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Skoda Rapid Spaceback – Road Test

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Skoda Rapid Spaceback - More Space, Less Price...

By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

The updated Skoda Rapid and Rapid Spaceback models were revealed at the Geneva Motor Show in March and are now established within the popular Skoda extensive range of models.

Where the Rapid and Rapid Spaceback sit in the line-up needs some explanation. They are both positioned between the Fabia B-segment supermini hatchback/estate models and the C-segment Octavia hatchbacks/ estates. As the Octavias, they are considerably larger than the average family cars such as the Ford Focus and Vauxhall Astra; the Rapids are a good fit and at a very competitive prices. Rapid prices start from £15,345 and run up to £20,135. Rapid Spaceback prices start at £14,410 and range up to £19,570.



More explanation is required regarding their names. The Rapid is a five door hatchback that looks more like a saloon, but with a large boot ranging from 550 to 1,490 litres (19.42 to 52.62 cu.ft). The Spaceback is a five door hatchback with a leaning towards an estate and is marginally cheaper but has more rear seat legroom and slightly less boot space, with 415 to 1,381 litres (14.66 to 48.77 cu.ft) of space.

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Spec levels for Rapid models are S, SE, Sport and SE L and the Spaceback has S, SE Tech and SE Sport. Both line-ups, depending on the spec level chosen, have the new VW Group 1.0 litre TSI turbo petrol engines with 95 or 110 hp outputs, and there is a 1.4 TDI turbodiesel 90 hp and a 1.6 TDI turbodiesel with 115 hp. The 95 hp petrol and 90 hp diesel engines also have the option of a DSG twin-clutch auto gearbox.

Just to sweeten the deal Skoda is currently offering Rapid models of both types with a £1,800 deposit contribution for customers using their Solutions Personal Contract Plan. They also have their Scrappage Scheme offer of £3,000 for both the Rapid and Rapid Spaceback against any EU 1-4 diesel vehicle first registered before 2010 and registered in the owner's name for at least six months. This offer is for Rapids ordered by 31 December 2017 and delivered by 31 March 2018.

Whilst both versions have been restyled for their mid-life facelift with a revised front face, sharper exterior styling lines and with the introduction of the new 1.0 litre petrol engines, they remain relatively conservative in their appearance, with short front and rear overhangs, creating a wheel at each corner impression that amplifies the long wheelbase look.

I tried the Rapid Spaceback SE Tech, the most popular spec level, but with the 1.4 TDI 90 hp turbodiesel engine, which will be the choice of high mileage business users, whilst retail customers will choose either of the 1.0 litre TSI turbo petrol engines. The recommended on-the-road price of my test model was an attractive £17,210 and of course potentially reducing



that price is their Scrappage deal or the finance contribution offer.

Inside the bland styling continues with lots of hard dark plastic trim, but the seats are comfortable and the rear seats offer much better than average legroom for passengers in the C-segment. The controls and instrument layout are all familiar with other Skoda and Volkswagen Group models, which are plus-points, and it all seems well put together adding to its value for money proposition.

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The base S spec level has 15-inch steel wheels with hubcaps, manual air-con, daytime running lights, front electric windows and door mirrors and of course the usual DAB radio system. The most popular SE Tech level sees the addition of 16-inch alloy wheels, an Amundsen satellite navigation system with 6.5-inch touchscreen, Bluetooth, USB port, aux-in, six speakers, climate control air-con, cruise control, front fog lights, height and reach adjustable steering wheel, keyless start-stop, hill hold control, leather-covered steering wheel and handbrake, on-board computer, rear electric windows and trip computer. My test car had the £80 extra cost temporary space saver spare wheel. The SE Sport spec level adds 17-inch alloy wheels, a panoramic glass sunroof and sports front seats.

So we have so-so styling, running kit, lots of space for rear seat passengers and the versatile passenger or load carrying seating combinations, plus of course the attractive price.

Add to that the potential for really good fuel economy from the 1.4 litre TDI turbodiesel engine. With just 90 hp it's not that lively and it 'growls' under acceleration and rattles at tickover but during my week of motoring with the usual combinations of long motorway journeys combined with some country road travel and the usual in-town stop/start driving, the real-life figure was an impressive 64.4 mpg. That's of course not as good as the official EU Combined Cycle figure of 70.6 mpg but on one 'steady' longer journey it actually showed 74.7 mpg. With CO2 emissions of just 105 g/km, VED road tax is £140 each year. Company car drivers will pay 23% Benefit-in-Kind tax. Insurance is Group 14E.



Top speed is a modest 114 mph and the zero to 62 mph acceleration time is 11.6 seconds. This engine comes with a five-speed manual gearbox as standard but there is the option of the £1,160 DSG automatic which will be a bonus for some users. The fifth gear of the manual gearbox is very 'tall' hence this engine's impressive ability to produce really good fuel economy. Yes it does require more use of the gearbox around winding country roads to keep the unit in its most responsive area but with 230 Nm (170 lb.ft) of torque available from 1,750 rpm it quite a punchy performer in the mid-range.

The ride comfort was generally good with only the worst potholes sending shudders through the suspension into the cabin. Poorer urban road surfaces made the car feel unsettled from the driving position but not uncomfortable for passengers.

Stability and traction control are fitted but it does lack the very latest in advanced safety features such as automatic emergency braking and so on. However it does have a Euro NCAP five star safety rating.

VERDICT

For the money and size it's a competitive package, fit for purpose rather than fit-for-fun.

For: Attractive pricing for its size and spec especially with finance and Scrappage deals on offer, very roomy for rear seat passengers, well equipped, good real-life fuel economy, comfortable ride.

Against: Bland styling inside and out, noisy engine, average to drive.



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

Skoda Rapid Spaceback SE Tech, 1.4 TDI 90, manual.

Price: £17,210

Engine/transmission: 1.4 litre, four cylinder turbodiesel, 90 hp, 230 Nm (170 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm, five speed manual.

Performance: 114 mph, 0-62 mph 11.6 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined cycle 70.6 mpg (64.4 mpg on test).



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Emissions and taxation: CO2 105 g/km, VED road tax £140, BiK company car tax 23%.
Insurance Group: 14E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000-miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,304 mm (14.12 ft), W 1,706 mm (5.60 ft), H 1,459 mm (4.79 ft), boot/load space 415 to 1,381 litres (14.66 to 48.77 cu.ft), five doors/five seats.