

# Skoda Fabia Estate

*Featured model: 1.4 16v Comfort*



**A**S WE WRITE THIS REPORT, some serious new rivals are coming over the horizon to challenge the Fabia's critically acclaimed dominance in the supermini market sector. In fact, the new Polo will be a close-coupled design to the Skoda, but there's also a new Ford Fiesta, Honda Jazz and Citroën C3 for would-be buyers to consider.

What the Fabia designers have done, however, is to widen their model's appeal by adding an elongated estate car version. We took the opportunity of conducting our full test in the 100bhp petrol model and were more than impressed.

In fact, this VW-derived 16-valver weighs 80kg less than the 1.9TDi diesel, but the estate adds 35kg to the other end of the car. Whatever the reasons, the resultant road manners show off the Fabia in the best possible light; it rides and handles with real poise and aplomb.

This petrol engine is a wonderful foil for the diesel – it runs slowly without a vestige of complaint, yet shows no real interest in hill-climbing or accelerating vigorously until you make a downshift with a gearchange that's beyond reproach. This is in spite of its already short-legged gearing, whereas the torquey TDi is completely the opposite. The 1.4's thirst is about 15mpg inferior, but the ultimate 30-70mph dash separates them by just half a second.

Compared with the five-door hatch, the estate adds some 26cm to the Fabia's length, plus a UK premium (at the time of writing) of some £700.

In return, it retains the many well thought out qualities of the hatchback (already well-documented in earlier reports), augmented by a roomier and elegantly executed estate car tail.

The load bay boasts handy (removable) side lockers plus underfloor space for oddments, scuff-resistant floor rails, a large, regular-shape load area, and a wide high-lifting tailgate. It not only increases cargo volume by 55 per cent beneath the roller-blind load cover, but is immaculately presented, too.

## VERDICT

**We've now sampled most of the Fabia's trim levels and power units. Although the lower-powered 1.4 is even quieter, we consider this 100bhp estate car the best choice for all except high mileage, long-distance users. The diesel's parsimony and surprising performance are unfortunately accompanied by some mechanical harshness, particularly at lower speeds – something that this petrol version successfully evades. Whichever you choose, the Fabia's estate car treatment has made an already commodious small family car even more inviting and enjoyable to drive.**

## AT A GLANCE

*considering size, price and rivals*

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

## SPECIFICATION

**engine** 1390cc, 4-cylinder, petrol; 100bhp at 6000rpm, 92 lb ft at 4400rpm; belt-driven double overhead camshafts, 16 valves

**transmission** 5-speed manual, front-wheel drive; 19.0mph/1000rpm in 5th, 15.7 in 4th

**suspension** front: independent damper/struts with integral coil springs.

Rear: torsion beam (dead) axle, coil springs

**steering** electro-hydraulic power assistance; 2.8 turns lock-to-lock;

10.25m diameter turning circle between kerbs (14.8m for one turn of the wheel)

**brakes** ventilated discs front, solid discs rear, with standard anti-skid control (ABS) and traction control

**wheels/tyres** 6in steel with 185/60R14H tyres (alloy option on test car). Full size steel spare

## LIKES ...

chilled storage compartments  
door mirrors that move in unison  
fantail screenwash jets  
set-and-forget heater temperature

## and GRIPES

chopped-off interior mirror image  
rear load sill remains  
no door mirror-heater tell-tale  
less safety for fifth occupant

## THE FABIA ESTATE RANGE

**size and type** supermini estate, mid-priced

**trim levels** Classic, Comfort, Elegance

**engines** petrol: 4cyl/1.4 litre/68bhp, 4/1.4 16v/100, 4/1.4 16v/75 (auto), 4/2.0/115 diesel: 4/1.9SDi/64; 4/1.9TDi/100

**drive** front-wheel drive, 5-speed manual (4-speed stepped automatic with torque converter available with 1.4 16v/75bhp only)

## OVERTAKING ABILITY ★★★★○

Rapid acceleration (like diesel's), but only when revved to 6000rpm plus. Yet more willing to amble without complaint – right down to 25mph in top. Superb gearchange

acceleration in seconds	through gears*	④ <sup>th</sup> gear	⑤ <sup>th</sup> gear		
20-40mph	3.4	10.2	13.9		
30-50mph	4.2	9.8	13.7		
40-60mph	5.4	9.8	13.9		
50-70mph	6.7	10.2	14.6		
<b>30-70mph</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>20.0</b>	<b>28.3</b>		
<b>max speed in each gear</b> (*using 6200rpm for best acceleration)					
gear	①*	②*	③*	④*	⑤
<b>speed (mph)</b>	30½	50	73	97	114

## SPACE AND PRACTICALITY ★★★★○

Estate's extra length benefits luggage space, yet back seat comfort remains intact. Proper seat-folding (60/40 split) in impeccably lined cargo area. Rear load sill the only snag

in centimetres (5-door estate)		inside	(† without sunroof)
<b>outside</b>		front - legroom	86-109
length	422	- headroom	95-101†
width - inc mirrors	193	rear - typical leg/	100/
- mirrors folded	170	kneeroom	72
height (no roof bars)	145	- headroom	94
load sill height	16/	- hiproom	122-126
(inside/outside)	63	<b>load space</b> (all seats in use)	
<b>steering</b>		(litres/cu ft)	527/18.6
turns lock-to-lock	2.8	load length	86-150
turning circle (metres)	10.25	full length to fascia	240
easy to park/garage?		load width	96-143
	★★★★○	load height (to shelf/	56/
		to top of aperture)	84

## CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS ★★★★○

A bit more lower back support (like Felicia's) wouldn't come amiss; otherwise, only minor complaints (eg inaccurate speedo and trip computer). Plenty of seat and wheel adjustment



## HOW THE FABIA 1.4 16V 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 from 50mph (m/kg)	maximum legroom - front (cm)	typical leg/ kneeeroom - rear (cm)	steering - turns/ circle (m)	overall length (cm)
<b>SKODA FABIA 1.4 16v ESTATE</b>	<b>4/1390/100</b>	<b>3690</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>28.3/20.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>24½/27</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100/72</b>	<b>2.8/10.25</b>	<b>422</b>
<b>VW Polo 1.6 (8v) Estate*</b>	4/1598/75	3280	11.7	22.4/16.5	39	26/26	108	94/69	2.9/10.1	414
<b>Citroën Xsara 1.6 Estate</b>	4/1587/110	3220	10.5 <sup>(a)</sup>	25/17 <sup>(a)</sup>	40	25/23	109	97/72	3.2/10.7	437
<b>Rover 25 1.4i (103) Hatch</b>	4/1396/103	3360	11.4	32.5/22.0	38	28/14	107	97/70	3.0/10.3	399
<b>Peugeot 206 1.4 Hatch</b>	4/1360/75	3330	12.7	30.3/20.2	43	25/13	108	94/66	2.8/10.1	384
<b>Skoda Felicia 1.3i Estate*</b>	4/1289/68	3380	15.2	33.3/21.6	41	29/21 <sup>o</sup>	106	99/72	3.1/10.85	421

\* Performance figures for Hatchback

<sup>(a)</sup> approximate

<sup>o</sup> no ABS

## SAFETY ★★★★○

Rear discs cause heavier handbrake, but powerful ABS standard with excellent pedal progression. Twin airbags within impact-resistant body; good crash-test performance

### braking

pedal feel	★★★★○
in emergency	★★★★○
handbrake	★★★○○○

### dry road stopping distance

from 50mph (with standard ABS)

pedal load	distance
unhurried 10kg	32½m
sudden 27kg +4kg ie 31kg	24½m best stop 26m

## EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS (Hatch tested Sept 2000)

front impact 75%	side impact 78%
overall 76% <span style="float: right;">★★★★○</span>	pedestrian rating <span style="float: right;">★★★○○○</span>

## SECURITY FEATURES

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

## HANDLING AND STEERING ★★★★○

This engine and body produce the model's best ride and handling – fluent, ideal steering response (though no true feel). The chassis feels as eager as the engine to have fun



## COMFORT ★★★★○

Can jib at sharp edges but otherwise an unflurried, bigger-car-ride. Engine thrum busy but unobjectionable at 70mph and oh-so docile when pottering. Wind noise suppression remarkable, too.

## FUEL ECONOMY ★★★★○

Similar pattern to lower-powered eight-valve 1.4, but more acceptable on this higher performance version. Still 27 per cent heavier than diesel, with similar power, however

type of use (air conditioning off)	AA test (mpg)
urban (17mph average/heavy traffic)	27½
suburban (27mph average/6.4 miles from cold start)	35
motorway (70mph cruising)	37½
cross-country (brisk driving/20 miles from cold start)	41
rural (gentle driving/20 miles from cold start)	47½
<b>typical mpg overall</b>	<b>40</b>
realistic tank capacity/range	42 litres/370 miles
official mpg (urban/extra urban/combined)	29.1/50.4/39.8
CO <sub>2</sub> emissions 170g/km	car tax band C