Skoda Octavia Estate Scout 4×4 Road Test

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Skoda Octavia Estate Scout 4 x 4 – Takes the Rough with the Smooth.

By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

Don’t fancy being one of the latest craze of ‘me-too’ buyers of small medium and large SUVs and Crossovers, but need a bit more security of 4×4 traction with winter just around the corner, then the new car market offers an increasing number of choices of all-wheel-drive cars and estates.

Scouting around a Skoda dealership, or their website, you will come across the Octavia Estate Scout 4×4 five door, available with two 2.0 litre turbodiesel engine options. The 150 hp unit has a six-speed manual gearbox and costs £25,700. The other, the one I tried, has 184 hp and comes with an automatic twin-clutch DSG transmission as standard and costs £28,495.

The Octavia range of mid-sized family car 2WD five door hatchbacks are priced from £17,865 and 2WD or 4WD estates are priced from £19,085. They sell in the C-segment as the industry defines this category. The Octavia is available with a wide range of VW Group engines, petrol 1.2 to 2.0 litres and diesel from 1.6 to 2.0 litres. There are hatchback and estate vRS sports versions as well with 220/230 hp TSI petrol and 184 hp TDI turbodiesel units, plus 4×4 versions. It is a highly acclaimed all-encompassing model line-up so no wonder the Octavia is Skoda's global top selling range, and that also applies in the UK where 22,616 of them were sold last year out of their total of 74,692 new car registrations.

Skoda, part of the VW Group of brands, calls upon the use of all the drivetrains, components and platforms available and used in various combinations throughout the Audi, SEAT and VW line-up of models. What Skoda adds is their own distinctive styling and especially with the Octavia and the Superb model ranges, more interior space than their counterparts, all usually at a cheaper price. So Skoda today really stands for 'more for less' rather than its old image of a 'budget-brand'.

As an example the Octavia Estate Scout 4×4, which has the same choice of engines and 4WD system, undercuts in price and is roomier, than the VW Golf Alltrack Estate and the SEAT Leon X-Perience when the specification is comparable if not exactly the same. It also offers more boot and load space and is much cheaper than the new Audi A4 Allroad quattro estate.

The Octavia uses a longer wheelbase version of the VW Group highly praised MQB modular platform and this means much more extra legroom than other cars in this class. When it comes to the estate, on which the Scout is based, this also means more luggage space, with

610 litres (21.54 cu.ft) with the three rear seats raised and 1,740 litres (61.45 cu.ft) with the rear seats folded down. The only downside to the load area is that the floor is lower than the rear sill so items have to be lifted over that and down into the boot.

There are other clever storage places within the interior, which gives even more practical user-friendly features. Space is one of the main reasons people buy the Octavia in either body form, and price of course is another reason. The interior is smart, the fascia houses logical controls and generally the quality is good, although there are some hard plastics lower down in the cabin's trim.

The Scout specification includes 17-inch alloy wheels, automatic post-collision braking, off-road driving mode, multi-function steering wheel, Alcantara and leather upholstery, touchscreen sat-nav which incorporates Bluetooth, DAB radio and an iPod connection, trip computer, cruise control, door sills with the Scout logo, electric windows and door mirrors, air-con, floor mats, lane assist, auto wipers and lights and tinted glass.

Exterior wise, in addition to the alloy wheels and in keeping with its on/off-road abilities, there is 33 mm (1.3 in) of increased ground clearance, front and rear under body protection plates, larger bumpers, wheelarch and side sill extensions and black side protection

mouldings.

CZ65 OCS

Core to this particular Octavia Scout is the 4×4 system which uses a fifth generation electro-hydraulically controlled multi-disc clutch located in the rear axle. This operates fully automatically, distributing torque between the front and rear wheels as needed, delivering the right amount of drive needed for any situation. With an electronic differential at the rear, drive is distributed evenly from side to side ensuring good traction on all surfaces at all times. The same system is used for other 4×4 versions of the Octavia, not just the Scout.

The Octavia Scout I tried had the 2.0-litre TDI 184 hp turbodiesel four cylinder unit, the same engine as fitted to the 'hot' turbodiesel Octavia vRS which is available either with 2WD or 4WD. So its performance is impressive with 280 Nm (207 lb.ft) of torque delivered from 1,750 rpm. This gives a strong and linear power delivery right through the rpm range. Top speed is 136 mph and zero to 62 mph takes a swift 7.8 seconds.

There was intrusive engine noise during acceleration but that toned down once cruising speed had been reached. Mated with the only choice of transmission for this model, a six-speed DSG twin-clutch automatic gearbox, the gearchanges were swift and more or less seamless, making for easy driving at low speeds in town or accelerating on open roads.

This particular version of the Scout is pretty rapid and sure-footed. It felt heavier than other Octavia models but no less nimble. Although it rides a little higher due to the increased ground clearance it felt reassuring during cornering with little body roll – and much better than most high-riding SUVs. The ride was really comfortable with only the worst of poor road surfaces causing the vehicle to become unsettled. It will also be a sure-footed tow vehicle.

As for fuel economy, the official Combined Cycle figure is 56.5 mpg but for my test driving period I only got 44.4 mpg overall for a week's worth of motoring. The best was on a long run and that reached 47.2 mpg, but both too far away from the official figure. The CO2 emissions are 129 g/km so VED road tax is £0 for the First Year rate and £110 for following years. Company car drivers will pay 25% Benefit-in-Kind tax. Insurance is Group 22E.

VERDICT

The latest Skoda Octavia range has a huge array of models with five door hatchback and estate body styles and a wide range of engine, transmission and drivetrain choices. For its larger than average interior space in this sector and comprehensive specification, it generally offers great value for money so no wonder it is the brand's best seller. The Scout 4×4 will have niche-appeal but it goes to show just how well the range caters for all-sorts of customers.

For: Class leading interior passenger and load carrying space, high spec, good looking kerb appeal, comfortable ride, sure-footed on-road grip, useful lightweight off-road ability, strong engine, good vehicle for towing.

Against: Real-life fuel economy couldn't match the official figures, only an auto gearbox

available with this engine, boot floor is lower than the rear sill so not ideal for an estate.

Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Skoda Octavia Estate Scout, 2.0 TDI 184 hp, 4×4 automatic.

Price: £28,495.

Engine: 2.0 litre, four cylinder turbodiesel, 184 hp, 280 Nm (207 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm.

Transmission: Six speed auto gearbox, on demand 4×4 traction.

Performance:

0-62mph: 7.8 seconds.

Top speed: 136mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 56.5 mpg (44.4 mpg on test).

Emissions and Taxation: CO2 129 g/km, VED road tax £0/£110, BIK company car tax 25%.

Insurance Group: 22E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000-miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,685 mm (15.37 ft), W 1,814 mm (5.95 ft), H 1,531 mm (5.02 ft), boot/load space 610 to 1,740 litres (21.54 to 61.45 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,800 kg (3,968 lb), five doors/five seats.