New Skoda Kodiaq Sportline – Road Test

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SKODA KODIAQ SPORTLINE – A MILES BETTER SPECIFICATION LARGE SUV…

…Assessed by David Miles (Miles Better News Agency)

It’s a fast evolving world in the car industry with changing fashions in the models we buy such as hatchbacks, saloons and estates losing out to SUVs, the introduction of new WLTP testing procedures which has caused delays in supplying compliant engines, and the introduction of new power units, the global fall in new car sales and of course the

demonization of diesel models continues, and should we mention the uncertainties over Brexit?

As an example of this fast changing world, Skoda recently introduced Sportline versions of their award winning large SUV – the Kodiaq. I was due to test the 1.4 TSI 150 hp turbo petrol powered model, but that was substituted because under the WLTP changes it is due to be replaced by the Volkswagen Group's new TSI 1.5 litre 150 hp, cylinder on demand petrol unit. So a 2.0 litre TSI 180 hp model with the new Sportline spec arrived instead so full marks to Skoda PR for keeping me mobile. However in this fast changing automotive world I've just learned this engine is also due for replacement this year (2019) by a cleaner but more powerful 190 hp TSI petrol engine, which is likely to be a shade more expensive to buy.

The core technical specification of this test model is 320 Nm (236 lb.ft) of torque from 1,400 rpm, Combined Cycle 38.2 mpg, CO2 170 g/km, top speed 127 mph and a zero to 62 mph

acceleration time of 8.2 seconds.

Despite the engine changes, what we know about now is that the award winning Skoda Kodiaq can be a five or seven seat model, depending on the spec chosen. These are SE, SE L, Scout, Sportline, Edition and L&K. A Kodiaq vRS 2.0 litre 240 hp Bi-Turbodiesel high performance model shown at the Paris Motor Show will join the UK range in the Spring priced at a hefty £42,870. Currently petrol engine options are 1.5 TSI 150 and the outgoing 2.0 TSI 180 I tried, and as of now diesel choices are 2.0 TDI 150 and 190 hp. Four wheel drive is available for all but the 1.5 litre TSI engines, and the 2.0 180 hp TSI petrol and 2.0 TDI 190 hp turbodiesel models have a seven speed DSG auto gearbox as standard.

Current on the road prices covering 44 derivatives range from £25,770 to £40,170.

The Skoda Kodiaq large SUV first arrived in the UK in 2017 and I haven't driven one since then. In the meantime it has received numerous awards based on its versatility, ability, price and specification. In recent times the SUV market in all areas has boomed for sales and SUV ranges from most brands have evolved with more engines, derivatives and additional higher and sports styling specification levels added.

Drive forward the Sportline versions which are seven-seater models with prices from £35,695 to £37,855. My test version, the 2.0 TSI 180 hp auto 4WD, costs £36,190.

The Sportline spec level, also used for other Skoda ranges, offers the dynamic styling of

Skoda’s performance models, but is focussed on practicality rather than speed. But there is certainly no lack of pace from the exiting 2.0 TSI 180 hp turbo petrol engine and its slick auto seven speed twin-clutch gearbox, with the 4WD system providing plenty of adhesion on our soaking wet winter roads. For good measure it has a selectable off-road mode which includes hill descent control, so it’s a very good comprehensive technical package. With a healthy 320 Nm (236 lb.ft) of torque available from just 1,400 rpm it is very responsive either travelling along winding country roads or during acceleration on fast open roads. It cruises with absolute ease at 70 mph, plus, being a petrol engine, it’s very quiet at all speeds and in all conditions. With our traffic grid-locked pre Christmas driving conditions in stop-start town traffic it was a joy to use.

Another joy of driving was this model's very comfortable and compliant ride quality. For a big SUV fitted with eye-catching 20-inch wheels shod with low profile tyres it was a pleasure to travel in. It's more often-than-not the case that with any car fitted with oversized wheels and skinny depth tyres the ride quality just spoils the ownership experience for a lot of people. I just wish other Volkswagen Group brands using the same components adopted Skoda's ride quality and handling settings, it's just another example of how Skoda differs from its other family members of Audi, SEAT and VW brands.

I also just wish the real-life fuel economy of the test vehicle was a bit better. On test, road use only, it returned 29.7 mpg, too far short of the 38.2 official Combined Cycle figure. With CO2 emissions of a heavy 170 g/km the VED petrol rate First Year road tax is £515 before the Standard rate of £140 is applied for year two onwards. Company car drivers will pay 35% Benefit-in-Kind tax – very close to the maximum 37% level.

The Kodiaq SUV Sportline, although sporty to drive if required, is all about Sports styling and equipment and it's a model path followed by most other mainstream manufacturers who have systematically added higher spec sportier looking variants to broaden the appeal of their model ranges.

With full order books since it was announced, the Kodiaq Sportline exterior specification additions include deeper front and rear bumpers, additional black trim details including the radiator grille, roof rails, door mirror housings, window trims and rear diffuser, which is flanked by two chrome-trimmed exhaust tailpipes.

Inside the changes include a leather-bound flat bottomed sports steering wheel, carbon effect dashboard and door trim inserts, Alcantara trimmed sports front seats, second and third row seats and door panels. There is also LED interior lighting, aluminium pedals, sports style instrument dials and a Sportline plaque.

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Away from styling more practical features include Care Connect connectivity, multi-function computer, Columbus sat-nav with a 9.2-inch touchscreen, DAB radio, Smartlink, cornering LED foglights, full LED headlights with adaptive function, LED daytime running lights, LED rear lights, cruise control, driving mode selector including an Eco setting, dual zone air con, electrically operated tailgate, very useful keyless entry and pushbutton start, auto lights and wipers and those nice unique Skoda touches of an umbrella in the front doors, removable LED torch in the boot and an ice scraper located in the fuel filler flap. Although the vehicle has front and rear parking sensors a rear view camera would have been useful, given its

long length. But as always Skoda goes that extra mile to provide customer-friendly products which sets them apart from other VW Group brands as well as most other manufacturers.

The other benefits of this version of the Kodiaq are its seven seats arranged in three rows which provide numerous layouts for passenger and load carrying combinations. The rear row of two seats are really only suitable for child passengers but with all seats in use there is still 270 litres (9.53 cu.ft) of boot space and depending on whether the second and third row of seats are either up or down this goes up in stages to a maximum of 2,065 litres (72.94 cu.ft). For good measure it also has a braked towing weight of 2,000 kg (4,409 lb) so it's a really useful workhorse as well.

VERDICT

I don't normally do any Car of the Year awards because what might be best for one person isn't suitable for somebody else. But in this case my SUV of the Year is the Skoda Kodiaq range because it just offers so much in terms of user-friendly functions, excellent ride comfort and interior space – no matter what engine or spec level is chosen, and all at competitive prices.

For: Hugely versatile user-friendly roomy large SUV, comfortable ride, sharp handling, responsive high torque engine, smooth auto gearbox, high specification, attractive kerb appeal, wide range of models to chose from at competitive prices in its sector.

Against: Real-life fuel economy, high-ish tax costs, no rear view camera as standard, ungenerous VW Group warranty.

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

Skoda Kodiaq Sportline 2.0 TSI, 180 hp, DSG auto, 4×4, seven seat large SUV.

Price: £36,190.

Engine/transmission: 2.0 litre, four cylinder turbocharged direct injection petrol 180

hp, 320 Nm (236 lb.ft) of torque from 1,400 rpm, seven speed DSG auto, 4WD.

Performance: 127 mph, 0–62 mph 8.2 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 38.2 mpg (29.7 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 170 g/km, VED petrol First Year road tax £515, Year Two £140, BiK company car tax 35%.

Insurance Group: 23E.

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), wheelbase 2,791 mm (9.16 ft), boot/load space 270 to 2,065 litres (9.53 to 72.94 cu.ft), braked towing weight 2,000 kg (4,409 lb), five doors/seven seats.