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SEAT Leon 1.5TSI FR Sport – Road Test

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The revised SEAT Leon Hatchback 1.5TSI FR Sport test driven by Robin Roberts (and Miles



Better News Agency).

SEAT Leon has raised its game in the very competitive family car sector as the industry slowly pulls away from the Covid pandemic and components shortages.

It was unfortunate timing for the comprehensively revised Leon to be announced three years ago to date and all the changes are only now really appreciated.

The new-look SEAT Leon comes in six trim levels from just under £23,335 with a choice of Hatchback or Estate style, petrol, diesel, mild hybrid and plug-in hybrid powertrains, six-speed manual and DSG automatic transmission, rising to £33,525.

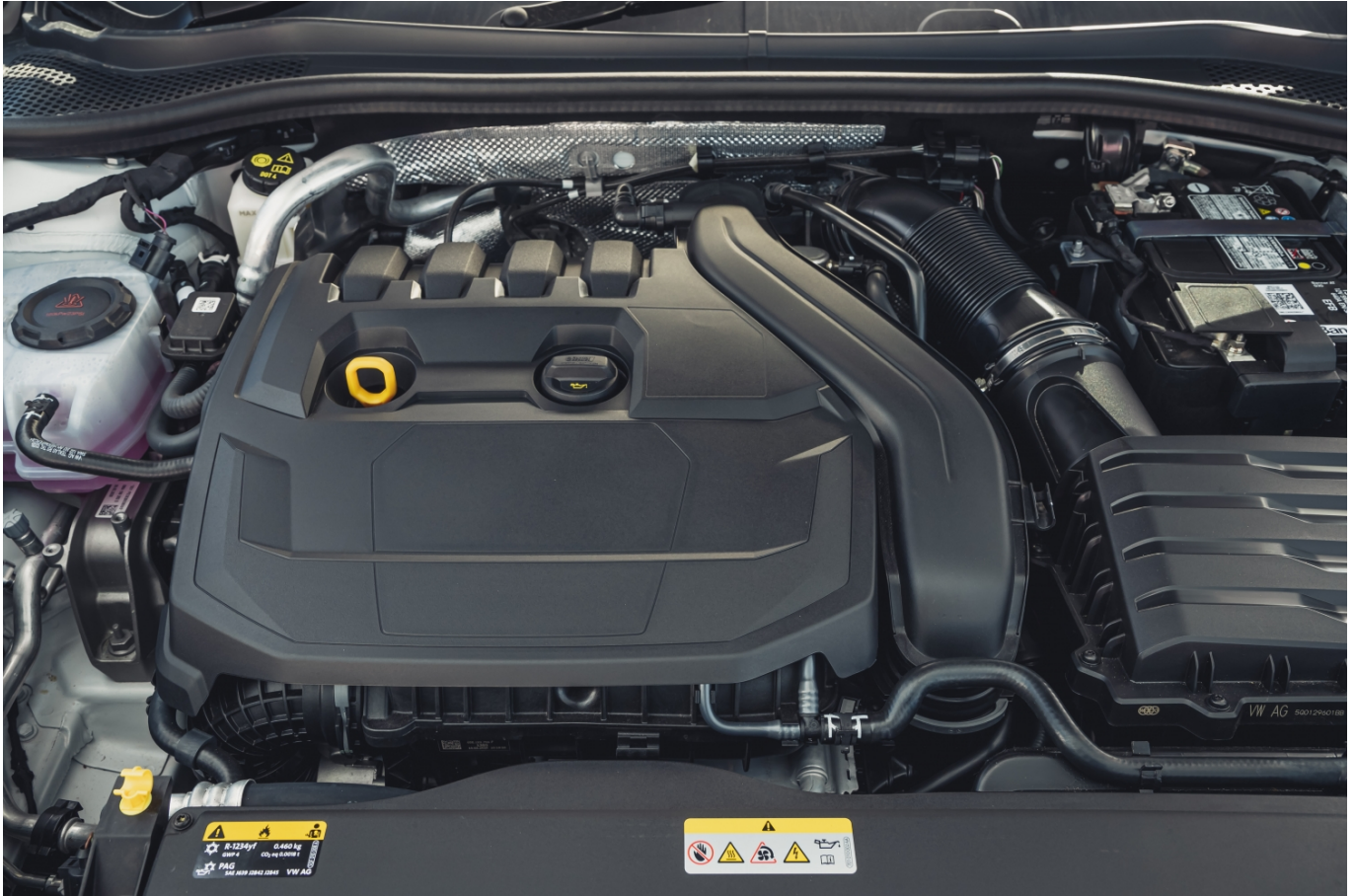
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Our 1.5 TSI FR Sport 5-door hatchback turbo-petrol 130 hp test car sits mid-range and is a nod to its sporting predecessors, benefitting from new exterior and interior styling, full LED headlamps and wrap-around rear lights, extensive infotainment and communications upgrades and a longer platform which improves the ride and room.

The FR Sport specification includes powered and heated door mirrors, heated front seats, leather detailing, powered driver's seat and microsuede upholstery.

The mid-range 1.5 litre turbo petrol engine has intelligent technology which cuts out unnecessary cylinders on light throttle settings and accounts for the remarkable economy we achieved over the expected and verified value in the high forties.

A lot of the time with the test car was spent on motorways which helped us over 50 mpg but even on main and secondary roads we saw figures into the upper 40 mpg sector, and that was without deliberately adopting an eco-style of driving.



With some more enthusiastic throttle use the figures did naturally drop and the performance is respectable but not remarkable through the closely set gear ratios and we thought it had a distinctly poor pull in top which is really only good for flat motorway cruising.

Our manual model had a neat and precise feel to the gearchange but the clutch pedal did not complement it with a long travel action and driving in town or a motorway queue was irritating as a result.

No complaints however with the steering feedback through the slim wheel and its compact turning circle without kickback or vibration on bad roads.



While it coped well with poor roads, bumps and potholes, the suspension, wheels and tyres could be heard at work underneath, even if rarely felt.

The foot and parking brakes did a safe job slowing and holding the car and releasing quickly when wanted.

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Major secondary controls on stalks for lights and wipers worked well but buttons on the wheelspokes were not so user friendly and those on the infotainment display were distracting when driving. The display screen also needed familiarity to operate safely and quickly and I am not so sure this is as well laid out as it might have been.

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Temperature control in the cabin was wide ranging, quick to change and had good output, ideal in the UK climate, and it came with powered windows all round.

Visibility was really good all round with bright lights, effective wash and wipers, slim roof pillars and useful sensors when parking or manoeuvring.

We liked the plentiful oddments room throughout the cabin for a family car and the reasonable bootspace behind, quickly tripling capacity as the offset split rear seats were folded almost completely flat.

Access was easy and while shoulder room was tight for three behind, they had good legroom and headspace. In front, the space was plentiful too and reach and rake settings were good but while the front seats were deeply shaped they did not offer much support in the lumbar region and in fact left driver and passenger aching after a 200 miles trip, despite altering the settings.



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It did cover the distance with ease and economically, while no-one complained about being short on room or having a hard ride.



VERDICT

The latest SEAT Leon FR Sport is big improvement on its predecessor, better value than its Volkswagen Golf stablemate, a tough take-on for its Skoda rivals and those from other rival manufacturers.

It has made up a lot of ground, particularly in areas of refinement, but it still has a bit of a way to go to be best in class.

For: Great economy, good responses to steering & brakes, fairly roomy, tight gearchange, excellent infotainment system.

Against: Dark interior, uncomfortable front seats, long travel clutch, lots of road noise, fiddly minor controls, average warranty.



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FAST FACTS

Model: SEAT Leon Hatchback 1.5TSI FR Sport 5-door

Price: £29,970

Mechanical: 130 PS four-cylinder 1.5L turbo-petrol, 6 speed manual



Max Speed: 129 mph

0 - 62mph: 9.4sec

Combined MPG: 52.7

Insurance Group: 16E

CO2 emissions: 130 g/km

Tax costs: Bik rating 30%, VED £255FY, £180SR

Warranty: 3 years/ 60,000 miles

Size: L 4.37 m (14.34 ft), W 1.80 m (5.91 ft), H 1.45 m (4.76 ft)

Boot space: 380 to 1,301 litres (13.42 to 45.94 cu.ft)

Kerb weight: 1,316 kg (2,901 lb)