Skoda Karoq SE L – Road Test

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The latest version of the Skoda Karoq SE L...

…tried and tested by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

It’s not often you can begin to appreciate a car by looking in the boot, but the Skoda Karoq is different to other modern SUVs.

In profile or from the front it could really be any one of a number of rivals, but the differences start when you open the fifth-door and look in the boot as I found out.



The very large, wide, deep and cleanly styled luggage space has a purposeful reversible

floor panel with waterproof side, is variable in height, comes with luggage restraint nets and some substantial hooks either side to hang items such as wet clothing or shopping bags. Convenient.

Young or young at heart people in the back seats not only have a lot of room for all they seem to carry or wear but our test car came with drop-down individual trays fitted to the backs of the front seats with adjustable mounts for mobile phones so they can be used for games, music and, heaven forbid, video calls. There are power sockets too. Calming.



Now we know that young people have to be fed on journeys and in the front there's plenty of room for storing packs of sandwiches, crisps, energy bars, drinks and Skoda has even provided a custom-fitted waste bin to help keep the interior tidy, together with an elasticated strap to keep paperwork from falling about. Contentment.



When you have it this right from the outset and before turning on the engine you know you're onto a winner with families. There are numerous powertrain and transmission options plus specification levels so the range starts from £26,545 and goes up to £38,805 covering most budgets for a mid-sized SUV.

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Of course you need something for the driver too, and I don’t think many could be disappointed with the way the Skoda Karoq SE L covers ground.

The 1.5 TSI 150 PS, 4-cylinder turbo petrol engine is one of VW Group’s latest, offering very easy smooth power delivery, reasonably quick acceleration and – thanks to the intelligent cylinder deactivation technology which cuts out two pots if not needed – rewards with effortless economy.



With a heavier load aboard or need to accelerate, the four cylinders deliver a punch to safely overtake. All is done seamlessly and remarkably quietly as well.

Our manual gearbox model had a short action and progressive clutch with short-throw changes in a narrow gate for precise and quick movements and it never lacked the right gear for any situation, being brisk from standstill and long-legged on motorways and main roads.

Underfoot, the brakes were strong with just modest pressure applied and the parking brake securely held the 1.3 tonnes model on a familiar hill we use each day.

Steering the Skoda was effortless with power assistance doing all the work, feeding a compact turning circle without losing positive responses on winding country roads.

Secondary controls grouped on and around the wheel and column needed familiarisation and were not always logically laid out for this driver, but the screen ahead displayed large clear instruments and multi-function panel.

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A large central display housed the infotainment system and controls, worked well and very clearly showed what was selected.

Heating and ventilation worked well in the big cabin, finely and quickly changing as desired and backed up by powered windows, with good wash/wipe and very powerful headlights giving good vision in poorer conditions.

As suggested above, the oddments and luggage spaces were very good with a lot of nooks and crannies throughout together with pockets, bins and recesses.

Front and back seat passengers enjoyed a lot of room, good adjustment on the front pair, nicely supporting cushions and bolsters, with a neat splitting of the rear backrest to

maximise loading configurations and a drop down armrest with drinks holders in the middle of the bench-type seat.

Now all this would be wasted if the Skoda Karoq ride was poor, but it was of course, good. Not overly large wheels and tyres with sensible suspension settings meant the car covered all surfaces smoothly and without shaking occupants even when lightly laden.

Conversely it did not roll or wallow on bends taken at speed and it kept all four wheels firmly planted while not showing up any wayward tendencies on corners. It felt surefooted and safe at all times.


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The high driving position, low waistline and slim roof pillars permitted clear all round vision but if you missed anything a comprehensive package of sensors around the car and wide angle reversing camera alerted the driver to obstructions or danger.

There are three trim levels, SE Drive, SE L and Sportline, with buyers able to choose from three petrol and two diesel engines. They come with front or four wheel drive depending on the engine and trim level.

Skoda has updated its range of value-packed option packages. There’s a new Travel Assist Package Plus, which includes Adaptive Cruise Control, Front Assist with emergency braking, Blind Spot Detection, Traffic Sign Recognition, Lane Assist and Traffic Jam Assist.

VERDICT



The latest Skoda Karoq range is very focussed and really packs in a lot for their cost, which has inevitably risen, but I'm not surprised it has picked up awards for being so family friendly when it starts from the back. Clever.

For: Very family friendly with high levels of equipment, excellent powertrain, economical, roomy and comfortable, comprehensive sensors and clear reversing camera.

Against: A lot of hard black plastic interior trim, high fifth door opening not powered and

heavy bonnet, average warranty.



FAST FACTS

Skoda Karoq SE L



Price: £30,660

Mechanical: 150 PS 4 cylinder 1.5 TSI turbo petrol, 6 speed manual front wheel drive

Max Speed: 131 mph

0 – 62mph: 8.8 sec

Combined MPG: 42.2

Insurance Group: 17

C02 emissions: 148 g/km

Tax costs: BiK34%, VED £230FY, £165SR

Warranty: 3 years/ 60,000 miles

Size: L 4.39 m (14.40 ft) , W 2.03 m (6.66 ft), H 1.61 m (5.28 ft)

Boot space: 521 – 1810 litres (18.40 to 63.92 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1347 kg (2,970 lb.)