

Skoda Octavia Estate

Featured model: 1.9/110 TDI SLX



SKODA IS NOW A WHOLLY OWNED subsidiary of VW, so it's no surprise that this Octavia leans heavily on the Golf for its major bits and pieces. Even details like stalks and grab handles are shared with Audis and VWs, and although the Skoda's image and price are lower, it's the longest and roomiest of all the models based on the Golf platform.

The extra room inside isn't given to rear passengers, however – indeed the Czech-designed Felicia has similar rear legroom. Instead, it's hard to beat for luggage volume, especially in this estate car guise with its more upright tailgate; unfortunately a load sill (though lower than on the hatch) is still present. Otherwise, there's actually little difference between the two body styles – apart from £700.

Up front, you don't have to have this SLX to enjoy plenty of driver and passenger aids – the more keenly priced GLX diesel has a 20bhp power deficit, however, and we wouldn't expect any better mpg figures. No, this 110bhp diesel's mix of performance and economy is hard to beat. The way it delivers strong pull low down makes its acceleration so accessible and, curiously, it's smoother, less vibrant than the Golf installation below 1500rpm. Real mechanical refinement is the prerogative of the top 1.8/150bhp Turbo, of course, but this diesel's manners cost less to buy and to fuel – by £1100 and 19mpg, in fact.

In the SLX, both front seats offer a plethora of adjustments, and there's full

climate control to soothe in summer, seat heating in winter, a trip computer, four airbags plus a CD/radio with eight speakers. Don't overlook the fact that the list price of all Skodas includes free servicing and routine replacements for the three-year warranty period. Other points of reassurance include a galvanized body with a 10-year anti-rust guarantee and excellent security features, as the table shows. It stops well, too, with standard ABS on nearly all derivatives.

VERDICT

The Octavia has deservedly made such a good impression that pragmatic buyers are now choosing it in preference to VW Group counterparts. You can see why – it's better equipped at a lower price, and offers unsurpassed security in ownership – the dealers tend to be better, too! The back seat proves that it's not really a Passat or a Mondeo equivalent, and neither does it corner or ride quite so fluently. Nevertheless, with an excellent range of engines to suit every priority, it offers a lot of satisfaction in ownership, way beyond the expectations created by Skoda's former brand-image.

AT A GLANCE

considering size, price and rivals

Overtaking ability	★★★★○
Fuel economy	★★★★○
Controls/displays	★★★○○
Handling/steering	★★★○○
Comfort	★★★○○
Space/practicality	★★○○○
Safety	★★★★○

SPECIFICATION

engine 1896cc 4 cylinder diesel; 110bhp at 4150rpm, 173 lb ft at 1900rpm. Belt-driven single OHC, 8 valves. Direct-injection turbo-diesel with intercooler

transmission 5-speed manual, front-wheel drive. 27.6mph/1000rpm in 5th, 21.9 in 4th

suspension front: independent damper/struts, coil springs. Rear: torsion beam axle, coil springs

steering hydraulic PAS - 3.1 turns lock-to-lock; 10.5m diameter turning circle between kerbs (15.7m for one turn of the wheel)

brakes ventilated discs front, solid discs rear with standard ABS and traction control

wheels/tyres 6in alloy with 195/65R15V (Michelin on test car). Full-size spare

LIKES AND GRIPES

lumbar/height adjusters for passenger rear cushion easy to remove entirely replaceable bumper nudge pads

driver's fore/aft adjuster too coarse left footrest too close for comfort air con won't work below 5°C back-breaking spare wheel location

THE OCTAVIA RANGE

body lower medium 5-door hatch and estate

trim levels LXi (not estate), GLX, SLX
engines petrol: 1.6/75bhp (not estate), 1.6/101bhp; 2.0/115bhp, 1.8 Turbo/150bhp. diesel: 1.9 turbo/90 or 110bhp

drive front via 5-speed manual (4-speed torque converter auto optional on GLX/SLX petrol versions)

OCTAVIA 1.9/110 TDi SLX ESTATE

OVERTAKING ABILITY ★★★★★

Less low speed vibrancy means the strong low speed urge is more useable. Cruising effortless, but there's some background harshness

acceleration in seconds	through gears*	④ th gear	⑤ th gear
20-40mph	3.4	9.5	15.3
30-50mph	4.3	7.4	11.0
40-60mph	5.4	7.4	9.6
50-70mph	6.4	8.1	10.3
30-70mph	10.7	15.5	21.3

max speed in each gear (*using 4450 rpm for best acceleration)

gear	①*	②*	③*	④*	⑤
speed (mph)	25	46	70	97½	118

SPACE AND PRACTICALITY ★★★★★

Tremendous load length, but the extended rear floor pan means there's still a load sill and less passenger space than you might expect

in centimetres (5-door)		inside	(† with no sunroof)
outside		front - legroom	82-112
length	451	- headroom	95-100†
width - inc mirrors	195	rear - typical leg/	97/
- mirrors folded	173	kneeroom	69
height (no roof bars)	145	- headroom	97
load sill height	14/	- hiproom	127-132
(inside/outside)	63	load space (litres/cu ft)	605/
steering		(all seats in use)	21.3
turns lock-to-lock	3.1	load length	98-166
turning circle (metres)	10.5	full length to fascia	260
easy to park/garage?		load width	102-123
★★★★		load height (to shelf)	57/
		(to top of aperture)	87

CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS ★★★★★

Digital read-outs for air con and radio obscure; lots of seat and wheel adjustments, and accelerator action ideal - unlike Fabia's.



SAFETY ★★★★★

Excellent brakes, with powerful skid-free emergency arrest. Crash test on Golf should apply here too - looks good

braking	dry road stopping distance from 50mph (with standard ABS)
pedal feel ★★★★★	pedal load
in emergency ★★★★★	10kg 30m
handbrake ★★★★★	27kg 24m best stop
	+4kg ie 31kg 26m

EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS (for VW Golf)

front impact	63%	side impact	92%
overall	77%	pedestrian rating	★★★★

SECURITY FEATURES

central locking	✓	alarm	0
remote control	✓	immobiliser	✓
auto window closure	✓	luggage security	★★★★
deadlocks	✓		★★★★
✓ standard	0 factory option	* not available	

HANDLING AND STEERING ★★★★★

Steering weightier than previous 1.6 tested, but not excessively so. Willing to be hustled with safe responses and traction control



COMFORT ★★★★★

Firm ride on estate version when unladen, improved by heavier diesel engine. Good full climate control air con and both front seats are comfortable with a lot of adjustment

FUEL ECONOMY ★★★★★

Extra power leaves fuel consumption uncompromised; an excellent 60+ always attainable on a longer run

type of use (air conditioning off)	AA test (mpg)
urban (17mph average/heavy traffic)	34
suburban (27mph average/6.4 miles from cold start)	46
motorway (70mph cruising)	52½
cross-country (brisk driving/20 miles from cold start)	55
rural (gentle driving/20 miles from cold start)	65
typical mpg overall	54½
realistic tank capacity/range	45 litres/540 miles
official mpg (urban/extra urban/combined)	41.5/64.2/53.3
CO ₂ emissions 143 g/km	car tax band A

HOW THE OCTAVIA ESTATE COMPARES*

	engine cap/power (cyl/cc/bhp)	revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	fuel economy (mpg)	brakes best stop from 50mph (m/kg)	maximum legroom - front (cm)	typical leg/kneeroom - rear (cm)	steering turns/ circle (m)	overall length (cm)
SKODA OCTAVIA 1.9 TDI SLX	4/1896/110	2540	10.7	21.3/15.5	54½	24/27*	112	97/69	3.1/10.5	451
VW Golf TDi/115 6sp	4/1896/115	2000	10.3	28.0/18.8 ^o	51	25½/26*	109	96/72	3.1/10.3	440
Ford Focus 2.0 †	4/1989/130	3120	9.5	24.9/16.7	33	27/22	107	100/71	2.9/10.6	444
Vauxhall Astra 2.0 Di	4/1994/82	2740	12.8	22.1/15.9	51½	26/21	108	95/70	3.1/10.4	429
VW Passat TDi 110	4/1896/110	2450	11.1	21.4/15.9	53	24½/18	112	100/78	2.8/10.9	467

*all estate cars † petrol ^o6th/5th *with ABS

OCTAVIA 1.8 TURBO SLX 5 DOOR HATCH

OVERTAKING ABILITY ★★★★○					
<i>Both very fast when revved and extremely smooth and flexible when ambling, this Turbo 1.8 is a delight</i>					
acceleration in seconds	through gears*	④ th gear	⑤ th gear		
20-40mph	NA	8.2	11.6		
30-50mph	3.4	7.0	9.7		
40-60mph	3.9	7.0	8.9		
50-70mph	5.1	7.4	10.0		
30-70mph	8.5	14.4	19.7		
max speed in each gear (*using 6000 rpm for best acceleration)					
gear	①*	②*	③*	④*	⑤
speed (mph)	35	59	88	112	131


SPACE AND PRACTICALITY ★★★○○			
<i>Biased towards luggage rather than rear passengers, who are nevertheless comfortable, so long as they aren't lanky</i>			
<i>in centimetres (5-door hatch)</i>		inside	<i>(† with sunroof)</i>
outside		front - legroom	82-112
length	451	- headroom	91-96†
width - inc mirrors	195	rear - typical leg/	97/
- mirrors folded	173	kneeroom	69
height (no roof bars)	143	- headroom	93
load sill height	23/	- hiproom	127-132
<i>(inside/outside)</i>	73	load space (litres/cu ft)	605/
		<i>(all seats in use)</i>	21.3
steering		load length	98-166
turns lock-to-lock	3.1	full length to fascia	260
turning circle (metres)	10.5	load width	102-145
easy to park/garage?		load height (to shelf)	55/
	★★○○○	<i>(to top of aperture)</i>	84

CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS ★★★○○	
<i>Leather on test car undermined seat support – not sufficient “give”. Clear displays, lots of seat adjustments (both sides) but footrest too close</i>	
	

SAFETY ★★★★○	
<i>Excellent brakes, with powerful skid-free emergency stop. Crash test on Golf should apply here, too – looks good</i>	
braking	
pedal feel	★★★★○
in emergency	★★★★○
handbrake	★★○○○
dry road stopping distance	<i>from 50mph (with standard ABS)</i>
pedal load	distance
10kg	30m
27kg	24m <i>best stop</i>
+4kg ie 31kg	26m

EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS – for VW Golf			
front impact	63%	side impact	92%
overall 77%	★★★★	pedestrian rating	★★○○○

SECURITY FEATURES			
central locking	✓	alarm	0
remote control	✓	immobiliser	✓
auto window closure	✓	luggage security	★★★★○
deadlocks	✓		
✓ standard	0 factory option	* not available	

HANDLING AND STEERING ★★★★○	
<i>Medium-weight steering and wide tyres equal good, role-free cornering, but not inspirational handling like Bora V5</i>	
	
COMFORT	★★★○○
<i>Definitely more Audi A3 than Golf, with firm (yet jolt-free) secondary-road progress; some tyre noise</i>	

FUEL ECONOMY ★★★★○	
<i>Pretty good when you consider the acceleration available – the smaller engines (1.6/2.0) will do no better</i>	
type of use (air conditioning off)	AA test (mpg)
urban (17mph average/heavy traffic)	23½
suburban (27mph average/6.4 miles from cold start)	28
motorway (70mph cruising)	37
cross-country (brisk driving/20 miles from cold start)	35
rural (gentle driving/20 miles from cold start)	41½
typical mpg overall	35½
realistic tank capacity/range	45 litres/350 miles
official mpg (urban/extra urban/combined)	25.7/44.8/35.3
CO ₂ emissions	192g/km
	car tax band D

HOW THE OCTAVIA 5-DOOR COMPARES	engine cyl/cap/power (no/cc/bhp)	revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	fuel economy (mpg)	brakes* best stop (m/kg)	maximum legroom - front (cm)	typical leg/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	steering turns/ (p) circle (m)	overall length (cm)
SKODA OCTAVIA 1.8 20v TURBO	4/1781/150	3040	8.5	19.7/14.4	35½	24/27	112	97/69	3.1/10.5	451
VW Bora 2.3 V5	V5/2324/150	3220	8.5	18.8/14.0	32	24/17	109	93/65	3.0/10.6	438
Alfa Romeo 156 2.0 Twin Spark	4/1970/155	3310	7.8	22.6/15.7	31	26/22	106	95/76	2.2/11.4	443
Peugeot 406 2.0 16v	4/1998/135	3210	10.5	27.2/17.6	32½	29/16	111	99/74	3.2/11.0	456
Ford Mondeo 2.5 V6	V6/2544/170	2950	8.2	21.7/15.0	29	23/22	110	102/76	3.0/10.4	456

* all with ABS