

AN ATTRACTIVE FAMILY CAR

By *Tim Saunders,*
Motoring Correspondent

When I drive a new car, I like to do so with little knowledge of the vehicle. Then when we have made our acquaintance I enjoy a journey of discovery. I've not strictly been able to do this with the Octavia because I have driven a number of them over the years. After all, this model has been around since 1996 but each one over that 25 years, or quarter of century if you like, gets better and better, yet externally it has changed little. So when I first drive this particular model I am adamant that it is a 2-litre petrol because there is plenty of pull. But I am completely wrong - by some 500cc. This cavernous estate is powered by a tiddly 1.5-litre petrol engine, which is quite some achievement. As I drive an old Ford Fiesta 1.4TDCi, I'm still used to smaller cars having smaller engines but this is no longer the case. It is striking that the Skoda squeezes out 150bhp compared to 68 in my 19-year-old Fiesta. While both are as efficient returning around 50mpg, the Fiesta produces 114 to 119g/km of CO2 compared to the Skoda's 129 to 153g/km but these figures are misleading because diesel fuel is more harmful to the environment. '... while diesel fuel contains slightly more carbon (2.68kg CO2/litre) than petrol (2.31kg CO2/litre), overall CO2 emissions of a diesel car tend to be lower,' according to theconversation.com. 'They can also produce more nitrogen dioxide, making diesel one of the main sources of this toxic gas.'

My only qualm is that the six-speed manual gearbox is notchy particularly when changing up from second to third.

It reminds me of the popular old Ford Cortina in the way that it has found a place in the nation's hearts as a trusty family car available in both saloon and estate configurations. But the Skoda is so much better built and more efficient, too. Outside it is as exciting as an estate car can be but there are hints of luxury about it from the rear privacy glass, chrome roof rails and of course the striking petrol blue metallic paintwork.

Inside there's comfortable microsuede upholstery and Henry (5) has discovered that there's a sliding cover over where drinks bottles can be stored in the front centre console. For the rear passengers, there's iPad storage behind the front seats so that square-eyed occupants can hide their addictive devices, if only they can tear themselves away for long enough...

There's a sat nav and even heated steering wheel and front seats. This model is fitted with a foldable tow bar with adaptor and Park Assist. It's surprising that a car of this size does not come with a reversing camera though - I do find these helpful.

It's comfortable rather than engaging to drive and the build quality is good. Overall it's an attractive family car.

Founder and editor of 'Travel & motoring magazine', Tim Saunders is an advanced motorist and journalist. He has always been passionate about motoring and regularly reviews cars from the leading manufacturers.



FACTS AT A GLANCE

Skoda Octavia 1.5TSi 150PS

Price: £29,050

0-60mph: 8.5secs

Economy: 45mpg

CO2: 129 to 153g/km

Top speed: 139mph

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