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Skoda Octavia SE Technology Estate – Road Test

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Keith Ward test drives a spacious Octavia estate from Skoda

Keen to maintain its status as their best-selling model in the UK – the choice of almost 30 per cent of their customers – Skoda this Spring (2017) gave a mid-term facelift to the popular Octavia.

It's a familiar formula: outwardly a restyled front end (wider grille, re-shaped lights) and indoors an obligatory catch-up with the relentless progress in safety features and infotainment technology.

All models feature alloy wheels, seven airbags, user-friendly touchscreen infotainment systems and what Skoda call SmartLink+. So Apple CarPlay and Android Auto mobile phone connectivity is now standard, as are LED rear lights, air conditioning, an XDS electronic differential lock and an automatic post-collision braking system.



A vast 58-strong range covers five-door hatch and estate bodies, seven trim grades, a choice of four petrol and three diesel engines with some 4WD and automatic options, all at prices from £17,195 to £30,245. So not as cheap as Skodas once were, but still competitive for what is now a respected quality brand.

Overall, price threshold for 4WD is a shade over £26,000 while the flagship trim is again leather-shod Laurin & Klement (£27,595 upwards), off-road the Scout (£26,685-plus) and performance the vRS (£25,185 and up).

In the UK, 46 per cent of Octavia buyers choose the Estate, a reflection of interest from business and fleet operators. Our Estate test car was the 1.6 TDI in mid-range SE Technology trim, tagged at £21,790.

That brings cruise control, driving mode selection, a driver fatigue sensor if you show signs of nodding off, dual-zone air conditioning and front fog lights.

The Technology badge adds adaptive cruise control, an Amundsen eight-inch touchscreen navigation system, Wi-Fi hotspot, and rather panicky front and rear parking sensors, erring well on the side of caution. I missed a reversing camera, available as an option.



On-top options provided including a skinny spare wheel, park assist and a three-year Care Connect upgrade with a private emergency call facility boosted the overall price to £23,170.

Interior space and comfort continues to be the Octavia's strong suit. Rear passengers enjoy generous knee and head room, although piggy-in-the-middle has to straddle a central tunnel.

The rear seatbacks divide 2:1 and fold forward into a not quite flat floor, with an awkward step, but an impressive load length of 1,650 mm (5.41 ft) on our tape. The optional dual-height floor would flatten the step. In normal mode, the boot width, stretching into the wheel arches each side is an impressive 1,500 mm (4.92 ft). Overall cargo volume tops out at 1,740 litres (61.45 cu.ft), among the best in class.



On the road, the 1.6 litre 115 PS diesel is not a flier, taking 10.2 seconds to 62 mph, and makes itself heard through the gears before toning down on an open road. I found myself searching sometimes for a non-existent sixth gear for cruising and not always finding to hand a comfortable cog in mixed traffic. Some drivers have favoured the bigger 150 PS 2.0 litre diesel six-speed for these reasons, meaning a price hike of £740. But the return from the 1.6, in a week's unsparing use, of over 56 mpg was pleasing. And its 106 g/km CO2 means a flat VED rate of £140 on this year's new scale.

Comfort is the best setting of the Octavia's adaptive ride, otherwise it can be choppy. But its saloon-like steering and handling make it a generally pleasurable drive.

To date, more than 5 million Octavias have been produced, with annual global sales peaking at 436,000 last year through more than 100 markets worldwide. It is now built in China,



Russia, India and Kazakhstan as well as its native Czech Republic.

VERDICT

A roomy, practical estate; it should continue to prosper in its latest form.

Latest Skoda news:

Last month (July 2017) saw the launch of petrol-engine variants of the Octavia and Superb SE Tech models for fleet customers.

Skoda outperformed the UK market in the first half of 2017, posting record UK registrations of 42,558 cars January to June – a new high for the brand, and 2 per cent up on 2016.

Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief: Skoda Octavia SE Technology

Type: Estate; five-door; five seats

Size:

Length 4,659 mm (15.29 ft); width 2,017 mm (6.62 ft); height 1,465 mm (4.81 ft).

Kerb weight 1,252 kg (2,760 lb); max tow 1,500 kg (3,307 lb).

Boot Volume 610 to 1,740 litres (21.54 to 61.45 cu.ft); length 1,010 to 1,650 mm (3.31 to 5.41 ft); min width 1,010 mm (3.31 ft).

Engine: Diesel; 1.6; five speed manual gearbox.

Power: 115 PS; max torque 184 lb ft (249 Nm).

Pace: 125 mph; 0–62 mph in 10.2 secs.

MPG: On test 56.3; official combined 68.9.

Emissions and taxation: CO2 106 g/km; band B; VED £140 p.a.; BIK 23%.



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Wheels: 16-inch alloys.

Insurance Group: 15E.

Warranty: 36 months/60,000 miles.

PRICE: £21,790; as tested, with options £23,170

Rivals (Estates): VW Golf , Ford Focus, Peugeot 308 SW , Honda Civic Tourer, Kia cee'd SW, SEAT Leon, Vauxhall Astra Sports Tourer