I've now notched up a couple of thousand k's in the 407 SV HDi- so some early, but perhaps a little informed, thoughts re it and its immediate predecessor - a 97 D8 petrol 406ST. The 407 had 67,000 on the clock when I bought it. The 406 had 80,000 & has now done 220,000. (prior to this I had a couple of 505 sLi wagons, which succeeded a DSpecial, a 504, a 404, and a couple of 403's)

I chose the 407 over a replacement 406 largely because I wanted a low mileage car, wanted a wagon and wanted a diesel. It was much easier to find a 407 fitting these criteria than a 406. I toyed with the idea of a 307 or 308 diesel estate, but I spend a fair amount of time these days ferrying two very elderly women (one 91, one 84 with parkinson's disease) around to medical appointments etc, with their walking frames, and they have trouble, because of medical probs, getting in and out of our 307 XSE because of the significantly shorter door aperture. The extra mod cons also appealed (hey! I was 17 when I got my own first Peugeot 403 - though I'd been driven around in 'em since the age of 4 - & I've hit 60 now).

Got to say that I love the 407 SV & given the choice again I wouldn't pick any differently. In many respects it is the best of the Peugeots I've owned. The 406 has its pluses , too, though.

Power: I thought that the extra power etc of the V6 diesel might make the 407 seem unbalanced, but it isn't. For a large car you can certainly throw it around on the bends with remarkable ease. The extra grunt is remarkable compared to any of my earlier French cars, too. It puts the power down on the road noticeably more smoothly than the 406, too. Very impressive. A slight hint of turbo lag, but far less than on other turbo diesels I've driven, and wonderful "tractability" and "pick up" throughout the normal driving range. It actually makes driving easier in many situations. Those 440NM of torque really comes in at the range where you need it.

Comfort: Comfort-wise the 407 is generally outstanding. The 406 was a very comfortable car on long trips - significantly more so IMHO than the 505 or the 504 and rivalling the DS. The seats in the 407 are significantly better, however, and I don't get the niggle at the base of my spine that the 406 gave me after a few hundred k trip. Yes, the suspension on the 407 is more "Germanic" than the 406, but this doesn't translate into discomfort . The 407 seats are very well tuned to the suspension (but more on the suspension later, because it is one of a couple of areas where , for mine , the 406 still wins out). Driving position is very easy to set up in the 407SV, with electronic seat controls & the memory function makes swapping regularly between two drivers a doddle. My wife always found it hard to set up the 406 to suit her driving position. She doesn't in the 407. (bear in my mind our 406 was pretty close to "base model" while the 407 is fully optioned though). For a long trip in comfort I'd certainly pick the 407 over the 406, and either over anything else I've owned , even including the DS when it was young. Front leg room is better than the 406. Rear legroom, fairly similar.

Both cars are significantly more comfortable than our 307 XSE.

For mine, the 407 actually feels roomier than the 406 (though it is only about 50mm wider internally at "waist" height at the central pillars. Perhaps the long driver to bottom of windscreen length adds to the impression)

Noise: At cruising speed the 407 is even a little quieter than the 406 - due to the 6 speed auto & less wind noise. At intermediate speeds - accelerating in traffic etc, it seems just a little noisier to me (probably due to the diesel engine), though it is certainly not intrusive. Both are very quiet cars compared to their predecessors (none of which were seen as noisy in their day).

Economy: Fuel economy in the 407SV is noticeably better than in the 406 Petrol ST for the kind of driving I do, despite the very significantly greater power. I generally averaged around 10l/100k in the 406 in "mixed" driving (though I got significantly better on long trips). The 407 SV HDi has averaged about 8.3 l/100 K in mixed driving so far, and even though it's dear, diesel is still generally a few cents cheaper than the premium unleaded I fed the 406. The 2 litre diesels, of course, are significantly better again, though, and the 406 diesel is probably the most frugal of all.

Handling: Through the bends both cars are very capable. The 407 has a little less body roll than the 406 (both have far less than 403s through to 505s in standard set-up). Both also will go round corners faster than their rear wheel drive antecedents in general driving (though if you have only driven rear wheel Pugs before the style needed is a little different) and you can certainly power drive them through corners. Both are capable of very fast point to point times. The 407 handling reminds me a bit of a 306XSi we had, but with a more suppleness and subtlety. The 406 handling is on a class of its own for subtlety and suppleness, though. I suspect the 407 may actually even go round a set of cones faster than a 406, but you will be more conscious of it all in the 407. Both are far better, IMHO, than our 307 XSE in this regard, even though it hangs on well enough when pushed.

You'll notice a bad bump on a bend more in the 407 than the 406, especially in the rear (and if its shod with the 18" 235/45's like mine), but it doesn't lose grip as a result. The 406 is certainly more refined, suspension wise.

On rough roads, dirt, corrugations. etc. the superiority of the 406 in this area becomes more evident. The greater ground clearance and suppler suspension helps, and I suspect the unsuspended mass is lower, too. On a fast bitumen road, the 407 comes out on top. As I said, more Germanic than French in some ways. Both cars, are very enjoyable as "driving" vehicles.

Both are better than the 307.

Other design attributes: I see some people commenting on the "long nose" of the 407 compared to the 406. In fact the distance between the base of the steering wheel and the tip of the nose in my 407 is exactly the same as in the 406. Set for my driving position both cars come out at exactly 2 metres (by comparison, on the 505 SLi it is 1.8m & on the 307 1.9m - the price of safety zones).

The 407 does have more overhang than the 406 (by about 12 cm). This is entirely due to a longer crumple zone, and contains very little of any weight. The distance from the back of the radiator to the tip of the nose is also 12 cm shorter in the 406 than the 407. Basically I'd reckon it comes down to the need to meet 5 star safety ratings wrt pedestrian safety especially, but it does make it easier to scrape on a sloping driveway exit (The 407 is about the same in this regard as with our 307 XSE and my old DS).

The appearance of a "long nose" from the drivers seat really comes down to illusions created by the different windscreen positions & angles. The 407 is actually way shorter than the 406 from windscreen base to nose tip, but the equally greater steering wheel to windscreen position creates an illusion of greater length. If you are used to nose-in "wall parking" a 406 it takes a while to realise that the distance from you to the wall in a 407 needs to be exactly the same! Until you do, you'll be surprised at how unnecessarily far out you've stopped.

When I first stepped into the 407 for a test drive the main thing that bothered me was visibility. The acutely sloping windscreen & thick pillars to support it, coupled with dark window tinting and those silly wide angle "cars are really much closer than they look" side mirrors, made me have some serious second thoughts. The 307 has some of the same problems. The 406 was OK in this area, but even it fell way short of our old 505 wagon which, together with the 404, still wins hands down for visibility in my book.

Despite these reservations, I've actually been surprised at how quickly I've adjusted to it. The wrap around rear quarter windows in the wagon , despite the segmentation, actually gives you better rear quarter vision than on the 406 sedan or the 307 hatch. The 'silly" mirrors mean the vehicle has no problem with rearward blind spots, though I still have to make myself very conscious about distance of approaching vehicles when pulling out from the curb etc. I haven't found myself missing seeing Mack trucks or even mini minors as a result of the front pillars, etc etc.

Still, forward, especially front quarter, visibility is an area where the more upright screen & pillars of the 406 beats the 407 (though the 505 wagon beats both all round by a handy margin).

Safety:

Secondary safety - Well, I haven't managed to crash either a 406 or a 407 (though a 505 wagon that copped a car coming out of a sideroad against a stop sign when I was doing 80 kph dealt with it extremely well) so I can't speak from personal experience. You feel safe in both, but safer in the 407. All of those airbags, electronic gizmos and sheer body mass (1917kg kerb weight cf 1390kg for the 406 sedan) give you a lot of confidence. So does the 5 star safety rating.

Primary safety - Both cars offer excellent primary safety - handling, braking etc are extremely good/exceptional for vehicles of their size. 504s and 505s were both renowned for primary safety, but in these critical areas the 406 and 407 are even better. On occasion the extra grunt of the 407SV HDi may get you out of a situation that you might not in the 406, but on the other hand, the same grunt might encourage, shall we say, "overconfidence" on some occasions ;-). Headlights are better on the 407, though the 406 ones are certainly adequate, too. Both are better than the 307's.

Creature comforts: This is a bit of an unfair comparison. The 407 is a top of the range model, while the 406 was pretty well standard 1997 issue, apart from some nice mag wheels. Not surprisingly, the 407 wins hands down. I find the seats more comfortable (and with far better side support and adjustability of course) than even the armchairs in my old DS. The 406 seats were pretty good, but not on the same level, even when they were new. The split system climate control works extremely well, even on the stinking hot days we've had here in the last week or so). The 200 watt JBL 8 speaker audio system is the best I've had in any car. When it comes to music, this car offers it in spades. Built in 10 Gig HD for storing mp3s, in dash MP3 capable CD player, 6 stacker CD in the boot, Audio and AV input in the glovebox for your iPod. All works beautifully. Gorgeous sound & oodles of oomph. Only reservation re my 2008 model is that the iPod doesn't get mirrored on the car display when used through the AV/Audio input. I rarely use the iPod in it, though, given the other options.

The built in car phone can either run from a sim card, or be bluetooth tethered to your phone. I run it from its own sim. Far better/safer set-up than any "hands free" kit I've had before. The Sat Nav cost $100 at Regans to update from 2007 maps , but only 2010/2011 version is currently available. Sat Nav works well, but has more limited options for display & voices etc than most standalone options. Safer to use on the road, though I've barely played with the voice activated processes for the phone, satnav, trip dat, audio stuff yet, I'm afraid.

Internal storage for the driver is better than on my 406, with a useful lidded cuddy on the dash to the right of the driver, good central console storage, door pockets. Passenger "chillable" glovebox loses a lot of space to an airbag, but is very deep, though narrow.

For long loads the passenger's seat back can be laid flat, giving you a prodigious length for long bits and pieces. Built in rear side window blinds help keep the sun out. Auto-wipers , auto-headlights. "splitable" rear cargo door, so you can just open the window on the tailgate to put things in and out, electric memory seats, moon roof, etc etc etc.

All in all it is very well appointed, and almost impossible not to feel comfortable and cosseted when you are inside it. I hate to think what its like if the electrics die, though!

You can certainly get some of this stuff in a later model, up market, 406 than mine, but the whole combination really works very well in the 407.

On some "fully optioned" vehicles I've driven in , especially up market 4x4's, all of the creature comfort gimmickery distracts me , but the 407 still comes across as a "drivers car" first & foremost.

Character/ Styling:

I must confess I like cars with a bit of character. Obviously this comes down to subjective feelings of the person concerned, but for mine the 407 has it in spades. The 406 and the other vehicle I seriously considered, the C5 Citroen estate, are much blander. The exterior of the 407 does it for me. That curvy butt, sleek sidelines and great front smile of a radiator grill come together in a blend of style with cheekiness that works for me. A lot more character than the 406 both inside and out, I reckon. Far less likely to be mistaken for a Camry! I like the interior of the C5 estate, but the outside just doesn't cut it, to my mind.

Reliability/cost of owning: Only time will tell. For the most part the 406 was a very low cost car to own. Apart from brakes and belts very little broke down or needed replacing (the 307 has needed significantly more in 50,000 less kilometres of ownership). The two items that did go, though, were biggies, but in the late stages of its life. At 200,000 Ks a timing belt (rated for 80,000Ks) broke after less than 40,000 Ks use. Engine rebuild for $2000+ as a result. Shortly after this the transmission started to act up a little. At 220,000 it died completely. Hence the 407!

The 407 has longer service intervals than my 406 (later 406's are longer) and that danged timing belt is rated for 180,000 on the diesel V6 though I'll be replacing it earlier. Turbo, diesel filter and other costs will probably mean higher service & repair fees than I've had to meet for the 406 and the extra gimmickery means more things to go wrong, of course. No signs of anything wrong to date. At 69,000 K it drives and feels like a new car. Suspect tyre costs will be significantly higher, and more frequent, on the 407 though given the extra power, weight and rubber size.

So, all in all, I really loved my 406. Really felt like a part of me after spending 140,000 kms in the drivers seat. But while it still seems to give me a rueful, downcast look whenever I walk past it to the 407, I'd have to say that I'm very happy indeed with its successor. Only time will tell whether this is simply a brief affair or a long term relationship, I guess, but I'm not usually given to passing flirtations. ;-)