

SPECIAL PEUGEOT 205 GTI MARKS THE END OF A CLASSIC

After ten years of acclaim and plaudits, the car described as the "best hot hatchback of all time", the Peugeot 205 GTI, has ended its production run this month (February 1994) and Peugeot Australia has laid claim to 30 of the very last cars to be sold with an up-rated equipment package as the Peugeot 205 GTI Classic.

"The Peugeot 205 GTI is a seminal car," says Ray Bowden, General Manager of Peugeot Australia. "It quite simply defined a whole breed of car, the compact, high performance car that was also versatile and easy to use. With its stunning performance and go-kart like roadholding and handling, it proved that it was possible to have sportscar performance without all the drawbacks of owning a sports car. And although there have been many pretenders to the 205 GTI's throne from other car makers, none has come close and it has been left to Peugeot, with the 306 S16 which arrives in Australia later this year, to provide a true successor to the 205 GTI."

All 30 Peugeot GTI Classics - which will be available from Australia's Peugeot dealer network from March - share a common specification. They will be immediately recognisable thanks to their unique Mayerling Green metallic paint and 205 GTI Classic badging. Standard equipment includes full leather upholstery, a glass sliding sunroof with a sunshield and vacuum sealing, a digital stereo radio cassette unit that may be used as the control unit for the optional ten track CD multiplay and upgraded speakers to match the new sound system. Power steering, central locking, electric windows and air conditioning are also standard in the \$37,500 price.

"We expect these cars to be nothing short of a collectors item," says Ray Bowden. "We already have a queue of people wishing to buy the ultimate Peugeot 205 GTI and we expect them to sell out quickly."

The Peugeot 205 GTI: A decade of hot hatchback domination

It is ten years since the original Peugeot 205 GTI was launched in 1.6 litre form and six years since it arrived in Australia. Five years ago a 1.9 litre version was added to the 205 GTI range and this subsequently became the standard version for Australia.

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Over the years the basic look of the car has changed little. Larger wheels and tyres and minor changes to the front bumper and grille being just about the only exterior changes, proving just how innately 'right' the classic Pininfarina styling of the 205 is. Inside there have been revisions to the dashboard, but once again the changes have been minor.

The Peugeot 205 GTI: World Championship winner

The ultimate Peugeot 205 GTI was the T16 version, which swapped its front engine and front wheel drive for a mid-mounted turbocharged multi-valve engine connected to a sophisticated four wheel drive system. This combination provided a level of performance that left supercars gasping and provided the basis for World Championship winning rally and rally raid cars. It was also the basis for the 405 T16, famed for its rocketship ride up the Pikes Peak mountain in the hands of rally ace Ari Vatanen.

In just about every country that it has been sold, the Peugeot 205 GTI has been used in motorsport, with whole generations of racing and rally drivers cutting their teeth in the motorsport arena with the little Peugeot.

The Peugeot 205 GTI: Is there another ten year old car to compare to it?

The 205 GTI, and indeed the whole 205 family, begs the question: Is there any other ten year old car that could not only be still on sale, but still remain at the head of its class? Only last year former Formula One driver and racing car test driver, John Miles, picked the 205 GTI as the best handling car in its class, beating all its modern rivals. This year it has been described as the "Best hot hatchback of all time" by the UK magazine Autocar and Motor.

Everywhere that the 205 GTI has been sold it has been acclaimed for its style, dynamics and performance, as well as its versatility.

The Peugeot 205 GTI's unique combination: Performance & versatility

The combination that made it so special was its ability to out corner and out perform cars either much bigger than the 205 or with the best sports car credentials, yet it could also carry four people in comfort and its hatchback and folding rear seat enabled it to be a true load swallower.

Such is the poise and rapid response of the Peugeot 205 GTI, roadtesters said that the 205 was more than just like a go-cart, it actually *was* a road going go-cart.

The performance offered by the 205 offers no special indulgence by the owner, it is happy nipping down to the shops with the kids in the back as it is supplying the absolute cream of motoring pleasure on a twisty mountain road. No extra servicing is demanded by the 205 and even its fuel consumption ranks well amongst cars that offer less performance.

"The measure of a classic car that changed motoring attitudes and set new standards is how people remember their first drive in that car," says Ray Bowden. "Ask anyone who has driven a Peugeot 205 GTI and they will recall their first drive in the GTI: The instant response from the steering; the almost unnerving way it clung on to every road surface it was offered; the punchy, potent performance at any speed and in any gear; the ability to deal crushing blows to other so-called performance cars and the ability to throw a chest of drawers in the back! The 205 GTI is a true motoring milestone and the 205 GTI Classic is the last chance there will ever be to own one."

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EJR/ejr/0137

24 February, 1994