SEAT Tarraco – Road Test

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THE NEW SEAT TARRACO – 140,000 PEOPLE CANNOT BE WRONG...

...says David Miles (Miles Better News Agency)

The new SEAT Tarraco is a seven seat large SUV and its name is taken from the Mediterranean city of Tarragona and that name was chosen by 140,000 on-line enthusiasts.

Priced from £28,335 to £38,055 the Tarraco range joins the SEAT Spanish arm of the VW Group's other SUVs – the compact Arona and the very highly rated and award winning Ateca mid-sized SUV – both these models being five doors, five seat offerings.

But the Tarraco is aimed at those who want even more space, more seating or load carrying combination options so it can also compete with now less popular MPV people carriers. We know SUV styling is the driving force behind new cars sales.

Depending on the spec chosen there is the choice of two direct injection turbocharged petrol engines – 1.5 TSI Evo 150 hp manual 2WD and the 2.0 TSI 190 hp with standard fit DSG auto gearbox and 4Drive 4WD. For those that want diesel power there is the usual VW Group's workhorse unit – the 2.0 TDI 150 hp manual with 2WD, the same unit with DSG auto and 4Drive and the 2.0 TDI 190 hp with standard fit DSG auto and 4Drive. All engines have start-stop technology.

Spec levels are SE, SE Technology, Xcellence and Xcellence Lux and of course personalisation options. Further spec levels of FR and FR Sport are scheduled and a plug-in hybrid powertrain will also be added next year.



The Tarraco is mainly about interior space. With all three rows of seats in use there is a small 230 litres (8.12 cu.ft) boot, fold down the third row of two rear individual seats and this increases to 700 litres (24.72 cu.ft) and with the second and third rows of seats folded

down the load space increases to a cavernous 1,775 litres (62.68 cu.ft).

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All spec levels have a 10.25-inch digital cockpit and 8.0-inch floating central display screen, and importantly the heating and ventilation controls are separate and so not operated via the touchscreen. Standard equipment includes Front assist, Lane Assist and Emergency Call. Such items as Park Assist, an Electric Tailgate with virtual pedal which allows the foot to be waved under the rear bumper to open the tailgate and a top view camera system are amongst the convenience items available. Also included are the now commonplace connectivity functions so overall it’s a well specced, practical and well equipped vehicle at whatever level of equipment is chosen. However you need to pay an extra £110 if you want a space-saver spare wheel rather than the tyre repair kit, a must have I feel for most people. If you need a towbar with electrics that adds £685 to the price and a panoramic sunroof adds a further £960.



Its competitor models are fairly numerous these days even in this large size SUV segment and its closest rival also comes from the VW Group of brands; it's the highly rated Skoda Kodiaq but that offers five and seven seat models, with the same engine and drivetrain choices at similar prices. Probably the deciding factor on whether to buy a SEAT Tarraco or a Skoda Kodiaq will be down to whichever dealership is most convenient and which offers the best transaction price or finance deal. Also to be considered in the large SUV segment are the Mazda CX-5, Citroën C5 Aircross, Peugeot 5008, Kia Sorento, Hyundai Santa Fe, VW Tiguan Allspace and moving to premium brands – the Audi Q5, BMW X5, Land Rover Discovery and Volvo XC90.

Designed and developed by SEAT in Spain, but manufactured at the VW Group's Wolfsburg Plant in Germany, the Tarraco SUV is 4,735 mm (15.53 ft) long, 1,839 mm (6.03 ft) wide and 1,674 mm (5.49 ft) tall – creating a huge interior space and an imposing robust exterior

image. At the front is a prominent grille design flanked by full LED headlights, retaining the company's triangular signature. The LED lighting also allows for dynamic rear indicators which have become popular with many new cars. The wide and full height tailgate gives easy access to a flat load floor with no high sill to load items over and into the vehicle. Overall the Tarraco has a more conservative visual appearance than some of its 'blinged-up' rivals.

Inside it's much the same story with all the controls well laid out, most of the specification most commonly needed and with reasonable amounts of soft-touch trim. However there is an equal measure of harder plastic trim as well. It's all very clean and clinical in its interior styling but perhaps a bit bland.

My test drive model had the popular 2.0 litre TDI 150 hp turbodiesel engine, six speed manual gearbox and with 2WD. A rotary dial allows various driving models from Eco to Individual to be chosen at will. This model with the Xcellence spec level I tried costs £31,900. Some of the additional spec items you get with the Xcellence versions includes 19-inch alloy wheels, dark tinted rear windows, chrome roof rails, sat-nav with 3D mapping, Alcantara trimmed front sports seats, Adaptive Cruise Control with speed limiter, KESSY keyless entry with push-button start, Park Assist self parking and front parking sensors plus a rear view camera.

The engine we know well from other SEAT and most other VW Group brands. It's a strong workmanlike performer with 340 Nm (251 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm and it works well with the six speed manual gearbox. For preference I'd find the extra refinement and ease of driving worthy of choosing the seven speed DSG automatic gearbox. But that comes with 4Drive 4WD traction and pushes the price up to £36,815, which might be a step too far for some owners particularly as it increases the running, insurance and tax costs.

With CO2 emissions of 129 g/km the manual version I tried has the First Year diesel rate VED road tax cost of £170 and then £145 Standard rate. Company car drivers will pay 33% Benefit-in-Kind tax and Insurance is Group 24E. For the auto version with CO2 emission

figures of 146 g/km the VED First Year tax is £210 and BiK tax goes up to the maximum 37% rate and insurance is Group 26E. The manual model has a WLTP Combined Cycle fuel economy figure of 47.1 mpg and my week of test driving covering all types of roads and driving conditions returned a very good 44.1 mpg which considering the size of the vehicle and its multi number of seats was impressive. By way of comparison the auto version official Combined Cycle figure is 39.2 mpg.

As for performance the top speed of my manual gearbox model was 126 mph and zero to 62 mph takes an acceptable 9.8 seconds, more or less matched by the auto gearbox model.



The handling for such a large and elevated vehicle was good, sharp front end steering response, accurate feedback through the steering wheel and it was generally composed and

well-balance. However the larger 19-inch wheels didn't help with ride comfort on country roads where impacts from potholes were well and truly felt inside the cabin. I also noted there was significant wind noise at higher cruising speeds from the door mounted mirrors.



VERDICT

Overall the new SEAT Tarraco seven seat large SUV, in whatever spec chosen, will fit the bill for most people who want the fashionable SUV styling and need to carry at times up to seven people, or less people and lots of load space. It doesn't obviously stand out from other similar models in a crowded market place but neither does it not measure up to what it was designed to do. The deciding factors for customers will be convenience of a SEAT dealership and the actual haggled price or most attractive PCP finance deal. If the best deal turns out to be a Tarraco over any of its competitors you won't be losing out.

For: Versatile and fashionably styled large SUV, seating for seven, large load area when needed, well equipped, strong fuel efficient diesel engine, wide range of engine choices, competitively priced.

Against: Doesn’t stand out for exterior kerb appeal, somewhat bland interior styling, access to the third row of seats is best done by agile children, very firm ride with the large wheels, wind noise from the door mirrors, ungenerous VW Group warranty.



Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec in Brief:

SEAT Tarraco 2.0 TDI Xcellence, 150 hp manual, seven seat SUV.

Price: £31,900.

Engine/transmission: 2.0 litre, four cylinder, direct injection turbodiesel with start/stop, six speed manual, 2WD.

Performance: 126 mph, 0–62 mph 9.8 seconds.

Fuel consumption: WLTP Combined Cycle 47.1 mpg (44.1 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 129 g/km, diesel rate VED First Year road tax £170 then £145 Standard rate, BiK company car tax 33%.

Insurance Group: 24E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,735 mm (15.53 ft), W 1,839 mm (6.03 ft), H 1,674 mm (5.49 ft), wheelbase 2,790 mm (9.15 ft), boot/load space 230 to 1,775 litres (8.12 to 62.68 cu.ft), braked towing weight, 2,200 kg (4,850 lb), five doors/seven seats.