

FIT FOR A LADY

Where there's a "second car" in the family it's usually a hatchback and behind the steering wheel is a woman driver. Five volunteers spent a month trying out current models



PEUGEOT 205 XLD

£5745. 3 doors. 146in long, 62in wide. 1.7 litre, 60 bhp. Approx 60 mpg. Insurance group 3. Service interval 6000 miles. Warranty 1 year unlimited mileage, 6 years anti-rust.

Diesel cars offer long life and good fuel consumption at the expense of performance, with a characteristic clatter. This 5-speed gearbox diesel version of the successful 205, here in neat and simply-trimmed three-door form, is generally reckoned to be the most acceptable of the small Derv-burners available. Same engine is used in the Citroen Visa 17D; a smaller (and slower) diesel is available from Daihatsu.



Not for the weak or shopping-laden is this heavy boot lid

DRIVER: Olivia Temple, painter, living in rural Somerset. Car essential for all transport. Though compact and two-doored, this car gave a real feeling of spaciousness and light, due partly to the generous window design and wide doors. Getting in and out of the back seat was no longer a battle of limbs and seat belts. The car seemed equally happy doing the shopping in our local town or racing up the M5. I never noticed any diesel noise once the car was on its way, and the acceleration was impressive. It felt young, energetic and willing.

The seats were comfortable; with good back support.

On the minus side: The boot lid was too heavy, especially for a shopper already holding parcels. The front seats clicked down with a disconcerting jerk soon after sitting in them. The heater was good, but noisy. Neutral gear took some finding.