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Skoda Kodiaq First Impressions

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New Skoda Kodiaq large SUV joins the sales trail.

By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency)

Yet another all-new model range joins the booming SUV market, this time it is the Skoda Kodiaq range of large five or seven seat, 2WD or 4WD models. Prices start from an

eye-catching £21,565, rising through a range of 24 derivatives to £34,050, and deliveries to UK customers start from 6 April. Order books opened last November and the brand has received 30,000 expressions of interest from UK potential customers and over 2,000 confirmed orders.

James Snowden, Skoda UK's head of Product Marketing, said at this week's media launch,



“We initially had a sales target of 7,000 units this year but such has been the demand we are now able to supply around 10,000 units, but we are right hand drive product limited.”

The Kodiaq is the Czech firm’s first large SUV and as a member of the Volkswagen Group it uses common components such as the scalable MQB platform and a wide range of the latest petrol and diesel engines.



With the SUV market sector growing year on year with record sales, there is no shortage of established competitors such as the Hyundai Santa Fe, Kia Sorento, Ford Edge, Nissan X-Trail, Toyota Land Cruiser, Land Rover Discovery Sport, Honda CR-V and Mitsubishi Outlander. Alternatively, taking a step down a shade in size then the Renault Kadjar, SEAT Ateca, VW Tiguan, Ford Kuga, Toyota RAV4 and Mazda CX-5 are just a few of the sales



contenders.

What the new Kodiaq offers best of all in this class is huge space and high standard equipment at very competitive prices, just as the Skoda has done with their Superb and Octavia ranges. Incidentally, Kodiaq is a type of Bear.

Initially the Kodiaq range is offered with S, SE, SE L and Edition trim and equipment levels, but Skoda has just announced Scout and Sportline versions to come later this year.

When it comes to engine and five or seven seat model choices, the basic S version is five seats only with engine options of the 1.4 TSI 125 hp petrol and to come a 2.0 TDI 115 hp turbodiesel, both with six-speed manual gearboxes.

The SE level has five or seven seat options and more engine choices. There is the 1.4 TSI 125 hp unit, the 1.4 TSI 150 hp with ACT – Active Cylinder Technology which shuts down two cylinders under light loads to save fuel – and 2.0 litre TDI 115 hp or 150 hp turbodiesel units. The SE is the first level in the range where the 4WD option can be chosen and also a DSG twin-clutch auto gearbox is available.

The SE L level, with five and seven seat models, is available with the 1.4 TSI 150 hp petrol unit manual and auto, and 2.0 TDI 150 hp and 190 hp diesels with the manual or DSG auto gearbox options.

The Edition level has seven seats as standard and the choice of 1.4 TSI 150 hp and 2.0 TSI 180 hp petrol units, plus 2.0 TDI 150 hp and 190 hp turbodiesel power units, with the latter featuring a DSG auto gearbox and 4WD as standard.

James Snowden, Head of Product Marketing, said that so far 85% of UK customer orders are for the higher specification SE L and Edition models, 65% are retail customers, 90% have ordered a seven seat version, 60% of customers have ordered a 4WD model, around 80% have ordered a diesel variant and a similar percentage are using Skoda's PCP finance scheme to buy the vehicle. With a 25% deposit and a 42 month agreement PCP monthly



payments start from £209 and rise to £275.

He added that the single most popular version will be the Kodiaq SE L 2.0 TDI 150 hp turbodiesel, manual with 4WD and seven seats, and priced at £30,650. The most popular petrol version will be the 1.4 TSI 150hp turbo manual with the same SE L spec, seven seats and 4WD, priced at £29,110.

Even the base S version has LED daytime running lights, 17-inch alloy wheels, leather multi-function steering wheel, air-con, Front Assist which includes City Emergency Braking, Kessy Go keyless entry, touchscreen infotainment system, DAB radio and Smartlink for seamless smartphone connectivity. SE versions see items such as 18-inch alloys, cruise control and rear parking sensors, auto lights and wipers and the £1,000 seven-seat option. SE L additions include 19-inch alloys, sat-nav with WiFi, driving mode selector, heated front seats and full LED headlights. The Edition models added spec includes leather upholstery, metallic paint and chrome roof rails plus Lane Keep Assist, high beam alert, wireless phone charging and blind spot detection.

The 4WD system is on-demand, in other words it is an electronically controlled system which constantly calculates the ideal driving torque to the front and rear wheels. When in overrun or light load driving conditions, drive is only to the front wheels, which saves fuel. There is an additional Off-Road function operated by a simple touch button which adjusts the chassis, engine management and brakes to suit rougher terrain, and it applies Hill Descent Control. For those owners who need a tow vehicle the braked towing weights depend on the version chosen, but range from 1,600 to 2,200 kg (3,527 to 4,850 lb) and the vehicles have a Trailer Assist reversing steering function.



The Kodiaq is 4,697 mm (15.41 ft) in length, 1,882 mm (6.17 ft) wide and 1,676 mm (5.50 ft) high so it is visually a substantial looking heavyweight SUV. With its short front and rear overhangs and long 2,790 mm (9.15 ft) wheelbase it looks purposeful and capable as an on/off roader, even though it uses the same platform as the highly praised Skoda Superb saloons and estates.

At the rear is a huge boot and with all seven seats in use there is still a handy 270 litres (9.53 cu.ft) of load space. With five seats in use this space increases to 630 litres (22.25 cu.ft) and with the middle and third row of seats folded there is a massive 2,005 litres (70.80 cu.ft) of cargo room.



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In all but the third row of seats the interior is really spacious, the third row is best left for two children. Although the vehicle has a coupé-style roofline, lowering to the rear, headroom isn't an issue throughout and visibility for passengers is good. Being a Skoda there are there hallmark 'Simply Clever' and neat touches inside in terms of extra storage solutions, and even an umbrella in the front door plus an ice scraper in the fuel filler cap. Overall the interior quality is good although there are some areas of hard plastic trim - but they are minimal.

As for the body's exterior visual styling there is the new Skoda family front face inspired by the Superb, with sharp dual headlights flanking a prominent wide grille and clamshell bonnet. At the side is a high rising waistline with sculptured side panels leading to the rear end where a wide and high tailgate gives access to the cavernous load space. It might be big but the Kodiaq is very easy to drive and so it will be an easy SUV to live with. The three year 60,000 mile warranty, although not class-leading, gives peace-of- mind motoring.

It's the size and practicality, high spec, competitive pricing and smart SUV styling that are the standout features of the new Kodiaq. As for its driving performance, using so many of the components from other models in the VW Group of brands, it is very much as expected. This means controlled agile handling, good ride comfort, reasonable steering response and a range of thoroughly modern engines - all of which will meet the very different demands that potential owners want from their vehicle.



Most users will opt for the popular 2.0 litre, four cylinder 150 hp turbodiesel engine that I tried, and this is widely used throughout the VW Group brands – although the 1.4 litre TSI 150 hp turbo petrol unit has considerable merits for lower mileage private users. The 2.0 litre turbodiesel 150 hp engine with SE L specification, 4WD and seven seats seems to me to be the most logical buy in the range for most people as advance sales numbers show. Given its versatility in seating, high level of specification, good fuel economy plus 4WD, the price of £30,650 makes it a competitive buy.

With 340 Nm (251 lb.ft) of torque delivered from 1,750rpm this is a strong and responsive engine. It can be a bit noisy under load but we know it well and we know it has potentially good fuel economy. Officially it will return 51.4 mpg in the Combined Cycle and on my test driving route around rural Somerset the real-life figure was 44.5 mpg. With CO2 emissions of 144 g/km under the new, (from 1 April this year) VED road tax figures, the First Year cost is £200, reducing to the £140 flat rate for Year two onwards. Company car drivers will pay 30% Benefit-in-Kind tax. Insurance is a competitive Group 17E.

Top speed is 121 mph and the zero to 62 mph acceleration time is 9.8 seconds so it's no slouch on roads. With its 4WD system, off-road driving needs to be confined to roads/tracks and grassy fields. It's no heavyweight mud-plugger off-roader but with careful use it will be sufficiently grippy for light rural use. Usefully this version can tow 2,000 kg (4,409 lb) so it will be suitable for those who tow caravans, boats and stock/horse trailers.

VERDICT

It's the sum of all the parts that add up, and all at a good price, that makes the new Skoda Kodiaq a serious contender in the ever-growing SUV sector – especially if size and good looks matter.

For: Attractive pricing, high specification, wide range of models, seven seat and 4WD model options, good looks, roomy and good ride comfort.

Against: Very little without being very picky.



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Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Skoda Kodiaq SE L 2.0 TDI 150 hp, 4WD, seven seat SUV.

Price: £30,650 (expected best-selling model).

Engine/transmission: 2.0 litre, four cylinder, turbodiesel, 150 hp, 340 Nm (251 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm, six speed manual with on-demand 4WD.

Performance: 121 mph, 0-62 mph 9.8 seconds.



Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 51.4 mpg (44.5 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 144 g/km, new VED road tax cost £200 then £140 Year Two onwards, BIK company car tax 30%.

Insurance: Group 17E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,697 mm (15.41 ft), W 1,882 mm (6.17 ft), H 1,676 mm (5.50 ft), load space 270 to 2,005 litres (9.53 to 70.80 cu.ft), five doors/seven seats.

Towing weight: 2,000 kg (4,409 lb).