Latest Skoda Octavia – Road Test

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LONGEVITY IS IN ITS GENES – THE NEW SKODA OCTAVIA.

By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

The new fourth generation Skoda Octavia Hatch and Estate models are here following the Covid-19 lockdown and UK customers can now take delivery of their new models or now more likely to wait until the new registration plate change month of September.

The Octavia has been a huge global sales success and UK buyers have had a strong association with the models with over 500,000 sold here since the first generation global sales versions arrived in 1996. However the Octavia name goes back further to 1959 when it

was launched in its own domestic market. The name Octavia is derived from the Latin word eight as it marked the eighth post war car built by Skoda. With 61 years of history behind Octavia with over 6.5-million sales now the fourth generation models are here and ready to continue their record as Skoda's top selling range.



The first Octavia arrived in 1959.

In their 125th anniversary year since they were founded, it is opportune to just remind ourselves about the history of Skoda Auto. Founded in 1895 Skoda is one of the longest-established car manufacturers in the world. It currently offers its customers nine passenger-car series: the Citigo, Fabia, Rapid, Scala, Octavia and Superb in addition to the Kamiq, Karoq and Kodiaq SUVs. The company delivered 1.24 million vehicles to customers around the world in 2019.

Importantly, Skoda Auto has been part of the Volkswagen Group since 1991. In association with the Group, Škoda Auto independently develops and manufactures vehicles, as well as

components such as engines and transmissions. It operates at three locations in the Czech Republic; manufactures in China, Russia, Slovakia and India mainly through Group partnerships as well as in Ukraine and Kazakhstan with local partners. It employs approximately 42,000 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.

My past experience with the Skoda Octavia I have to admit has over the years made it one of my favourite family cars, suitable for domestic and work duties. It particularly shines because of its size relative to its price and included standard specification. In its sector it has always been the roomiest of models and usually the best value for money.

Nothing seems to have changed in that direction, this generation of Hatch and Estate models are larger and the prices at least competitive if now not a great deal less than the competition. The new Octavia still sits between the C and D sized passenger car sectors competing against the likes of the VW Golf, Ford Focus, SEAT Leon, Toyota Corolla, Skoda Scala, Audi A3 and BMW 1 Series but also against larger D segment models such as Skoda's own Superb, Audi A4, BMW 3 Series and the VW Passat. It crosses size boundaries and pricing structures.



First the all-important matter in today's troubled market of pricing and at this point I must say the initial line-up of models is limited with vRS, 4×4, plug-in hybrid and hybrid versions to come and with more spec levels. Initially the Hatch is priced from £22,390 to £28,460 and the Estate from £23,370 to £29,540.

For both body types there are initially two spec levels, SE First Edition and SE L First Edition and three engine options. These are the1.5 TSI 150 hp petrol with cylinder deactivation with a manual gearbox. There is the choice of two 2.0 litre TDI turbodiesel units, the 115 hp manual and the 150 hp with a twin-clutch DSG auto gearbox as standard. With two diesel engine options it shows that the Octavia will remain, initially at least, a high mileage business user's vehicle until PHEV and Hybrid versions come along plus a 1.0 litre TSI 110 hp petrol unit.

Now on to another of the Octavia's strong selling points – size. The new Hatch has a length of 4,689 mm (15.38 ft), 19 mm (0.75 in) longer than its predecessor, while the Estate is 22 mm (0.87 in) longer than before and now also 4,689 mm (15.38 ft). Their width has also increased by 15 mm (0.59 in). With a long wheelbase of 2,686 mm (8.81 ft) both models impressively measure up for rear seat legroom for adults as well as children. The Octavia uses an evolution of the VW Group MQB platform which provides the facility for a longer wheelbase and more bodywork overhang at the rear for a larger boot/load area.

The Estate's boot capacity, which is the largest in the segment, has increased by 30 litres (1.06 cu.ft) to 640 litres (22.60 cu.ft) with the rear three seats in use and a massive 1,700 litres (60.03 cu.ft) with the rear seats folded down. The Hatch has a capacity of 600 litres (21.19 cu.ft) – 10 litres (0.35 cu.ft) more than the previous model, increasing to a very useful 1,555 litres (54.91 cu.ft) with the rear seat backs folded down.



The Skoda Octavia might be new but it has all the styling hallmarks of the previous

generation, another case of evolution over revolution following Skoda's philosophy of being 'Simply Clever', if it's not broke – don't fix it, in other words.

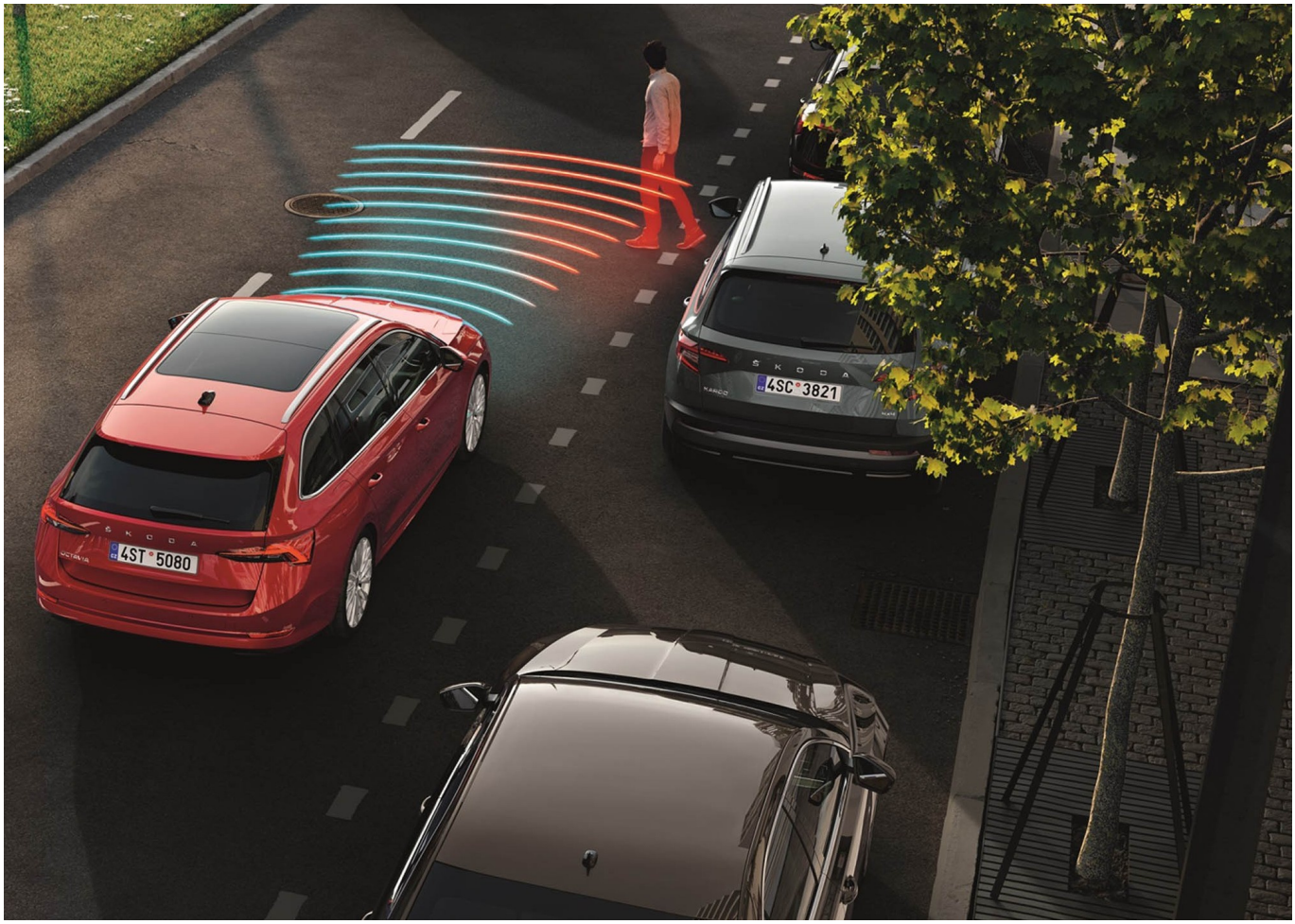
There is a revised front end with new grille, bumper and razor-sharp narrower headlights featuring LED technology for low beam, high beam and daytime running lights as standard. The tail lights, brake lights and fog lights make use of LED technology as well. The newly designed roof rails emphasise the elongated silhouette of the Octavia Estate while the Hatch has a slight coupé roof profile which doesn't restrict rear passenger headroom. In between the front and rear ends of Hatch and Estate versions are sharp continuous styling lines and sculptured panels which emphasise the Octavia's length as well as enhancing its kerb appeal, improving its up-market status.

Inside there is a new multi-level dashboard arrangement with the 10.25-inch touchscreen mounted centre and high up on the virtual cockpit dashboard. Below that is a line of buttons to control various functions including the driving mode selector, Park Assist and a short-cut to the air con settings. The smart looking new two-spoke steering wheel, which can be heated as an option, has new control buttons and knurled scroll wheels allowing drivers to operate a total of 14 different functions, without removing their hands to operate the touchscreen most of the time.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

A combination of chrome trim inserts, chrome door handles, a neat centre console plus soft-touch trim materials. The LED ambient lighting multi-colour combination functions operate for the front doors, footwells and dashboard and give the new Octavia a premium look and feel in keeping with its inevitable move upmarket.

I'm not going to trawl through the huge list of spec items, including the latest connectivity and driving safety and support systems and 17-inch alloy wheels plus there is a long list of additional costs options. Suffice to say, even with just the two initial trim levels, the spec and equipment is high and most of it can also be found on other VW Group brand's models.



Skoda’s new Octavia with the latest safety support technology included.

My test car, the Octavia SE L First Edition Hatch with the 2.0 TDI 150 hp turbodiesel engine and seven speed DSG auto gearbox has an on-the-road price of £28,460. But there were options added such as the 18-inch alloys at £680, head-up display at £690, Titan Blue metallic paint at £595 and a steel space-saver spare wheel at £180 making a total price of £30,605. Given its size, spaciousness, quality, styling inside and out and driving performance I think proves the new Octavia remains a fair bargain and in these uncertain times that makes Skoda’s Simply Clever marketing theme very appropriate.

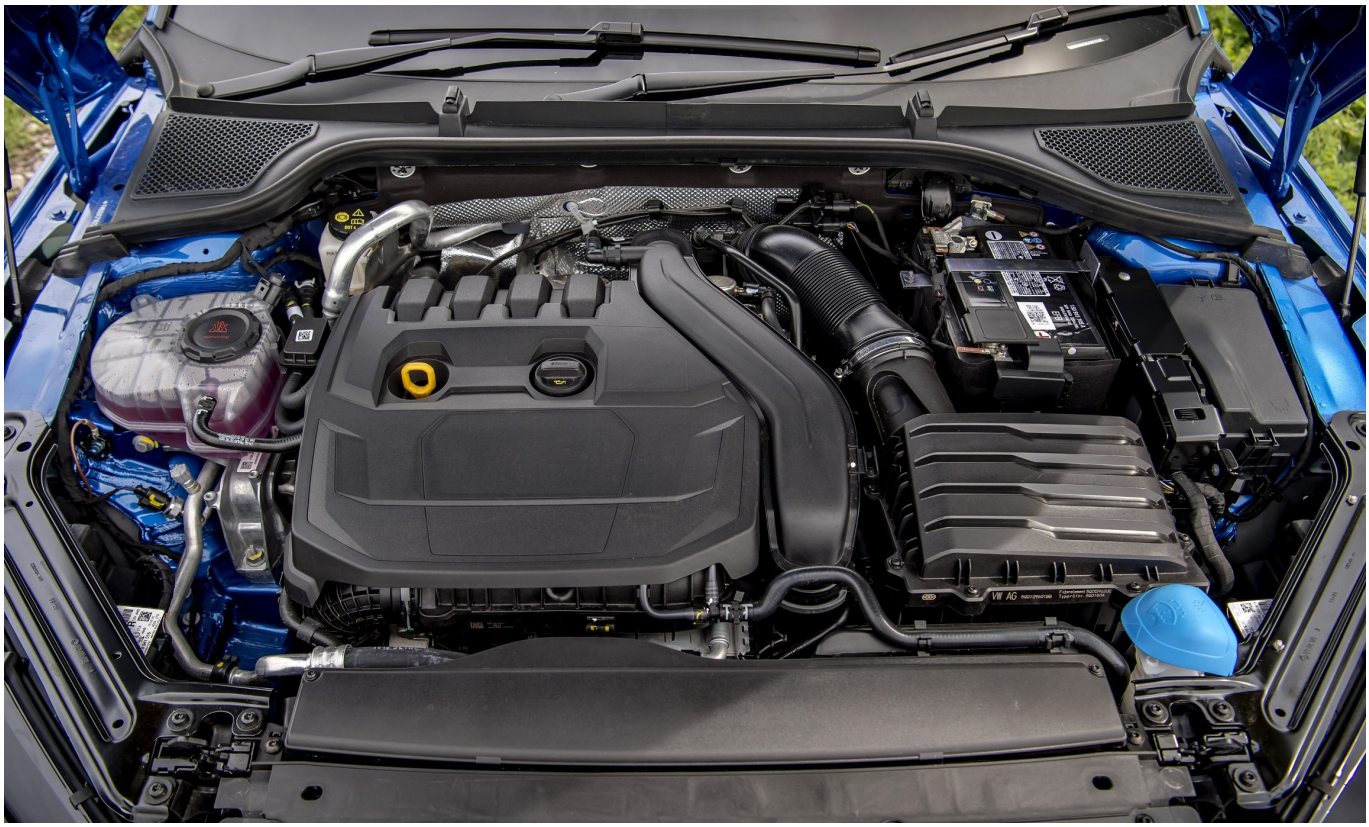


Behind the wheel I always get the impression with past Octavia models that I'm driving a bigger and better car than most of its direct C-segment competitors, certainly better for space and value for money.

The handling is sound, predictable and the ride generally comfortable although I wouldn't recommend the optional 18-inch alloy wheels fitted to my test car. They firmed up the ride at times with their lower profile tyres which couldn't effectively absorb thumps, bumps and noisy pothole impacts – stay with the standard 17-inch ones and save money as well.

The 2.0 litre TDI turbodiesel engine we know from past experiences and it has been the workhorse unit for most VW Group brands. In its latest updated form with new low emission controls the power output remains at 150 hp but with a massive 340 Nm (251 lb.ft) of

torque from the usual 1,750 rpm. The four cylinder unit still sounds a little gruff on start up but once warm the noise dies away and coupled with the ideal seven speed DSG auto gearbox driving becomes calm. Not that the engine/gearbox combination is docile, it could, if legal, push the Octavia Hatch up to 141 mph and the zero to 62 mph acceleration time is 8.7 seconds.



This revised unit also shines for fuel economy. Under the new WLTP testing procedure the Combined Cycle, depending on spec, ranges from 52.3 to 61.4 mpg. and my test car after a week of mainly short runs with one long journey included produced 58.9 mpg which is brilliant. Even cruising to and from my local town saw 54.4 mpg recorded day-in, day-out. The CO2 emissions range between 120 and 141 g/km, my model was rated at 136 g/km so First Year diesel rate VED tax costs £540 and then Standard rate at £150. Benefit-in-kind company car tax is rated at 34%, insurance is Group 19E and warranty is the usual ungenerous VW Group's three years/60,000 mile period.



VERDICT

Overall the new Skoda Octavia Hatch offers lots to like and little to displease, especially for those wanting space and good fuel economy. You will also get sharp styling and high spec levels as well. As Skoda says ‘Simply Clever’ and good news – there are more clever versions to come.

For: Sharp styling, interior space especially rear seat leg room for three adults, huge boot/load space in its sales sector, high driving support, safety and connectivity spec levels, well priced, comfortable ride most of the time, good handling, strong engine, smooth auto

gearbox, excellent real-life driving fuel economy.

Against: Diesel model attracts higher tax costs, gruff engine note at start-up when cold, poor road surfaces give a noisy and less smooth ride with larger 18-inch optional wheels, ungenerous VW Group warranty.



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

Skoda Octavia SE L First Edition Hatch, 2.0 TDI 150 hp, seven speed automatic.

Price: £28,460 (£30,606 as tested).

Engine/transmission: 2.0 litre, four cylinder TDI turbodiesel, 150 hp, 340 Nm (251 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm, seven speed auto, front wheel drive.

Performance: 141 mph, 0 – 62 mph 8.7 seconds, WLTP Combined Cycle 52.3 to 61.4 mpg (58.9 mpg overall on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 136 g/km, VED First Year diesel rate road tax £540 then £150 Standard rate, BiK company car tax 34%.

Insurance Group: 19E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,689 mm (15.38 ft), W 1,829 mm (6.00 ft), H 1,470 mm (4.82 ft), wheelbase 2,686 mm (8.81 ft), boot/load area 600 to 1,555 litres (21.19 to 54.91 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,600 kg (3,527 lb), five doors/five seats.