Skoda Citigo Road Test

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The Skoda Citigo – It's Here in Black and White

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In the UK's new car market, 'A' segment small City/Mini cars saw a big sales drop of 16.6%

in 2015. It seems customers were lured away to larger ‘B’ segment supermini models, being marketed by cheap finance offers on low mileage used or pre-registered dealer stock cars. There was also a move by style and cash conscious punters to the latest must-have compact SUVs, again available in plentiful numbers on dealer’s forecourts with low prices and easy-buy payment terms.

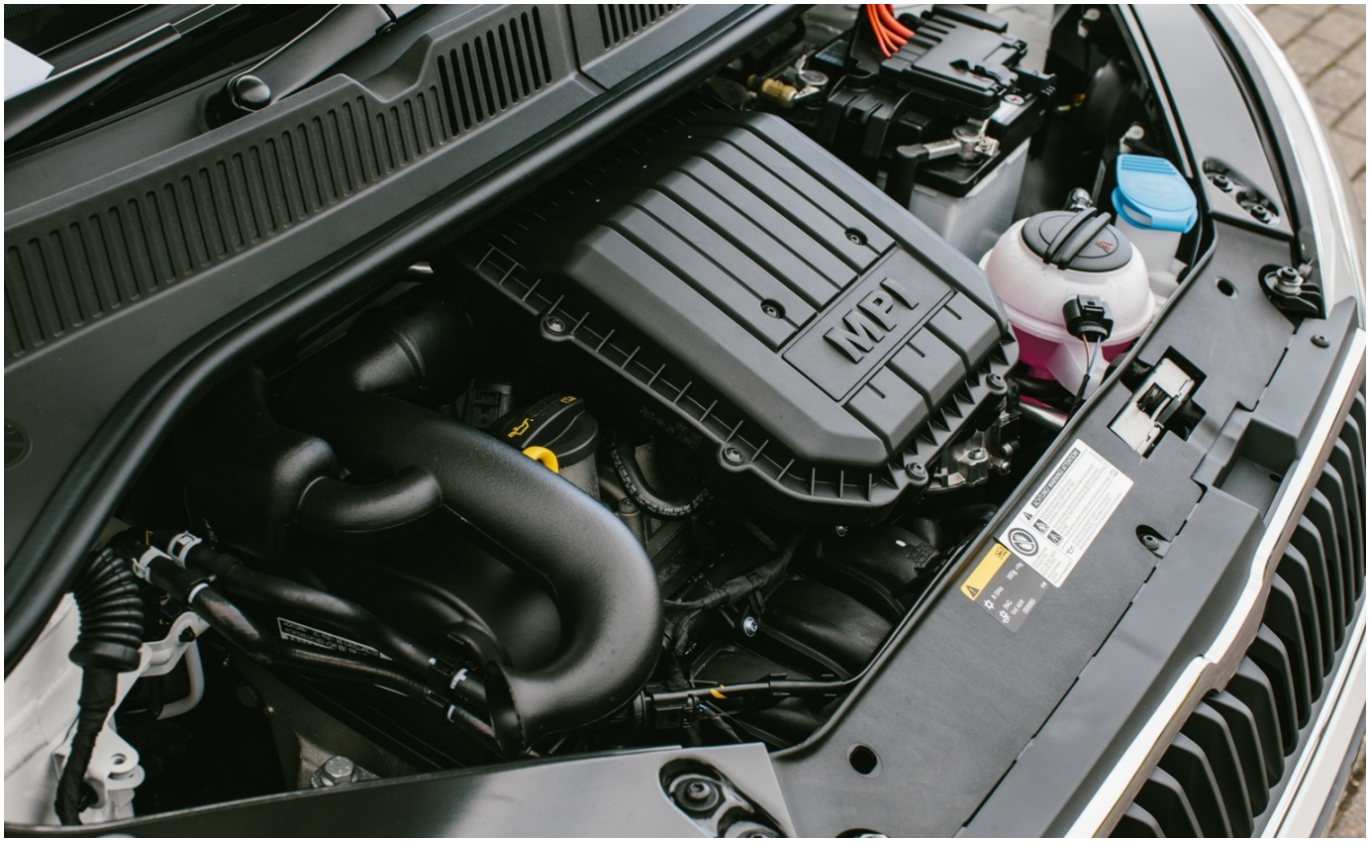
The Skoda Citigo is one of the ‘A’ segment City Car offerings, but it is also a triplet sharing its genes with the VW up and SEAT Mii, all part of the VW Group family. These three are generally recognised as being the roomiest and most practical, because of their boxy styling. But they are not necessarily the best-equipped or cheapest to buy, compared with the Suzuki Celerio, Hyundai i10, Citroën C1, Peugeot 108, Toyota Aygo and so on.

Skoda saw their overall UK sales drop by a small 1% in 2015, but to put that fall into context, the overall market went up by 6.3%. Driven by finance offers so far this year their sales have gone up by 7%. Getting back into the BLACK in terms of sales, Skoda’s Citigo range has a recently introduced Black Edition with added spec for very little extra money. Called Black there is a choice of two body colours, Black and, mysteriously, White. It is available with three and five door body options, priced at £9,990 and £10,340 respectively. Other Citigo three door versions start from £8,275 – and £8,625 for the more useful five door variants.

Currently Skoda is offering a Personal Contract Plan to 18 year olds and over with variable 0-30% deposits for the Black models. They highlight a monthly repayment fee of £79 a month over 42 months requires a deposit of £2,858, and with a mileage limit of 35,000 miles. With an insurance rating of a very low Group 2E it would seem a good way to get on the motoring ladder for youngsters and to reduce motoring costs if used as a second car for family duties.

The Citigo Black I tried (but White in colour) is a compact 3,563 mm (11.7 ft) in length and powered by a 1.0 litre 60 hp triple cylinder normally aspirated petrol engine, mated with a five speed manual gearbox. The engine produces a maximum of 95 Nm (70 lb.ft) of torque at

3,000 rpm, but it delivers significant grunt well below that figure. It was surprisingly pleasant to drive and relatively responsive, holding 4th/5th gears at low rpm in busy in-town traffic conditions. On the open road it held its own better than some of these small capacity normally aspirated three-cylinder petrol engined models. It will cruise happily at 70mph but without a turbocharger it does take a little time to get to that pace. Top speed is 100 mph and zero to 62mph takes a lengthy 14.4 seconds.



It became quite a skill on some roads, such as busy dual carriageways, not to get fenced in on the inside lane and lose momentum to overtake slower lorries. Lose momentum and the overtaking pace was lost – at least until the horses started pulling again. With five well sorted ratios in tune with the engine's powerband the Citigo Black five door I tried proved to be better than just another City Car. Yes that will be its main use, but it coped well on major roads and for some people it could easily be their only car.

It is cheap to run, with an official Combined Cycle figure of 62.8 mpg, and during my week long test with everything from commuting to motorways the real-life figure was 51.5 mpg. Again an example of unrealistic official figures versus a real-life one, but I was happy with the 50 mpg plus my driving time returned. With CO2 of 105 g/km, VED road tax is £0 cost for the First Year, and the rate going up to £20 for Year Two onwards. Bear in mind it is expected these VED rates will upwards change in the next Government Budget in March, to become applicable in April.

The handling was relatively surefooted, with a flat and level ride through corners and good grip from the front wheels during cornering, with not too much understeer. The rear suspension in particular transmitted bumps and jarring impacts into the passenger compartment but at least it didn't unsettle the car's handling, causing it to hop around and move of course. The steering was light and precise and the brakes felt well balanced.

So written in black and white what does the owner get in the way of extra equipment from the Citigo Black Edition? The wheels are black alloys, there is sunset privacy glass and body coloured door mirrors but annoyingly these remain with manual adjustment. Inside the Black spec includes Skoda's easy to use Portable Infotainment Device mounted centrally on top of the dashboard. This provides sat-nav, hands-free Bluetooth, computer and multimedia functions. There is also manual air conditioning, four additional speakers, electrically operated front windows and a height-adjustable driver's seat.

The Citigo Black Edition I tried was the five door version, and for that it is well worth paying the extra £350 over the three door version, just because of the extra usability it brings in terms of loading rear seat passengers or just putting bags or coats on to the rear two seats. Rear seat legroom isn't that great, but better than some in this City Car sector. With its boxy shaped passenger compartment, headroom is good front and rear. There is a deep 251 litre (8.9 cu.ft) boot at the rear and when the rear seat backs are folded down this goes up to an impressive 959 litres (33.9 cu.ft). The only drawback is loading the deep boot with heavy bags over a high rear sill.

VERDICT

If the price fits and the Citigo fits in terms of size the Black Edition models are competitive for price and low running costs. Yes, there are cheaper as well as more expensive Citigo versions, but this mid-range model looks the best buy. However in this sector there is a very wide choice of other City Cars, some cheaper, some with less CO2 emissions and even lower tax costs so it is a buyer's market in a sector which seems to have lost some of its appeal.

For: Well built, reasonably practical, cheap to run and insure, competitive pricing, higher Black Edition spec for little extra money.

Against: Sluggish acceleration, real life fuel economy well below the official figures, manually adjusted door mirrors, deep boot/high rear sill so it's not easy to load heavy bags, competes in a very competitive City Car market sector where UK sales have been falling.

MILESTONES AND WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC. IN BRIEF:

Skoda Citigo Black Edition 1.0 MPI 60hp 5 door.

Engine: 1.0 litre, 3 cylinder normally aspirated petrol.

Transmission: Five speed manual.

Power: 60 hp.

Torque: 95 Nm (70 lb.ft) of torque at 3,000 rpm.

Performance:

0-62mph: 14.4 seconds.

Top speed: 100 mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 62.8 mpg (51.5 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 105 g/km, VED road tax £0/£20.

Insurance Group: 2E.

Warranty: 3 years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 3,563 mm (11.7 ft), W 1,645 mm (5.4 ft), H 1,478 mm (4.85 ft), boot/load space 251 to 959 litres (8.9 to 33.9 cu.ft), 5 doors/4 seats.

Price: £10,340.