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Skoda Karoq – Road Test

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Keith Ward assesses Skoda's impressive five door mid-size Karoq SUV...

SUCCESSING the successful Yeti in Skoda's expanding SUV line up is a very different-looking animal.

The Karoq is more conventionally good looking and rounded than its boxy predecessor with the big windows, and a lot less distinctive. You may be hard-pressed to pick it out from many other SUV's in the office or supermarket car park.

It shares a VAG Group platform with the VW Tiguan and SEAT Ateca, while bearing a strong family resemblance to Skoda's own larger, seven-seat Kodiaq, tagged from around £5,000 dearer.

And in case you are wondering, there's a link between those two curious names. Skoda explain: Karoq comes from the language of the Alutiiq tribe, which is native to Kodiaq island



in Alaska. (Impress your friends – or not).

Lay a tape on them and you find the Karoq is longer and lower than the van-like Yeti, with a marginally larger boot. Prices start at around £3,000 higher, too, as Skoda cash in on their growing brand respectability, so raising the Karoq tag slightly above the Nissan Qashqai and SEAT Ateca, if still below the VW Tiguan.

The exclusively five-door Karoq offers a choice of four trim levels, four engines – two each petrol and diesel with outputs between 115 and 150 PS – in a 20-strong range at prices between £20,875 (1.0 TSI SE petrol) and £31,690 (2.0 TDI Edition diesel automatic with standard 4WD).

That seven-speed DSG automatic transmission is available across the range as an alternative to six-speed manual. CO2 emissions start from 117 g/km (1.6 TDI 115 PS DSG).

Standard Karoq features generously include aluminium alloy wheels, privacy glass, LED rear lights, dual-zone climate control, pedestrian monitor and driver fatigue sensor. An additional SE Technology trim is designed to appeal to business and fleet customers.

In upper-trim versions of the Karoq, the clever Varioflex system's three rear seats have been carried over from the Yeti. These can recline, slide back and forth or, to give a real Tardis touch, be removed completely, if not easily – they're a ton weight and of course need to be stored – to provide a van-like capacity of 1,800-plus litres (63.57-plus cu.ft.).

On the minus side, with the rear seats left in but folded, there's a quite hefty 220 mm (about nine inches) step across the extended boot floor, so no easy sliding in of long items.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

Dashboard technology and connectivity receives what is these days an obligatory breathless upgrade to keep abreast of rivals, featuring a screen (huge 9.2-inch on our top-trim Edition model tested here) responding to touch, swipe and – less consistently – gesture. You now get



Apple CarPlay and Android Auto smartphone mirroring.

Altogether, the roomy cabin of the Karoq is a pleasant and comfortable place to be, apart from a curiously greyed-out speedo which had me longing for a head-up display.

Other features of the Edition trim include a panoramic sunroof (slightly reducing headroom), rear view camera, leather seats (front pair heated; driver's electric with memory), cruise control, dual zone climate, lane assist, front assist radar and auto braking, chrome roof rails and electrically operated boot.

Puddle lights project the Skoda emblem for you to step out onto - there's posh - and there are the usual thoughtful touches from this manufacturer - an umbrella under the passenger seat; a disposable litter bag in the driver's door pocket.

On the road, the Karoq's suspension favours ride comfort against ultra-sharp handling, though the big 19-inch wheels on this version do tend to pick out uneven surfaces.

The Yeti's 148 bhp 1.4 litre petrol engine gives way in the Karoq to a turbo-driven 1.5 litre that produces the same power but averages up to 52.3 mpg in official tests - a claimed 7.5 mpg improvement.

This unit is also equipped with Active Cylinder Technology (ACT), briefly switching off the second and third of the four cylinders when their power output is not needed. It kicks in between 1,400 and 4,000 rpm and up to a speed of 70 mph.

It's all pretty seamless - you don't feel a thing and, depending on your driving style, claims to save up to 0.5 litres of fuel per 100 km. In real life we recorded 42.3 mpg from a varied week's motoring.

Given its capacity, the performance figures (0-62 mph in 8.6 seconds) are impressive, although slam your foot down with that familiar DSG automatic in sport mode and you are aware how hard it is working.



So far this year (2018) in a depressed UK car market down by more than 12 per cent in the first quarter, Skoda are doing relatively well with a dip of just over 3 per cent.

The best-selling Karoq version in the UK is expected to be the SE, but allied to the 1.5 TSI 150 PS petrol engine featured here. Karoq sales are expected to be around 17,500 in 2018, split 60 per cent private to 40 per cent business fleet.



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DICTIONARY

OVER

If the Yeti has retreated to its snowbound Himalayan hideaway, the Karoq is looking to enjoy sunnier climes.

Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Skoda Karoq Edition 1.5 TSI

Medium-size SUV; five doors, five seats.

Size: Overall length 4,382 mm (14.38 ft); width 2,030 mm (6.66.ft); height 1,603 mm (5.26 ft); kerb weight 1,361 kg

Boot Deck length 790 to 1,440 mm (2.59 to 4.72 ft); width 1,000 mm (3.28 ft); volume 479 to 1,605 litres (16.92 to 56.68 cu.ft).



Engine: Petrol; 1.5 TSI; four cylinder; turbocharged; seven speed DSG dual-clutch auto

Power: 150 PS @ 5,000–6,000 rpm; max torque 184 lb ft (250 Nm) @ 1,500–3,500 rpm

Pace: 126 mph; 0–62 mph in 8.6 secs

MPG: On test 42.3; official comb 50.4; tank 50 litres (11.00 Imperial gallons)

Emissions and taxation: CO2 127 g/km; VED band G; BIK 24%

Tyres: 215/50; 19-inch alloys

Insurance Group: 16E

Warranty: 36 months/30,000 miles

PRICE: £28,410; as tested with options £29,815

Rivals: SEAT Ateca; Volvo XC40; Nissan Qashqai; VW Tiguan; Peugeot 3008; BMW X1