Skoda Scala Monte Carlo – Road Test

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Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales) puts Skoda’s Scala

hatchback through its paces...

Skoda is emerging as a serious family and business car contender on UK roads, particularly after its extensive facelift and revisions earlier this year.

Previously, many looked at Skoda only after discounting the higher priced alternatives in its sector but it has elbowed and shouldered its way to the front, propelled by a value for money philosophy.

This Spring, Skoda gave its popular Scala hatchback and Kamiq SUV stablemate a significant redesign both inside and out, added some extra equipment and streamlined the powertrain choices in its three-trim levels.



Out went the diesel it had used for years and instead buyers have a selection of turbo-petrol units, 94 or 113 bhp three-cylinder 1.0 litre and 148 bhp 1.5 litre four-cylinder with six-speed manual on the most powerful pair and optional automatic transmission.

Depending on what you want in the way of trim and features you have the selection of SE, SE L or Monte Carlo and our version came with the six-speed manual gearbox rather than a

dual-clutch automatic which is about £1,300 more.

The test car had the optional brilliant silver metallic paint, convenience pack, plus steel spare wheel and tow bar preparation which added £1,860 to the list price. It may seem a lot of money but in reality it does raise the specification to a reasonable and practical level.

The 1.5 litre engine is geared for long-legged open road cruising and it does this very well with over 50 mpg regularly seen in the settings while cross country trips necessitate a lot of gear changing to keep up with traffic in hilly areas and this affects economy and engine composure as well.



It is fairly brisk but not really quick off the mark and having a few passengers aboard does accentuate the shortcomings of the gearing and need to frequently change.

That said, the long travel clutch and slick six-speed gearbox make easy work of everyday driving and town use.

While it stayed well planted on the road there was a tendency for the car to roll around tighter turns and liked to run wide on them, but it immediately stepped back in line if the steering or throttle were eased off.

Brakes were excellent with a really progressive feel and power build up and the traditional lever-type manual parking brake was strong.

Secondary controls on the wheel spokes, either side of the column and spread across the width of the fascia were close to hand and silent in use if not always in direct line of sight behind the wheel-rim and chunky spokes.

Instrumentation was very good, selectable, large, clear and well lit at night and matched by a decent central infotainment display on the dashboard top. Heating and ventilation worked well throughout with powered windows all round.


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There really was a lot of oddments' space in the new Scala for all passengers to use and in this respect it's a very good family car, helped by a lot of rear seat legroom in particular and offset folding rear seat backs to make the most of its carrying capacity and options.

Infront there was very good adjustment range on the wrap around sports seats and excellent visibility with low waistline, bright lights, camera and sensors for parking and a full length glass sunroof with powered shade.

Cabin and boot access was very good, total capacity better than many class rivals and it had a powered tailgate.

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The Skoda Scala Monte Carlo had a slightly firm but still good, absorbing ride over nearly all surfaces and its seats really caught most bumps before they upset the occupants.

Noise levels were generally very low. The four-cylinder engine is quieter than its triple-pot stablemates at all times but particularly pushing through the gears with a load aboard. Road rumbles could be heard, rarely felt, and wind or other mechanical noises were extremely low.

It actually dynamically felt like a much bigger and more expensive car but some of the interior panel finishes in modern sustainable materials may not be to everyone's taste. To us it also seemed quite dark inside.

VERDICT

The external redesign of the front end and back really have sharpened the style of the Skoda Scala and lifted it away from just a boring bridge between what a driver wants and can afford, and the revised powertrains, equipment and features will confirm it's a wise choice but not a hybrid which benefits from lower road tax.

For: Roomy, versatile, comfortable, very economical, motorway cruiser.

Against: Some engine and road noise, dark interior, average performance, handling and warranty.


SCALA

FAST FACTS

Model: Skoda Scala Monte Carlo

Price: £30,965, inc. options

Mechanical: 148 bhp 1.5 litre, 4 cyl petrol, 6 speed manual

Max Speed: 137 mph

0 – 62 mph: 8.2 secs

Combined MPG: 54

Insurance Group: 21

C02 emissions: 127 g/km

Bik rating: 30%, £220FY, £190SR

Warranty: 3 years/ 60,000 miles

Size: L 4.37 m (14.34 ft), W 1.80 m (5.91 ft) , H 1.48 m (4.86 ft)

Bootspace: 467 to 1,410 litres (16.49 to 49.79 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,211 kg (2,670 lb)

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