SEAT Leon Estate – Road Test

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At a time when so many cars look the same, one stood out with us, the SEAT Leon FR Black Edition, writes Robin Roberts (and

WheelsWithinWales).

There are five trim levels with hatch or estate bodystyles, four powertrains including diesel and manual or automatic transmission from £25,345 to £41,210 for the big 34-model wide range.

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Continuous improvement means since launching in 1999 there have to date been four generations and the current series uses the latest VW Group platform also found in Golf and Skoda models but adapted to their specifications.

There is still said to be another four years to go before it gets a big update – cue BEV – in the range change.

SEAT engine technology really lacks nothing from a driving point of view and the latest mild-hybrid system as fitted to the test car certainly dramatically contributed to the overall economy we enjoyed.



You can select different driving modes to maximum economy or performance

and even mix it up a bit to bring up features you prefer from a modest but good menu.

The engine was a quick starter, pulled well in Sport mode in particular and was always responsive to throttle changes. It also immediately changed character if you decided to utilise a different driving mode and this is very handy when moving from urban to open-road driving.

Not only was it quick responding but also very smooth changing whether going up or down the box thanks to the dual clutch set-up under-hand.

Steering was sharp even in the relaxed eco or normal modes and noticeably firmed in the Sport setting. The turning circle was good and there was no vibration or kick-back.

Underfoot, the brakes were well up to anything asked of them, delivering rapid deceleration with modest pressure and almost instant stopping if it sensed danger ahead, although I did find that a bit alarming on two occasions. The parking brake securely held it on a slope.

Secondary switches on column, wheel-spokes and along the fascia and central console were well marked and light to the touch with good sized instruments infront of the driver and a bigger infotainment display to the left.

It carries all the usual support features for entertainment, navigation, telecoms and enhanced driving information which were very clear and quick changing behind the touchscreen, but be warned it also clearly showed

fingertip prints.

I liked the simplicity and efficiency of the heating and ventilation with wide temperature settings, good output direction and plenty of push to cool or warm the cabin throughout.

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Oddments room is fair but not exceptional in a family car or one regularly used on long journeys and the bootspace is average before the offset split rear seatbacks are dropped or the ski-hatch is used.

Loading the boot from the back or sides was simple, the cabin had fairly wide opening doors and once inside the room was reasonable, but maybe a squash for anyone in the rear middle seat.

Front seats adjustment was very good and their shape and support made longer trips a pleasure and even the back seats had welcome support and location.

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Ride quality was slightly on the firm side but not really uncomfortable and much of that must be down to the big wheels and tyres.

Handling was worry-free with good sharp reactions, a lot of feedback through the wheel and footbrake and seemingly reassuring grip on wet and leafy roads.

It was brisk from standstill, accelerated well mid-range and cruised effortless at the 70 mph limit.

Over a wide mixture of roads we effortlessly averaged 62 mpg, well over the indicated best in WLTP tests. Only once did we see it dip to just under 50 mpg.

For many, the estate shape is more nimble and agile than a big SUV and certainly its usually easier to find a suitable parking space in centres which were designed with saloons in mind.

Visibility from the Leon Estate was very good with low waistline, deep windscreen, brilliant lights and really efficient washers and wipers both ends.

It also looks very good inside and has an eye-catching shape and design touches. Sophistication and refinement stand out.



Steplight design – a friendly welcome to the vehicle!

VERDICT

The SEAT Leon Estate mayn’t be first on your list but everything else might seem second best nevertheless.

For: Highly refined powertrain & very sophisticated interior, excellent seats, incredible economy, versatile loadspace

Against: Tight for three in rear, small nominal boot, some road rumbles and jiggly ride on poor surfaces.



FAST FACTS

Model: SEAT Leon FR Black Edition eHybrid Estate

Price: £36,905

Mechanical: 150 PS, 4 cyl 1498cc petrol-hybrid, 7 speed DSG

Max Speed: 135 mph

0 – 62 mph: 8.7 secs

Combined MPG: 62

Insurance Group: 21E

C02 emissions: 126 g/km

Bik rating:30% **,** £110FY, £195SR

Warranty: 3 years/ 60,000 miles

Size: L 4.65 m (15.26 ft), W 1.80 m (5.91 ft), H 1.45 m (4.76 ft)

Bootspace: 470 to 1,470 litres (16.60 to 51.91 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,417 kg (3,124 lb)

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