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SEAT Arona FR 24 LE – Road Test

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SEAT has earned its place as the stylish brand for a younger



generation of drivers over the last four decades, writes Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales).

On sale since 2017, the SEAT Arona is one of the new generation of 'crossover' models or tall hatchbacks in the B-sector and the smallest in their sub-compact range under the Ateca.

Its introduction has helped SEAT pass the magic million mark for SUVs and Arona sales have taken a hefty 500,000 in seven years, more than the slightly bigger Ateca, and is their best selling model by far.

This year saw the introduction of only the second generation Arona since 2017 and to mark the brand's 40th anniversary there was a special Limited Edition with distinctive grey paint, unique wheels and enhanced technical features including a 10-inch infotainment screen.

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There are four different petrol powertrains between 95 and 150 PS output, 5 or 6 speed manual and 7 speed automatic transmission, and six trim levels, priced between £22,450 and £29,250 (*as of October 2024*). Our test car was the upper mid-range FR 24 Sport with mid-range TSI petrol engine and dual clutch automatic transmission, ideal as a city runabout or commuter car.



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Its very sleek styling with a 'floating roof' give the impression of a larger five-door model than is the case yet it will seat four in comfort and five at a pinch, but with a very good basic boot capacity and offset split back seat which allows it to more than double the loadspace if needed.

Our mid-range engine really revved easily and pulled well, belying its capacity, and despite the automatic transmission it consistently returned over 40 mpg.

It was brisk - not rapid - accelerating, but its longer gearing in top made easy work of motorways even if it changed down a lot in cross-country trips which did reduce the economy below the claimed WLTP figure in the higher 40 mpg sector.

Generally it was a quiet unit too until pushed to perform or with a few passengers aboard, and despite rising noise it was remarkably smooth nevertheless.

Gearchanges were very smooth, the steering light with a good turning circle in town and not twitchy at speed on winding roads. Underfoot, the brakes were nicely balanced between assistance and effort and the parking brake securely held it on slopes.

The secondary controls were familiar, close to hand and worked well within easy reach of the steering wheel, with a selection of buttons on the spokes and more across the fascia. Dials in front of the driver could be changed to reflect the chosen modes on the console and their display was compact but clear.

The bigger infotainment screen in the dash-centre was packed with features and easy to read if a little slow to change functions when chosen.

Heating and ventilation was good throughout, simple and effective and backed up by powered windows.

Oddments room was fair, not generous for a family car, but the low opening flat bottomed loadbed was easy to use and capacity gradually increased with a 60:40 offset split rear seat



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to provide more space than a Golf.



Access was fairly good through the doors but a little bit of a challenge for larger people



using the rear side doors. Driver and front passenger had an easier entry or exit and the cloth-covered seats were well shaped for them, a little less so for other passengers. Adjustment in front was good and an adjustable column meant the driver had a wide choice of settings.

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Visibility was very good to the front with big wipers, good washers and bright headlights, along with big door mirrors. The back window was deep and reversing was helped by sensors.

Noise levels were low unless the engine was busy and just a low, constant rumble could be heard from the tyres.

Ride quality was good for such a small car until some rougher surfaces showed up and then the springs and shock absorbers had their work cut out coping with what was thrown at them.

The FR 24's connectivity with mobile phones and WiFi made it ideal for drivers and passengers who like to keep in touch and enjoy their music to the full thanks to a sophisticated sound system with voice recognition as well. That really is high specification in a lower priced car.

There was also a suite of safety systems to keep danger away when in traffic, overtaking, or on increasingly speed checked roads. Surprisingly, intelligent headlights to automatically dim or deploy were not standard but an option.

VERDICT

It really is a very attractive package at the price when value counts as well as style.

For: Good handling, agile, compact turning circle, comfortable, roomy in front, reasonable



economy for performance, good equipment

Against: Busy engine when pressed, some road and suspension noises, slow infotainment screen.

FAST FACTS

Model: SEAT Arona FR24 LE

Price: £28,620

Mechanical: 115 PS 3 cyl 1.0 litre turbo-petrol, 7 speed DSG

Max Speed: 120 mph

0 - 62 mph: 10.3 secs

Combined MPG: 42

Insurance Group: 14E

C02 emissions: 131 g/km

Bik rating: 31%, £270FY, £190SR

Warranty: 3 years/ 60,000 miles

Size: L 4.16 m (13.65 ft), W 1.78 m (5.84 ft), H 1.53 m (5.02 ft)

Bootpace: 400 to 823 litres (14.13 to 29.06 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,231 kg (2,714 lb)



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