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Skoda's revised Octavia range – plus Octavia estate Road Test

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2017 updated Skoda Octavia line-up - incorporating a substantial estate car variant.

David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) gives his views - and offers some useful advice on choosing the best version of the Octavia for you...

The 2017 revised Skoda Octavia range of C-segment five door Hatchbacks and Estates have recently gone on sale and all retain their class-leading roominess plus high specification, and most are available at competitive prices.

The huge interior space offered by these models is in keeping with the huge number of models in the 2017 line-up. I counted 58 variants at prices ranging from £17,195 to £30,245. In addition to the two body style there are vRS high performance versions as well



as the Scout 4×4 on/off road Estates.

There is a choice of six turbocharged engines and seven improved specification levels including vRS and Scout variants. The three TSI petrol engines are 1.0 litre 115 hp, 1.4 150 hp and 2.0 230 hp. The TDI turbodiesels are 1.6 litre 115 hp, 2.0 150 hp and 2.0 184 hp units. Most engine options are available with manual and DSG twin-clutch auto gearbox choices and some 2.0 TDI 150 versions offer two or four wheel drive versions, depending on the spec level. The engine choice also depends on the spec level chosen and these are S, SE, SE Technology, SE L, Laurin & Klement, Scout and vRS.

The Skoda Octavia is a global car with more than five million sold since the first generation versions appeared in 1996. As part of the Volkswagen Group of brands, Skoda now builds the Octavia in its home Czech Republic market as well as China, Russia, India and Kazakhstan. Last year 436,000 Octavias were sold worldwide, the highest ever figure.

In the UK the Octavia is Skoda's best selling model range with over 23,000 sales last year, equating to 28.7% of their total record year registrations. In the UK 54% of customers choose the Hatchback body style and 46% the Estate. When it comes to engine choices there is more or less a 50/50 split between petrol and diesel sales and the 2.0 litre TDI 150 hp unit is the most popular with business users. Mid-range spec levels tend to be the most popular but it depends on whether it is a retail or fleet customer.



My test version was the Octavia Estate with Laurin & Klement (known as L&K) with the widely used, throughout the VW Group's brands, 2.0 litre TDI 150 hp turbodiesel engine. My test car also had the six-speed DSG auto gearbox and carried a price tag of £30,045. It looks pricey but perhaps it's not considering the interior space you get and the high specification. Its roomier and mostly less expensive than its VW Golf Estate, SEAT ST and Audi A3 Sportback stablemates which use the same platform and components, or the Ford Focus Estate, Peugeot 308 SW and Vauxhall Astra Sports Tourer. However if space and spec are priorities for the price of my Octavia Estate test car you could buy Skoda's award winning



and even larger Superb Estate which also many of the same engine options – food for thought?

The 2017 mid-life facelift includes a new design of four unit headlights with LED daytime running lights flanking the latest Skoda family grille. Above that is the classy looking bonnet with its sculptured styling lines and so the styling tweaks continue around the 4,687 mm (15.38 ft) long body to the large opening rear tailgate. This gives easy access to a flat load floor and provides 610 litres (21.54 cu.ft) of cargo space with the split rear seats in place and up to a massive 1,740 litres (61.45 cu.ft) with them folded down.



With its long wheelbase of 2,680 mm (8.79 ft) there is ample legroom for three adult passengers in the rear and I do not know of any car in this sector that offers more rear seat legroom, so it has to be one of the most practical family cars available. Interior space, high



spec options and a wide range of engines are the the main selling points for the Octavia Hatchback or Estate models. The overall quality of the interior trim is more functional than plush with a few bits of hard plastic but generally it's acceptable enough and looks durable and feels well put together.



In the front it is just as roomy with large supportive comfortable seats, and has a well laid out facia panel containing the latest VW Group infotainment, communication systems, sat-nav and driver aid technologies. Visibility is very good front and side with the rear view only let down if tall rear seat passengers are being carried - and the door mounted mirrors could be larger to reduce those blindspots, particularly for seeing overtaking traffic.



All the 2017 revised models have significantly higher specification than the outgoing generation. Standard spec includes alloy wheels, alarm, Bluetooth, touchscreen infotainment and SmartLink+ connectivity with Apple CarPlay and Android auto connectivity. LED rear lights, air-con, XDS electronic differential lock, electric front windows and door mirrors and automatic post collision braking is also standard fit function. And so the specification increases as you move up the range. The L&K version I tried is said to offer the most advanced technologies ever seen on an Octavia but at a considerable price premium. These functions include heated front seats, heated steering wheel, 9.2-inch Columbus infotainment system, Canton sound system, electrically operated driver's seat with a memory function, KESSY keyless entry with push-button start, Park Assist and Lane Assist. The alloy wheels are upsized to 18-inch, fog lights have a cornering function and there are decorative Piano Black trim inserts with L&K logos.



The mainstay 2.0 litre four cylinder turbodiesel engine is well known throughout the VW Group family of brands. It a solid fuel efficient performer developing 150 hp and 380 Nm (280 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm and on this occasion its mated with a six-speed DSG twin-clutch auto gearbox. Top speed is 132 mph and zero to 62 mph takes just 8.6 seconds. Officially the Combined Cycle figure is 58.9 mpg and my test car's figure for a week of mixed motoring conditions was a real-life 53.7 mpg. On a longer motorway journey cruising at 70mph in ECO mode the figure was 57.8 mpg. With CO2 emissions of 120g/km the VED road tax cost is £160 First Year rate reducing to £140 Standard rate for year two onwards. Company car drivers will pay 26% Benefit-in-Kind tax and insurance is Group 23E.

For those potential owners worried about going the diesel route because of emissions issues and potential future tax penalties, my suggestion is to consider the 1.4 litre TSI 150 hp turbo petrol unit. This is not available with L&K specification but choose the slightly lower

SE L level with the auto gearbox and the Estate costs £24,015. It is a fine engine with 250 Nm (184 lb.ft) of torque from a low engine speed of 1,500 rpm so it is very responsive, has a top speed of 134 mph and zero to 62 mph takes 8.3 seconds, with a Combined Cycle figure of 56.5 mpg with lower CO2 emissions of 117 g/m. The VED costs are the same as the 2.0 litre TDI but Benefit-in-Kind tax is lower at 22% as is insurance with a 21E rating instead of 23E. At over £6,000 cheaper and with lower insurance and some tax costs, plus a bit more performance and a slightly lower level of spec, it makes much more sense to choose the 1.4 TSI auto with SE L spec and you get the same passenger and load space all for £6k less. You know it makes sense!

Whatever engine is chosen the Octavia Estate provides a generally comfortable ride - better on the open roads cruising along, rather than at slower speeds where poor tarmac of urban roads unsettles the ride, and where bumps and thumps from potholes are heard and felt more.

VERDICT

Spacious and practical. The overall handling balance of the car is good; it's no sports



machine but it's easy to drive, easy to control and choose the right model it's easy of the pocket too.

For: Improved styling, higher specification throughout the range, some revised engines, loads of passenger room front and rear, huge load area space, generally a comfortable ride, sound handling, wide range of models.

Against: The price differential between models is too much so choose - carefully - the engine you really need and the spec level you really want - it can save thousands of pounds without any practical loss in performance and potentially with cheaper running costs.



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

2017 Skoda Octavia Estate L&K 2.0 TDI 150, automatic.

Price: £30,045.

Engine/transmission: 2.0 litre, four cylinder turbodiesel, 150 hp, 380 Nm (280 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm, six speed DSG auto.



Performance: 132 mph, 0-62mph 8.6 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 58.9 mpg (53.7 mpg on test), CO2 120 g/km, VED £160/£140, BiK company car tax 26%.

Insurance Group: 23E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,687 mm (15.38 ft), W 1,814 mm (5.95 ft), H 1,490 mm (4.89 ft), braked towing weight 2,000 kg (4,409 lb), boot/load space 610 to 1,740 litres (21.54 to 61.45 cu.ft), five doors/five seats.