



Skoda Fabia (2007 - 2014)

Hip To Be Square

Car review | It's hip to be square - at least according to Skoda. A good product for a good price. Since 1999, the Fabia has been the superior choice if you live by this philosophy. It is completely understandable that this success story has recently been updated. After selling more than 1.5 million cars, it's about time. The new Fabia, is it just as hip?

Out of the blue, it appeared. The normal process is: the car manufacturer shows off a concept car first; then they will carefully leak a number of technical specifications; and finally they will officially confirm that the particular car will actually be put into production. With its strong resemblance to the recently introduced Roomster, much of the usual preliminary work was consequently unneeded in the case of this entirely new Fabia.

MINI - Roomster

From the front, the Fabia has a fairly similar look to that of the mini Roomster. The Fabia has the same high nose (bearing the safety of pedestrians in mind) and the same self-confident and congenial appearance. The rear of the car has been appropriately streamlined with rear windows and roof, which slope gently downwards. The roof deserves particular mention as it can be ordered in white. Of course, this contrasting white roof has been copied straight from the MINI, but the effect is just as effective.



With the exception of its nose, the Fabia has many other similarities with the Roomster. Getting into the car, you immediately notice that the windshield is quite straight. The roof is also a couple of centimetres higher than usual. The Fabia may be the smallest Skoda, however it has an abundance of space.

Even with the front seat in the highest position, tall drivers still have lots of headroom; with the front seat in the furthest position, many drivers won't be able to

reach the pedals. It's a shame that Skoda hasn't adapted the headrests for the taller driver, as these are quite uncomfortable and add no extra security. The steering wheel and the seats can be adjusted into many different positions irrespective of the posture to achieve the perfect seating position.

The space in the rear is moderate, which is at the cost of the enormous amount of room in the front of the car. The sloping roof takes away from the headroom in the rear of the car as well. The relatively small side windows manage to enhance the smallness of this space.

Car boot

With an extra 40 litres, the luggage space has all the accoutrements of the Roomster. The Fabia has brackets for shopping bags as well as a flexible rubber partition which prevents small items sliding around in the boot.



It's possible to place the hat shelf at two different heights thus subdividing the boot laterally as well. Capable of holding up to 6kgs the hat shelf can also be used a little table. These are all simple things that don't add to the expense of the Fabia, but in reality make it a much more practical car.

The same applies to the storage in the car door; a simple recess offers space for bottles. A simple elastic band ensures that any paperwork which has been placed in the door compartments doesn't blow away. The double dashboard compartments (one on top of

the dashboard, one below) seem handy; however both are in fact smaller than one single dashboard compartment.

Equipment

The equipment is appropriate for 2007. The Skoda's radio/CD player plays not only CD's but also CD-ROM's with mp3 files. The mobile telephone can be connected with Bluetooth. That's the promise in any case. In spite of frantic attempts with various telephones, it was never possible to connect the mobile wirelessly to the car.

Other innovations for the Fabia are adaptive mist lights, which are an extremely useful and safety conscious extra as well as a climate control system. Previously the Fabia only had manual air conditioning. The battery is constantly being monitored, so that the Fabia never has an empty battery due to the intensive use from the electronics.



In spite of all the refreshing ergonomical ideas, the design of the interior hasn't been particularly creative. The test car, which is one of the basic models, has a sober black interior radiating nothing more than reliability and durability. Nevertheless in comparison with the Fabia from the previous generation, it has made great progress.



Diesel

The comparison with the Roomster doesn't just stop with its appearance and amount of space. The pair share the same engines. The Fabia is considerably lighter and more streamlined; the result of which is a considerably better performance. There are three diesel and three petrol engines.

The first part of the test ride was done with the 80 hp/195 Nm 1.4 litre three cylinder diesel engine. Of all three diesel engines, this is literally and figuratively the middle model. The performance is sufficient, but the turbo diesel lacks any kind of refinement. The engine is cold, stubborn and noisy.

Once the engine has warmed up it is very dependent on the turbo. At first there is little power available and only when the engine produces sufficient rpms does the turbo then jump in, whereupon the Fabia does perform well. Particularly on the motorway the Fabia is an extremely economical, merry mile-muncher.



Petrol

The petrol engines vary from 60 hp/108 Nm for the 1.2 litre three cylinder up to a respectable 105 hp/153 Nm for the 1.6 litre four cylinder. The latter performs outstandingly, reacts alertly to acceleration and yet remains rather economical. The Fabia 1.6 is slightly less quiet than its competitors, but you can't fault its engine otherwise.

However the engine that can be highly recommended is the 86 hp/132 Nm 1.4 litre petrol engine. In spite of the theoretical difference in capacity, the 1.4 litres is in reality just as smooth and lively as the considerably more expensive 1.6 litres. The difference is so small that after the test ride the test driver had to open the bonnet just to check that it really was the 1.4! The Fabia 1.4 can keep up nicely with traffic and always has sufficient in reserve to be able to overtake safely or to join the traffic quickly.

Road handling

Behaving normally will be crazy enough for the Fabia, whether with regard to its engines or its performance. The road handling is very good. If the driver does something unusual such as takes a corner too quickly,

makes an unexpected evasive manoeuvre, the car rapidly finds its balance once more without any loss of control.

However, the Fabia is not an exciting car nor is it comparable to a ride at the fun fair. The brakes are powerful, but not sharp. The steering is light, but not without feeling. The suspension is comfortable, but not free-floating. All in all, this new standard model from Skoda gives the driver that pleasant feeling that everything is just right.



Conclusion

At Skoda, it is all about a healthy understanding, behaving normally and no unnecessary fuss. That also applies to this completely new Fabia. The appearance, the road handling, the performance and the equipment are all good, but neither are they over the top nor unusual. The space and ergonomics of the Fabia are however above average.

As usual the price is considerably lower than average. The Skoda Fabia is definitely neither a driving compromise nor a necessary choice in lieu of more expensive cars. The Fabia is a clever choice, because the car is good on all counts. A new Skoda Fabia? It's hip to be square. ■



Specifications

Skoda Fabia (2007 - 2014) 1.4 16v 3

Size and weight

Length x width x height	400 x 164 x 150 cm
Wheelbase	245 cm
Kerb weight	1.060 kg
Trailer	500 kg
Trailer - braked	1.000 kg
Fuel capacity	45 l
Luggage space	315/1180 l
Tyre size	165/70R14

Engine and performance



Capacity	1390 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	86 PS @ 5000 rpm
Max torque	132 Nm @ 3800 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	12.3 secs
Top speed	174 km/h
Average mileage	6.5 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	8.6 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	5.3 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	155 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 11,455
Price base model	Â£ 7,990