doing that in an Audi TT ...

Watch the video at testdrives.biz.

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