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Skoda Superb iV PHEV – Road Test

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SKODA ADDS iV PHEV PLUS AND IN-HYBRID MODELS TO THEIR SUPERB RANGE...

...David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) puts the newcomer through its paces.

(Photographs by Skoda and David).

Skoda's hugely popular and award winning Superb range of large Hatch and Estate models has received a further boost to their range with the addition of petrol-electric PHEV models.



The global car industry is moving quickly to provide hybrids and pure electric powered models to meet the new the new EU emission regulations. These come into force from 1 January 2021 and electric and hybrid models are needed so as not to incur huge fines if the average of CO2 output of the cars they sell exceeds 95 g/km.

Currently in the UK there are 265,000 electrified vehicles on our UK roads and most of them are plug-in hybrids or self charging hybrids and just 3.3% (4,900) are fully electric cars. PHEV UK sales actually reduced last year once the Government did away with the £3,500 plug-in vehicle grant off the price of a new car but the fast increase of manufacturers bringing new PHEVs to market has restored the growth with sales up 111.1%. Self charging hybrids also saw sales go up by 20.6% and pure electric battery vehicle increased 204% but the sales numbers are still relatively small. But the move to more efficient electric and hybrid models is firmly on a charge.

The Skoda Superb iV PHEV five door Hatch and Estate models are available in four trim and equipment levels with the same plug-in hybrid powertrain. The trim levels are SE Technology aimed specifically at the company car market sector, SE L, Sportline Plus and the range topping L&K variant. Prices start from £31,970 for the iV Hatch £33,260 for the iV Estate.

Prices for conventional Superb petrol and diesel powered models range from £25,115 to £39,585 for the Hatch and £26,435 to £40,865 for the Estates. Engines for these versions are 1.5 litre 150 hp and 2.0 litre 190 hp turbo petrol and 1.6 TDI 120 hp, 2.0 TDI 150 and 2.0 TDI 190 hp turbodiesels, some with auto transmission options as well as 4×4 traction for the higher powered versions.



The Superb iV plug-in hybrids are powered exclusively by a turbocharged 1.4 litre, four cylinder, TSI 156 hp petrol engine plus a 85 kW 115 hp electric motor giving a total power output of 218 hp. Drive is to the front wheels through a six speed DSG twin-clutch automatic gearbox with auto, manual and regenerative braking pressure settings plus the usual Eco to Sport to Individual driving modes. There are also three hybrid-specific secondary power supply modes of Electric, Hybrid Auto and Hybrid Manual. The CO2 emissions range from 34 to 38 g/km depending on the model and spec level, with a zero emissions pure electric driving range up to 35 miles. Skoda says the iVs can travel up to 578 miles on a single tank of fuel and a fully charged battery when in hybrid mode.



The official WLTP Combined Cycle figure is 148.7 mpg to 201.8 mpg depending on the body style and spec level. My SE Technology Hatch returned an overall average of 65.6 mpg for a week of motoring using long and short runs, with some periods of charging using a 13amp household electricity supply. Charging the battery from zero to full took 5.6 hours but a public 3.6 kW charging point will halve that time. To get the optimum fuel economy the plug-in facility must be used as long journeys, especially motorways and dual carriageways, offer little scope for the regenerative braking recharge facility to work. For those drivers making daily short journeys and using the plug-in facility regularly, no petrol will be used and for slightly longer trips using the daily mains charge-ups and the regenerative braking recharge in stop start traffic and on winding country roads, my test car showed a regular



figure of 135 mpg and even up to 300 mpg at times. It's only longer high speed runs that reduced the final overall figure.

Top speed is 138 mph and the zero to 62 mph acceleration time is an impressive 7.7 seconds - far better than a 1.4 litre petrol engine would suggest but thanks to the high powered, high torque electric motor there was ample power and acceleration response.

In the UK new VED road tax charges will be announced in the Government's Budget this month. Currently VED road tax for the Superb iV models is First Year VED at £0 followed by the £135 Standard rate. The company car Benefit-in-Kind tax rate is currently 16% for the SE Technology trim Hatchback model but we know the new rate will be a low 10% so for company car users moving into a new Superb iV from April this will be of significant appeal. The new BiK rates are judged on the distance that can be covered using electric power only and the amount of CO2 emissions emitted.

Last year the Skoda Superb models received a major makeover styling wise with sharper body lines, remodelled bumpers, wider grille, new full LED matrix headlights, full LED taillights and dynamic indicators and there was an upgrading of the interior trim and equipment. The business-user specific SE Technology iV model I tested offers customers leather upholstery, also an 8.0 inch infotainment touchscreen, plus the latest Skoda MIB3 infotainment and connectivity functions, including a built-in SIM card for data and wireless connection for SmartLink and Apple CarPlay. It also provides real-time traffic information and on-line support allowing route suggestions to be calculated more quickly and accurately.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

My test car additionally featured the £375 rear-view parking camera which was useful given the restricted view through the sloping tailgate window of the Hatch model. It also had the £90 Traffic Sign Recognition function and the £465 Virtual Cockpit adjustable display feature. With the £595 metallic paint option this pushed the price up from £31,970 to



£33,580. By comparison across the spec levels it appears that an iV PHEV model is around £4,000 more expensive than a similar specced 2.0 TSI 190 hp automatic Hatch. So whilst company car drivers benefit from personal lower BiK tax costs, other users will pay significantly more for their car, which is the case with all PHEVs - although all users benefit from lower VED road tax costs.

By comparison the starter point Superb iV Hatch model is 20% cheaper than the entry-level BMW 330e PHEV and 15% less costly than the VW Passat GTE which uses the same engine/hybrid powertrain.

Inside the Superb iV the layout and instrumentation is more or less the same as other conventionally powered versions except for the battery level indicator which is added to the left hand side of the instrument binnacle display, and of course there are extra buttons to select the electric only or hybrid driving modes. Whilst the interior space of the Hatchback iV remains just as roomy as ever, especially for the huge rear seat legroom, the Hatch's boot space has reduced from 610 litres (21.54 cu.ft) to 485 litres (17.13 cu.ft) as some of the electric gubbins are positioned under the load area floor but there is still space below the load area to store the charging cables without compromising luggage room. The iV Estate's load area also reduces to 510 litres (18.01 cu.ft) from 680 litres (24.01 cu.ft). The battery pack is positioned under the rear seats and within the wheelbase but that gives no reduction in rear seat space, one of the Superb's biggest sales features.



As for driving the flow between pure electric, part electric and petrol only, all done automatically, was smooth with no noticeable changes in power delivery and the six speed DSG provided seamless gearchanges helped by the huge 400 Nm (295 lb.ft) of torque. It's a responsive and when needed fast accelerating car to drive and quiet at cruising speeds. It's also a very easy car to drive despite its technology. It is really just a case of pressing the starting button, select Drive or Reverse, nominate the driving mode and move off. The ride, as with most Superb models, is comfortable and compliant. It's not as agile as a BMW 330e PHEV or as hard riding and the VW Passat GTE PHEV, but it's a nice blend and the big bonus is the interior rear seat space which in its sector cannot be beaten.



VERDICT

The only choice and a potential downside, is whether you want to pay considerably more for the iV PHEV over other excellent Superb models. My biggest drawback was the need to plug-it into the mains to make the car as fuel and CO2 efficient as possible. Dealing with dirty wet cables on a dark night ready for the next day's motoring is not user-friendly but has become a necessity if we want to adopt 'greener' motoring with a plug-in hybrid or a pure electric car. Perhaps self-charging hybrids have the edge for convenience motoring for now.



For: Low tax costs, very spacious, impressive petrol electric hybrid powertrain, lively acceleration, comfortable ride, very good fuel economy potential if the plug-in function is used regularly, good business-like specification, wide range of other spec levels with the same powertrain.

Against: Higher purchase price will not appeal to some retail customers, not the sportiest handling car to drive, needs access to charging points to be a realistic Superb model to own or use.



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

Skoda Superb Hatch iV SE Technology Plug-in Hybrid.

Price: £31,970 (£33,580 as tested).



Powertrain: 1.4 litre, four cylinder TSI turbo petrol 156 hp engine plus 85 kW 115 hp electric motor with a total system power output of 218 hp and 400 Nm (295 lb.ft) of torque, six speed DSG dual clutch auto gearbox with front wheel drive and selectable driving modes. Performance: 138 mph, 0-62 mph 7.7 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 148.7 to 201.8 mpg (65.6 mpg on test including long and short runs), electric power only driving range 35 miles.

Emissions and taxation: CO2 35g/km, current VED First Year road tax £0 then £135 Standard rate, BiK company car tax rate 16% currently but 10% for cars bought from April onwards.

Insurance Group: 25E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles/battery eight years/99,000 miles.

Dimensions: L 4,869 mm (15.97 ft), W 1,864 mm (6.12 ft), H 1,468 mm (4.82 ft), wheelbase 2,841 mm (9.32 ft), boot/load space 485 to 1,610 litres (17.13 to 56.86 cu.ft), five doors/five seats.