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Skoda Kamiq – Road Test

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The Kamiq name says Skoda comes from the Inuit people living in northern Canada and Greenland and literally means something that fits perfectly in every situation - like a second skin. The Kamiq's name also begins with the letter K and ends in a Q and so handily continues the naming style of the two other Skoda SUV models, the mid-sized Karoq and the large Kodiaq.



The Kamiq is a five door compact SUV with an overall length of 4,241 mm (13.91 ft), about the same as a Skoda Fabia Estate and a little shorter than the new Scala family hatchback and only 140 mm (approx 5.5 inches) shorter than its Karoq mid-sized SUV family member. Potentially it could be seen as a replacement for the popular but now defunct Skoda Yeti but the Kamiq doesn't as yet offer 4WD versions.

Despite its scaled down size, like most other Skoda's, it provides plenty of interior space and it's the 735 mm (2.41 ft) rear seat legroom provided by the long 2,651 mm (8.70 ft) wheelbase with plenty of headroom, that sets this new compact SUV apart from its rivals which are numerous. The most obvious competitors are the Nissan Juke, Ford EcoSport, Fiat 500X, new Renault Captur, soon to arrive new Peugeot 2008, the Citroën C3 Aircross, Vauxhall's Crossland X/Mokka models, and from the Volkswagen Group of brands - the VW T-Cross/T-Roc versions plus the SEAT Arona and the Audi Q2.





In addition to the impressive rear legroom the Kamiq doesn't short-change on boot space either with 400 litres (14.13 cu.ft) with the rear seats in place and up to 1,395 litres (49.26 cu. ft) with the 60/40 split rear seat backs folded down. Surprisingly, as Skoda has a reputation for supplying just that bit more specification, you have to pay £155 more to add an adjustable load area floor which brings the bed height up to the level of the rear sill for ease of loading. However the familiar Skoda ice-scraper, torch and an umbrella stowed in the driver's door are included.

But in this class, apart from size and potentially kerb appeal, it's price that matters. The current Kamiq range has prices starting from £17,700 ranging up to £25,130. For now there is the choice of S, SE and SE L specification levels depending on the engine chosen, and all models are two wheel drive, no 4WD versions are planned as yet. A Monte Carlo higher spec level will follow. The petrol engine options are 1.0 litre TSI 95 hp with a manual gearbox, 1.0 litre TSI 115 hp manual and auto gearbox options, 1.5 TSI 150 hp manual and auto and



for those who want diesel power there is the 1.6 TDI 115 hp with manual and auto transmission choices. The CO2 emission levels for both fuel types vary between 112 and 116 g/km and insurance groups are 8E to 17E. Warranty as always is the usual ungenerous VW Group's three years/60,000 miles.

That's the nuts and bolts of the new model's line-up so to get to grips with the new Kamiq I got behind the wheel of the likely best selling version, the 1.0 TSI 115 hp manual with SE L specification, priced at £21,980. However with Skoda now upping the number of extra cost options available, instead of some being standard fit, the on-the-road price of my test car was a hefty £25,790. I admit Skoda was showcasing some of the wide range of options with my test vehicle so customers need to be selective in what equipment they really want. Just some of the fitted options were the heated multi-function steering wheel at £225, door edge protectors at £175, the electrically operated boot at £400, the steel space saver spare wheel at £150, heated windscreen added another £300 and heated front seats a further £250 but the big ticket item was the full LED adaptive automatic headlights system with cornering function, dynamic indicators and fog lights which costs an extra £1,050.

However the popular SE L spec level isn't short of standard equipment so you get such items as... 18-inch alloy wheels, Amundsen sat-nav with a stylish 9.2-inch centrally positioned dashboard touchscreen (and it has voice control), blind spot detection, cruise control, DAB radio with Bluetooth, dual zone air-con, electrically adjusted and heated door mirrors, gesture control, keyless engine start/stop button, lane assist, auto lights and wipers. The car also features a multifunction computer, virtual cockpit with adjustable driving dial configuration, Smartlink which includes Android Auto and Mirrorlink connectivity plus Wireless Smartlink for Apple CarPlay, front and rear parking sensors - plus of course the usual pedestrian and collision driving safety and a full set of air bags are included in all versions.



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As for exterior styling the Kamiq follows the usual compact SUV trend although it appears less of an elevated SUV vehicle than most in its class. At the front is the smart new generation Skoda face design which I like and it looks classy. There is a slightly rising waistline towards the rear and it has the usual roof rails but lacks wheelarch protectors which might detract from its SUV image for some owners.



Inside you will certainly notice the seating positions are lower than some of its SUV competitors, more of an elevated hatchback than a tall SUV. This could be a downside for older customers who like the ease of getting in and out of SUVs with higher positioned seats. However young through to older users will enjoy the benefits of its roomy rear seat space and that hasn't been achieved either by reducing the front seat space or reducing the versatile boot area. So whether its empty nesters who want to take out family or friends or younger users coping with the school run and potentially family holidays, the Kamiq really measures up in its compact SUV class.

The interior is quite classy as well with the top of the dashboard and front door coverings all

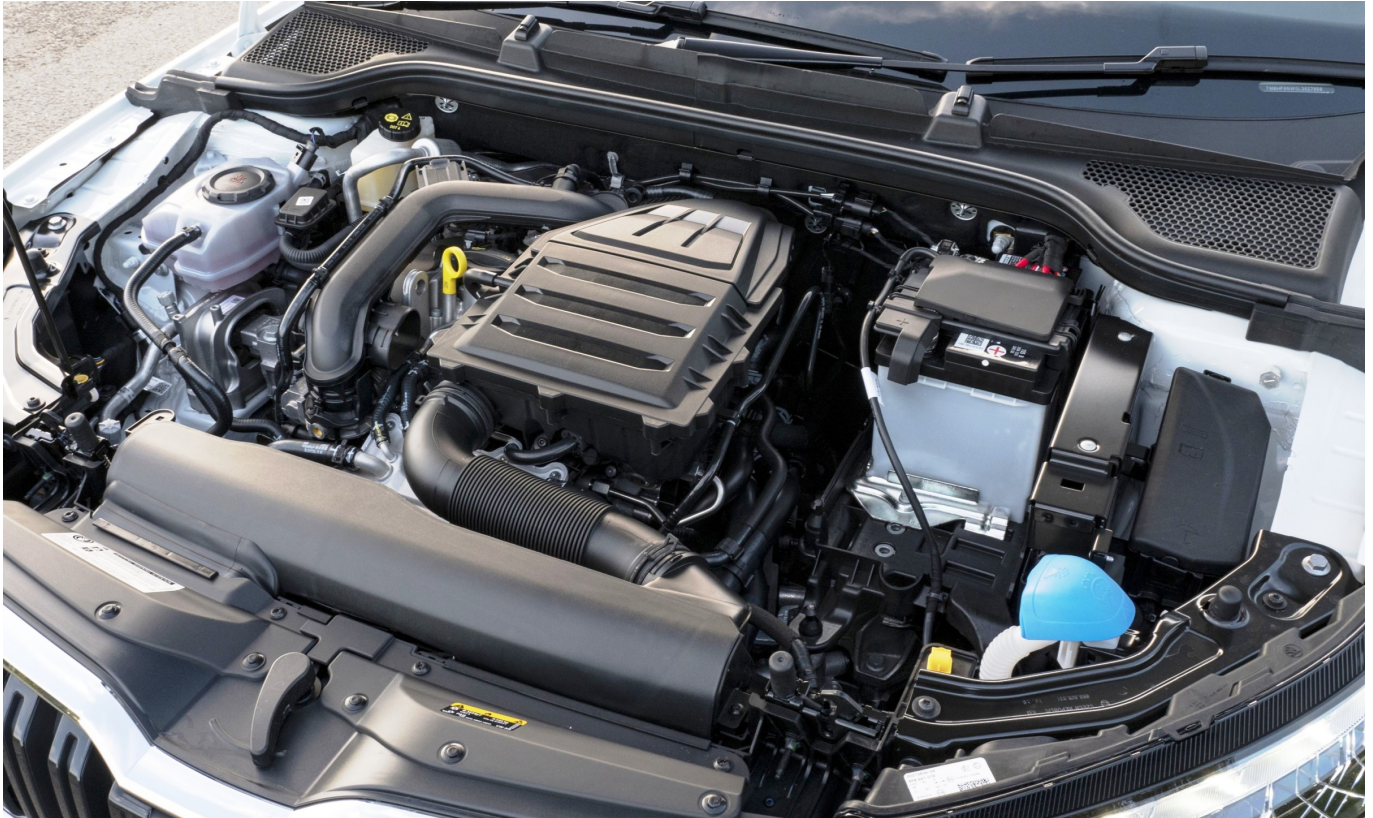


having textured soft-feel finishes. There are also cloth inserts in parts of the door linings which match the seat upholstery. There are plenty of storage spaces keeping it user-friendly and practical. Most of the controls and layout are common to other VW Group models but the nicely styled and easy to use large-ish touchscreen looks more up-market. That said some of the heating, air-con and ventilation controls plus the heated steering wheel functions have to be operated via the touchscreen, which isn't ideal although there are separate controls for some other main functions such as temperature selection.

The seats are comfortable and supportive with good adjustment but as I've said mounted lower in the car than you normally find with an SUV, even a small one.

The components under the skin are from the wide range of other VW Group models so we know them well enough. Skoda has done a really good job with tuning the suspension which is comfortable and compliant and not being as high off the ground as a VW T-Roc compact SUV there is less body-roll whilst cornering. The Kamiq sits firmly planted on the road and the longer wheelbase gives a better fore and aft ride balance.

The 1.0 litre, three cylinder turbo petrol engine with 115 hp is used commonly throughout the various VW Group brands so there is nothing new to report. This free-revving smooth unit produces 200 Nm (148 lb.ft) of torque from 2,000 rpm so it is responsive for acceleration and easy to drive at lower stop-start commuting speeds. The top speed 120 mph and the zero to 62 mph acceleration time is 9.9 seconds, again nothing new to report in that department. This engine is matched with a six speed smooth-changing manual gearbox with drive to the front wheels.



As for fuel economy, officially the WLTP Combined Cycle range is 42.8 to 47.1 mpg and during my week of test driving using most types of roads the figure was 45.9 mpg. The CO2 emissions are 116 g/km so VED First Year road tax costs £170 before the Standard rate of £145 is applied. The Benefit-in-Kind company car tax rate is 27%.

VERDICT

Overall the Kamiq is an important additional model range for the Skoda brand, although the compact SUV market already offers plenty of model choices. The Czech manufacturer, true to their traditions, has still found a way of offering something a bit different to customers, especially those who want more interior space than most other models in its highly competitive sector.

For: Class leading interior rear seat legroom, comfortable and compliant ride, well balanced handling, good real life fuel economy, low cost insurance, classy interior.



Against: Skoda is increasingly offering more extra cost options - some of which by tradition should be standard fit, lower height seating than in most compact SUVs, least SUV-like exterior styling in its sector, no 4WD models, ungenerous warranty.



Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Skoda Kamiq 1.0 TSI 115hp, manual, SE L, compact SUV.

Price: £21,980 (£25,790 as tested with options).

Engine/transmission: 1.0 litre, three cylinder TSI turbo petrol, 115 hp, 200 Nm (148



lb.ft) of torque from 2,000 rpm, six speed manual, front wheel drive.

Performance: 120 mph, 0-62 mph 9.9 seconds.

Fuel consumption: WLTP Combined Cycle 42.8 to 47.1 mpg (45.9 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 116 g/km, VED road tax £170/£145, BiK company car tax 27%.

Insurance Group: 12E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,241 mm (13.91 ft), W 1,793 mm (5.88 ft), H 1,531 mm (5.02 ft), wheelbase 2,651 mm (8.70 ft), boot/load space 400 to 1,395 litres (14.13 to 49.26 cu.ft), five doors/five seats.