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Skoda Scala Diesel – Road Test

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SKODA SCALA DIESEL - THE FUEL FRUGAL MODEL...

...tried and tested by David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

The all-new Skoda Scala, a C-segment five-door hatchback, is in effect the replacement for their Rapid range and sits between the Volkswagen Group's Czech brand Fabia supermini and larger C/D segment high selling Octavia model ranges.

Currently prices range from £16,595 to £23,315 and the initial line-up is relatively simple with 1.0 litre TSI petrol 95 and 115 hp engines a 1.5 litre TSI petrol 150 hp unit, and just one fuel-frugal 1.6 TDI 115 hp turbodiesel engine. All but the lowest powered petrol engine are available with manual or DSG twin clutch auto gearboxes.



The spec levels are simple too, with S, SE and SE L but that choice depends on the engine selected, and there are loads of extra cost options available as well, which can increase the prices significantly. A higher spec, sportier styled Monte Carlo model with all four engine options will join the line-up later this year after making its debut at the Frankfurt Motor Show this month. No prices have yet been announced.



If you are prepared to wait a little longer then a compact Skoda City SUV 2WD range, more or less based on the Scala with the same platform engines and an elevated stance, is an optional choice. It's called Kamiq - pronounced 'Ka-mick' and its main sales contender will be the similar sized and specced SEAT Arona and of course the new Skoda Scala hatchback. Prices are yet to be revealed but expect them to be only a bit more than equivalent Scala



models.

I know diesel powered cars are not flavour of the year so far but the latest generation engines are cleaner for CO2 emissions than turbo petrol units and the fuel economy is also much better. So in the real world for higher mileage drivers, or those that just like the extra torque diesels provide, there is still a healthy demand for such models.



For instance the 1.6 diesel Scala manual gearbox version has CO2 emissions of just 108 g/km with WLTP Combined Cycle fuel consumption figures of 53.3 to 57.7 mpg, the cleanest 1.0 litre petrol engine manual gearbox model is 113 g/km with WLTP Combined Cycle figures ranging from 43.5 to 50.4 mpg. Perhaps the biggest drawback is that the diesel models are more expensive to buy. As an example a mid-range best-selling 1.0 litre petrol



115 hp manual SE version costs £18,585 whereas the 1.6 litre 115 hp diesel manual SE costs £20,265. For company car drivers the all-important Benefit-in-Kind tax is 26% for the petrol model and 29% for the diesel but the diesel is less costly to insure, with a Group rating of 13E as opposed to the 14E for the same power output petrol model.

Now my colleague got the first chance a few weeks ago to drive the new Skoda Scala and he chose the likely best-selling 1.0 TSI 115 hp manual model with the SE spec priced at £18,585 and that version returned a real life 44.3cmpg fuel economy figure, about 16cmpg less than my Scala 1.6 litre 115 hp diesel automatic!

My alternative choice road test Scala 1.6 TDI 115 hp diesel seven speed DSG automatic with the SE spec level was priced at £21,515. Now that's a lot more than the petrol version and a manual gearbox diesel model with the same engine still costs £20,265. But all those prices are less than its main competitors such as the Ford Focus, VW Golf and Vauxhall Astra, and not only does the Scala cost less, it offers more passenger and boot space. In fact positioned side by side to a new Audi A3 Sportback five door hatchback, the Scala looks a lot longer, has a longer wheelbase, more boot room and costs over £4k less for the same diesel engine.

Its size wise where the Skoda Scala really measure-up, that and competitive prices without options. Using the VW Group's latest MQB A0 platform the long wheelbase is 2,649 mm (8.69 ft) whilst the overall length is 4,362 mm (14.31 ft), while width and height are 1,793 mm (5.88 ft) and 1,471 mm (4.83 ft) respectively. Its long wheelbase allows for generous rear knee room of 73 mm (nearly three inches) more than that of its Rapid predecessor model - and which is now equivalent to that of the larger Octavia. Headroom in the front measures 1,031 mm (3.38 ft) while rear passengers benefit from 982 mm (3.22 ft) - a figure that makes the Scala the best in segment for rear head space. The new Scala's boot is also the largest in its sales sector with a capacity of 467 litres (16.49 ft) with the rear seats in position. When the 60-40 split back seats are folded down this increases to an impressive 1,410 litres (49.79 cu.ft). It's the use of a torsion beam rear suspension layout with no intrusion into the load area of its components that leads to this large capacity. Further storage space, although not class-leading, is provided by a large glove compartment,



storage box between the two front seats and more compartments in the doors. In total this increases the car's storage space by a further 26 litres (0.92 cu.ft).

Up front the Scala with the SE spec level has a relatively simple layout. It is uncluttered and functional rather than inspiring. The fit quality looks good although there is a considerable amount of black plastic trim and controls, not all of a better quality and lacking behind the Ford Focus.

Specification wise the Scala is available in the UK with three trim grades and the S level comes with 16-inch alloy wheels, LED headlamps, leather steering wheel, gear and handbrake lever, a height-adjustable driver's seat, air-conditioning, DAB digital radio, front and rear electric windows and a Swing infotainment system with 6.5-inch screen.

The best selling mid-range SE model adds features including cruise control, rear parking sensors, Bolero infotainment system with 8-inch touchscreen, integrated umbrella and height adjustable passenger seat.

The range-topping SE L adds Skoda's new Amundsen infotainment system with 9.2-inch touchscreen, Virtual Cockpit, climate control air conditioning, keyless entry with start/stop and a colour multifunction trip computer. The exterior design includes 17-inch Stratos alloy wheels, full LED rear lights, dynamic indicators and privacy glass on the rear windows. Inside the seats are finished with silver Microsuede trims and chrome details on the dashboard, door panelling, gear and handbrake levers.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

The SE version I tested seems to be the sweet-spot of the range but, call me old-fashioned, I missed not having an integrated sat-nav system. You have to rely on using the wireless connectivity functions with your smartphone for that convenience. Delving into the extensive extra cost options list I found the Amundsen sat-nav system with the 9.2-inch touchscreen with the Virtual Cockpit function available for an added £1,025. I'd stick to the inconvenience of using an aftermarket sat-nav instead. There seems to be more and more



manufacturers negotiating this route of no integrated sat-navs as standard on even medium spec cars. It's all down to cost I suppose, rather than customer convenience, which given Skoda's long-term stance of going that bit further with their 'Simply Clever' marketing statement, I don't find clever at all.

Under the bonnet is the EU6-d TEMP compliant 1.6 litre, 115 hp turbodiesel engine which uses AdBlue to minimise emissions and particulates. This four cylinder engine produces 250 Nm (184 lb.ft) of torque from just 1,500 rpm so the power delivery is strong from low to medium engine speeds and worked well with the ratios of the seven speed DSG twin-clutch auto gearbox. This combination just made it an ideal driving combination whether it was pottering around town in stop-start traffic or accelerating on open roads. For the low or high mileage user, despite its extra price, it's a very user-friendly combination. The engine isn't that smooth, it's a bit gruff at times and the noise drones on at cruising speeds so a little more sound-proofing between the engine bay and passenger compartment would help.

Top speed is 124 mph and the more important zero to 62 mph acceleration time is a modest 10.1 seconds but that is adequate for most users given the realities of driving restrictions both in terms of traffic volumes and speed restrictions we endure these days. The official WLTP Combined Cycle fuel economy figures for the automatic gearbox are 49.6 to 54.3 mpg and during my week of test driving covering most types of road and traffic conditions it was easy to maintain 60 mpg overall and higher than that on a longer run, with 73.1 mpg seen on the computer readout.

The CO2 emissions are only 108 g/km so the diesel Rate VED First Year road tax costs £170 followed by the usual Standard rate of £145 a year. Company car drivers incur the dreaded extra 4% Benefit-in-Kind tax rate so they pay 29%. Insurance is a very competitive Group 13E but the warranty is the usual VW Group's ungenerous three years/60,000 miles.

Thanks to the use of 16-inch alloy wheels shod with deep-walled tyres the ride comfort was good with the sidewalls absorbing the worst impacts from potholes and other surface imperfections. It is not the most agile handling car in its sector, it lags behind the nimble

and sharp handling Ford Focus and it's not as well-balanced as the VW Golf, probably due to the Scala's extended wheelbase. The steering however was light with good feedback, and precise when holding an intended driving line during fast cornering conditions.



VERDICT

Overall the new Skoda Scala has far more plus points than negative ones. It's very roomy, well priced if you stay away from adding extra cost options, the diesel engine provides good real-life fuel economy and the SE specification is just about adequate, apart from the lack of an integrated sat-nav system, which is not in keeping with Skoda's 'Simply Clever' marketing slogan.

For: Class-leading very spacious interior with good rear seat legroom, large boot, well-



priced if options are not added, strong engine well-matched with the slick auto gearbox, very good real-life fuel economy, comfortable ride, low insurance costs.

Against: No integrated sat-nav system, bland looking dashboard layout, some cheap-feel plastic switches, dark hard plastic trim in places, too much engine noise intrusion, usual ungenerous VW Group warranty.



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



Skoda Scala SE 1.6 TDI 115 hp DSG auto five door hatchback.

Price: £21,515.

Engine/transmission: 1.6 litre, four cylinder turbodiesel, 115 hp, 250 Nm (184 lb.ft) of torque from 1,500 rpm, seven speed twin-clutch automatic.

Performance: 124 mph, 0-62 mph 10.1 seconds.

Fuel consumption: WLTP Combined Cycle 49.6 to 54.3 mpg (60 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 108 g/km, VED First Year diesel rate road tax £170 then £145 Standard rate. BiK diesel rate company car tax 29%.

Insurance Group: 13E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,362 mm (14.31 ft), W 1,793 mm (5.88 ft), H 1,471 mm (4.83 ft), wheelbase 2,649 mm (8.69 ft), boot/load space 467 to 1,410 litres (16.49 to 49.79 cu.ft), braked towing capacity 1,250 kg (2,756 lb), five doors/five seats.