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Skoda Superb range-topping Laurin and Klement 4x4 estate Road Test

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Skoda's Latest Superb Estate – Mostly Lives up to its Name... says David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).



(Note from Kim: Recently on Wheels-Alive, Keith Ward assessed the 150 horsepower 2.0 TDi SE L Executive manual transmission front wheel drive variant; by contrast David gives his verdict on the range-topping Laurin and Klement specification 190 horsepower 2.0 TDi four wheel drive version with six speed, twin clutch, automated Direct Shift Gearbox or DSG transmission).

The new generation Skoda Superb range consists of huge five door Hatchbacks and Estates. Hatchback prices start from £18,640 and the Estates from £19,840.

Being part of the VW Group the Czech brand has call upon the knowledge, technology and components used in Audis, VWs and SEATs. The new Skoda Superb Estate's competitors include the Audi A6 Avant and VW Passat Estate plus the likes of the latest Ford Mondeo Estate, Mercedes E-Class Estate and BMW 5 Series Touring. The Superb Estate is bigger than all of them and cheaper.

Styling, interior space, specification and price have all combined to reap recent awards for Skoda and their Superb Estate. It has just been voted What Car? Magazine's Best Estate Car 2016, it was named Best Large Estate in the Sunday Times Top 100 Cars list and even those canny Motoring Journalists north of the border voted it Scottish Estate Car of the Year.

In a timely manner, just as I was having my week long road test session with the Superb Estate, Skoda announced production of their 18 millionth car since they were founded in 1905. It just so happened that this milestone Skoda was a Superb Estate. The new Superb is one of 10 new models selected for the final judging of the 2016 World Car of the Year competition.

With UK new car customers last year moving away from buying family bus MPVs with a 21% fall in sales, some buyers have reverted to the latest must-have SUV styled models. But some have also turned back to choosing large estates for family and business transport, and like my Superb Estate test model, some have the increasingly popular 4x4 option.



Space Travel

Where the Superb Estate really scores, in addition to its competitive pricing, is space with five seats and only slightly less rear seat legroom than a long wheelbase Audi A8 limousine. Even with all five seats in use the load capacity is still 660 litres (23.3 cu.ft). With the rear seats down that increases to a massive 1,950 litres (68.9 cu.ft) and that is just one litre (0.04 cu.ft) behind the family-friendly Volvo XC90 large SUV.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

The Superb Estate's overall length is 4,861 mm (15.95 ft) and its width is 1,864 mm (6.12 ft) so fitting in a modern day parking space can be an issue but the model I tested it had radar parking sensors. The only problem was that when reverse gear is selected the door mirrors do not tip down to give a more precise view, especially if parking next to a kerb. A small point but an annoying one I found using this big estate on a daily basis, although Park Assist is an option.

Overall the design is now totally different from the rather old-fashioned look of previous generations, first launched in 2001. At the front is a wide and deeply sculptured bonnet with sharp crease lines and outside the bonnet are wide front wheelarches giving a chiselled front end. Only the Skoda grille design differentiates it from the straight-on-look of a BMW 5 Series. At the rear is a steeply raked tailgate window with wrap around LED taillights linking the tailgate and the rear quarter panels. A gently sloping roofline, slightly rising waistline above sculptured door panels neatly link the front and rear ends of this big estate.

Five trim and equipment levels are offered: S, SE, SE Business, SE Executive and Laurin & Klement. Even the entry level model gets air con, electric windows and door mirrors, 16 inch alloys and a five inch touchscreen. All the latest technology features are on offer including lane keep assist, park assist and Smart Link compatible with Apple and Android smart phones. The Laurin & Klement flagship model includes items such as 18 inch alloys, leather upholstery, eight inch touchscreen with sat-nav, 10 speaker sound system, DAB radio, adaptive cruise control, blind spot detection, driving mode selection, heated



windscreen, dynamic chassis control and the 4×4 traction system, although this high L&K grade is available without all-wheel-drive.

The interior, apart from being very roomy, is very well equipped, with logical positioning for all the controls. The quality of the fascia, door panels and seats looked and felt mid-range, not as posh as an Audi, Mercedes or BMW but about the same level as a VW Passat so durable rather than plush. There was no faulting the level of equipment though.

There is a wide choice of EU6 compliant engines all from the VW Group. These range from 1.4 TSI 125 hp and 150 hp, 2.0 TSI 220 hp and 280 hp petrol units plus the 1.6 TDI 120 hp, 2.0 TDI 150 and 190 hp turbodiesel engines. Even lower emission Greenline models with sub 100 g/km CO2 emissions are becoming available. A six speed manual gearbox and six speed dual-clutch DSG transmission are available for front wheel drive models and there is the additional choice of a DSG transmission and all-wheel-drive available as an option.

Top Line

To showcase their Superb Estate models Skoda provided me with the 2.0-litre TDI 190hp engine with the six-speed DSG transmission with the 4×4 drive option and L&K specification. This version costs £35,040 which looks hefty but it is less than its main competitors, plus you get the extra space and higher equipment.

My first question to Skoda was whether this engine would be subject to any re-adjustment needed because of the VW Group's emissions scandal. A definite NO was the answer so the 135 g/km CO2 figure for this engine with automatic transmission and 4×4 drive looks really impressive. That means VED road tax is currently £130 each year, BIK company car tax is 25% now, but that should go down to 24% from April, when the new rates come into force – that is if the Government stays with its last Budget statement that from April 2016 petrol and diesel cars will be treated equally for BIK tax purposes.

The official Combined Cycle fuel consumption is 55.4 mpg which looks good on paper but in reality I never got better than 46 mpg on a long run and finished up with an overall test



drive figure of 43.4 mpg. Given the performance, auto gearbox and 4×4 drive I think that is acceptable but not close to the official figure and that is becoming a big issue which the industry has to address.

On the subject of performance the top speed is 142 mph and zero to 62 mph takes just 7.7 seconds. The engine sounded on the gruff side under hard acceleration but became hardly audible once cruising speeds had been reached. With the auto transmission, changes were generally smooth and made light work of driving in slow or congested traffic conditions. One feature I didn't like was the auto stop/start system which operated at traffic lights or road junctions. Normally the engine on such systems re-starts once the driver's foot has been lifted off the brake pedal. On the Superb this was not so and the engine started once the accelerator was pressed which slowed restarting from standstill and in the end I switched the system off.



The steering was light and precise but more weight as well as sharpening up the accelerator and DSG auto gearbox responses could be achieved by selecting through the Eco, Comfort, Normal, Sport and Individual modes. Most of my driving was done in Eco mode. In Comfort mode I found the suspension to be too soft and there is little need for Sport, due to the amount of traffic that limits our progress, so in Eco I thought the estate performed at its all-round best. Being an Estate there was marginally more body roll during cornering than I experienced driving the Superb Hatchback but with the added grip of the 4×4 system this big estate held the lines through fast corners very well. The all-wheel-drive function was really valuable during my test driving week where the roads were often swamped with standing water which froze, so in early morning driving I encountered black ice.



VERDICT

My conclusion is that the Superb Estate offers a huge amount of space, and passengers ride in comfort with a high level of kit in this top spec version. It is all wrapped up in a thoroughly modern looking versatile-use body and it doesn't cost the earth to buy/lease or run it. There is no doubt as to why it has won so many prestigious awards.

For: Classy styling, well equipped, lots of passenger space, massive load carrying capacity, comfortable, easy to drive and live with, relatively low for tax costs in this sector, 4x4 traction.

Against: Gruff engine under acceleration, efficient rather than fun to drive, real-life fuel economy fell well short of the official figure, slow to work stop/start system, big to park.



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MILESTONES AND WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC. IN BRIEF:

Skoda Superb L&K Estate, 2.0 TDI 190 hp DSG auto 4×4.

Engine: 2.0 litre, 4 cylinder, turbodiesel.

Transmission: 6 speed dual clutch auto plus on-demand 4×4 drive.



Power: 190 PS from 3,500 to 4,000 rpm.

Torque: 400 Nm (295 lb.ft) from 1,750 to 3,250 rpm.

Performance:

0-62 mph: 7.7 seconds.

Top speed: 142 mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 55.4mpg (43.4mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 135 g/km, VED £130, BIK company car tax 25%.

Insurance group: 24E.

Warranty: 3 years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,861 mm (15.95 ft.), W 1,864 mm (6.12 ft), H 1,477 mm (4.85 ft), boot/load space 660 to 1,950 litres (23.3 to 68.9 cu.ft), five seats, braked towing capacity 2,200 kg (4,850 lb).

Price: £35,040.