Skoda Kodiaq – Road Test

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Author: Keith Ward

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eith Ward test drive’s Skoda’s seven seater family SUV…

UNLIKE some classier brands, Skodas seem to be designed by people who actually drive their cars in everyday situations. It is to their credit.

Take the big new seven-seat family SUV, the Kodiaq. Ours came with a pair of umbrellas concealed in the front door armrests. Open the passenger doors and a sort of hairy rubber caterpillar on springs automatically sidles out to wrap protectively around the edges, a boon in today’s seemingly ever-tighter parking spaces. Handy bag hooks fold out of the boot sides. A removable lamp doubles as a torch.

When not in use, the cartridge holding the roll-out luggage cover stores neatly in its own niche below the boot floor.

In total, say Skoda, more than 30 of these “Simply Clever” features have been integrated

into

the new Kodiaq, seven of them “completely new”.

While the Kodiaq is just 40 mm (about an inch and a half) longer than the Octavia, it looks big and bold: Almost 4.7 m (15.4 ft) long, 1.7 m (5.6 ft) tall and claiming the largest luggage capacity in its class at a cavernous 2,000 plus litres (70 plus cu.ft), although it’s on the same VW Group platform as the Touran.

An initial 29-strong range keenly priced between £21,310 and £33,795 has recently (October 2017) been augmented with a new Scout version, priced from £32,330 and positioned between the SE L and Edition.

All but a handful of five-seaters at the lower end come with seven seats, in three rows. The middle row of three folds down 60:40 (not the more versatile 30:40:30 in some rivals), but do feature individually adjustable backrests and can slide back and forth by 180 mm (seven inches or so). Utilising that facility, leg and headroom are good.

The rearmost pair of identical seats, suitable more for youngsters than adults to access and occupy, can be folded into the floor to help create a more or less flat load deck as long as 1,700 mm (67 inches) on our tape.



So much for the practical. Fans of techno toys will note that the Kodiaq offers the “broadest range of driver assistance systems ever” in a Skoda. These include Area View, using cameras located around the car to create a bird’s eye top-down view and 180-degree images to the front and rear.

It’s also the first Skoda to feature a new Connect system delivering “unprecedented levels of connectivity”. A Columbus navigation system features a “largest -ever” 9.2-inch display.

There’s a choice of five engines: three petrol and two diesel with power outputs from 125 PS to 190 PS, two or four-wheel drive, manual or DSG transmissions and four trim levels. The petrol range-topper is a 2.0 TSI delivering 180 PS through a seven-speed DSG and 4×4 transmission.

Standard are LED daytime running lights, alloy wheels, leather multifunction steering

wheel, air conditioning, front Assist, DAB digital radio, touchscreen infotainment systems and SmartLink phone connectivity.

Our £29,110 test car in the second top SE L trim pitched as most popular came with Alcantara upholstery in an upmarket cabin, Columbus sat-nav with 8.0-inch screen, cruise, dual-zone air con, touch-close tailgate and heated front seats. Also four-wheel-drive which automatically engages the rear wheels when slip is detected.

Options added, including that aerial view camera set-up (£3,050), boosted the final price to £33,745.

On the road, its smooth 1.4 petrol engine, albeit the one upgraded from 125 to 150 PS, performed

remarkably well in such a hefty steed as the Kodiaq, although with only a maximum of four adults aboard and not put to the test of transporting, say, seven hulking members of a rugby squad.

This engine sports ACT (Active Cylinder Technology) which shuts down the second and third of the four cylinders to save fuel when load and engine speed are low. It’s a smooth operation, within one rotation of the camshaft, we are told. Without a tell-tale message on the dash you wouldn’t know it’s happening, and it could be at 17 or 70 mph. So all that bulk riding on two cylinders.

How much it contributed to an overall return of just under 40 mpg in a week’s sometimes hard motoring, with a soft-roader 4X4 facility and six-speed manual transmission, is hard to tell.

Handling is more akin to a low-slung estate than a tall SUV, while Comfort setting on the Drive Mode selector dealt best with a tendency towards an unsettled ride on the big 19-inch alloys.

VERDICT

Practical, sensible family-friendly transport.



Next up from busy Skoda: The Karoq, a new compact SUV to replace the popular Yeti, but longer, less boxy and in style more like a smaller-scale Kodiaq.

Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Skoda Kodiaq SE L 1.4 TSI Family SUV; seven seats; five doors; electric tailgate.

Size: Length 4,697 mm (15.41 ft); width 1,882 mm (6.17 ft); height 1,676 mm (5.50 ft);

Weights: Kerb 1,653–1,751 kg (3,644 –3,860 lb); GVW 2,330 kg (5,137 lb); max tow

braked 2,000 kg (4,409 lb); nose 100 kg (220 lb).

Boot Length: 470 to 1,080 to 1,700 mm (1.54 to 3.54 to 5.58 ft); min width 990 mm (3.25 ft); vol 270 to 630 to 2,065 litres (9.53 to 22.25 to 72.92 cu.ft).

Engine: Petrol; 1,395 cc; two/four cylinders; turbo; six speed manual; 4×4.

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

Pace: 121 mph; 0–62 mph in 9.9 secs.

MPG: On test 39.2; official Combined 40.9.

Emissions and taxation: CO2 156 g/km; VED £500 then £140 per year; BIK 30%.

Wheels: 19-inch alloys.

Safety: Max 5 stars Euro NCAP (June 01)

Insurance Group: 15E

PRICE: £29,110; as tested with options £33,745

Rivals: Hyundai Santa Fe; Kia Sorento; Audi Q5; Land Rover Discovery; VW Touran; Nissan X-TRAIL