



Skoda Octavia turbo-diesel Estate – Road Test

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‘Diesel cars are a dying range but all I can say is long live the Skoda Octavia Estate turbo-diesel’ says Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales).

It’s going to become a model we will look back upon and ponder; wonder why such a thoroughly good all rounder has to be replaced by much more expensive, less practical and, frankly, less satisfying electric rivals.



It's one of the oldest model names in the Skoda stable and still accounts for about half of the brand's European sales but the fact its semi-estate shape and diesel engine have become unfashionable in the eyes of many buyers suggests we need to make the most of what we can get now.

Crossover styles now dominate desires but ask a taxi driver, serious travelling salesman, police traffic officer or someone who lives and works in the countryside and needs to balance life-style with thrift and there's a good chance they will have a Skoda Octavia tucked away in their memory or a barn.

Soundly designed, engineered and built, the Skoda Octavia Estate does an honest job at a reasonable price.



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Our test car had a retail price of £33,280 but came with a selection of fitted options which added about £3,500 to that and included Velvet Red metallic paint, 18-inch alloys and foldable tow bar, plus some additional driving assistance and comfort features.

The Octavia Estate series comprises 10 models from £25,255 to £38,870, in SE, SE L and vRS grades, come with front wheel or four-wheel-drive and engines from 110 PS to 245 PS with manual or automatic transmissions.

The 2.0 TD engine has been the backbone of the wider Volkswagen Group range for two decades, is bullet-proof and is probably the ideal power unit in the series.



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Being a turbo-diesel it is slightly slow off the mark but once on the move the power flows smoothly and strongly, with good mid-range overtaking and a relaxed response at motorway speed. The innate flexibility of the engine reduces gearchanges but there are seven ratios spinning away so it seems to have the right gear for any situation and it also contributed to very good economy overall.

The smooth changes were there whether going up or down the box and you can fine tune the powertrain with different modes to lengthen economy or sharpen performance.

The brakes were up to their task with only slight pressure on the pedal bringing about strong deceleration and a drama-free stop from higher speed. The parking brake did an excellent job on our test slope.

In the driver's hands, the steering had a nice weight and feedback, a good turning circle in town for parking and at speed it was not twitchy but more direct.

Handling was responsive and the roadholding very good for what is a medium sized family car and it was predictable and safe even with a load aboard.

The Skoda Octavia Estate has to carefully balance its suspension and shock absorbers to give an agreeable ride whether lightly or heavily laden and it certainly achieved an excellent level of comfort, even more remarkable when you could hear how hard the system was coping on some bad surfaces we seem to have as the norm these days.

Some of that comfort must be down to the big, deeply padded and firm seats throughout, with a wide adjustment range on the front pair as well as being heated.

Access into the cabin was excellent and it was roomy for five while the flat low loadbed made it simple to shove in or extract bags and cases and the rear seats quickly dropped to dramatically increase capacity. The boot floor also has variable height settings.

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Oddments room was good throughout for a family car with bins, trays and pockets a plenty.

Climatronic Air conditioning was straightforward and thoroughly filled the cabin while keeping side windows clear and feet warm.

Ahead of the driver was a 10.25-inch virtual display which meant the chosen dials and warnings could be tailored to specific requirements to highlight some features or put them in the background. This was a very clear and relatively simple system to change/set up.

The familiar stalks operated lights and the LED beams of the intelligent headlights which were both wide and long range, and the rain sensitive variable wipers which cleared a large area of the front and rear glass.

In the centre of the dash was a 10-inch touchscreen with multi-functions for comfort, convenience and communications and it all quickly linked to a mobile phone with full connectivity.

The infotainment display readouts were quick changing and very clear. The driver can also select various features to make long journeys safer with steering and parking assist and intelligent speed control.

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Noise levels were generally low apart from the road rumbles and until the engine was pushed in the intermediate gears.

So, it's easy to understand why the Skoda Octavia Estate is so popular with high mileage drivers and families, particularly in this 150 PS turbo-diesel form, when its ownership and running costs are quite manageable.

It's not the latest take on interior style but it is very hardwearing and practical and for many owners that's particularly important.



VERDICT

Skoda's Octavia Estate 150 PS SE L is a very good allrounder at a time when manufacturers are increasingly pitching their newer cars at a narrower field of users.

For: Extremely roomy and comfortable, highly equipped, good flexible performance and economy, low ownership costs.

Against: Some cheap plastic trim evident, noticeable road noise and intrusive engine when pressed.



FAST FACTS



Model: Skoda Octavia Estate SE L 2.0TDI 150

Price: £36,815

Mechanical: 150 PS 4 cyl 2.0 TD, 7 sp auto

Max Speed: 141 mph

0 - 62mph: 8.6 sec

Combined MPG: 63

Insurance Group: 22E

C02 emissions: 122 g/km

Bik rating: 29%, £210FY, £180SR

Warranty: 3 yrs/ 60,000 miles

Size: L 4.70 m (15.42 ft), W 1.83 m (6.00 ft), H 1.47 m (4.82 ft)

Bootspace: 640 to 1,700 litres (22.60 to 60.03 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,403kg (3,093 lb)