



Seat Exeo Salon-rebel

Review | What do you get when you cross a rebel with a family man? A thirty-something. This group still has ideals and dreams, but also has a career and a mortgage. Especially for them there is the new Exeo: a conservative four door sedan, which is supposed to have the playful and rebellious character of a Seat.

There's no doubt about it: the Exeo has a determined look. This may be just a four door sedan, thanks to "Arrow Design" even this company car has the same charismatic face as the other Seat-models.

A good start

Although the test drive starts off under the blazing hot Spanish sun, when entering the Exeo it is already remarkably cool inside. That's because Seat redefines the word "sunroof". Solar panels have been mounted on the roof. The solar energy is used to cool the interior of the Exeo, even when parked.



And that's not the only good start of this test drive, because Seat had another clever idea. From a technical viewpoint, the Seat Exeo is based on the previous generation of the Audi A4. All machines have literally been transported from the German Audi factory to the Seat unit in Spain. By using an existing design, the price of the new Seat can be low while offering already proven quality.

The cabin is almost as sterile and immaculate as the Audi's, though all logo's have been carefully replaced. Thanks to characteristic elements like the

Seat steering wheel, the Exeo looks like a real Seat from the inside. Those who know the old Audi A4, will notice that the remainder of the interior has been copied verbatim.



That also means that the space on the back seats is poor. And the Exeo has some ergonomical errors: the arm rest is in the way when changing gears. Before being able to apply the parking brake, the arm rest first has to be folded up.

Trim level

The sound quality of the standard audio system is no more than average. The optional audio, navigation and communication system (known as "MMI" by Audi) isn't very user friendly. Therefore Seat promises to replace it by another system within a couple of months.

The ambiance in the cabin depends on the trim level. The "Style"-version fails to be stylish at all with brown upholstery (this isn't tasteful cream or beige, but plain brown) and unmistakably fake wood. The materials used show signs of wear and tear quickly, because the brand new test car looks like it has had a long and rough life already.



Both the "Reference" (base model) and "Sport" version use black materials. These trim levels do make the Exeo feel like a quality product.



Petrol engine

First the "2.0 TSI" petrol engine was driven. With this most powerful engine on the list the Exeo should be able to prove itself as a true rebel. But instead the 200 horse power engine feels like 200 donkey power. With this power unit the Exeo isn't provocative or spritely, but it feels overweight and unwilling instead.

Only when flooring the throttle so that the rev counter is almost in the red zone, the Exeo TSI is indeed pretty quick and performs like a top-spec car should.



Diesel engine

The diesel engines feel much better. No matter what the rev counter indicates, the diesels always deliver lots of power. Therefore the Exeo diesel feels alive and willing like a Seat should. In real life the difference between the 140 hp and 170 hp diesel engine is marginal. Only in extreme conditions the stronger version really delivers that extra punch.

All diesel engines are very economical. Even when driving fast the 170 hp model consumes 6,7 litres of diesel per 100 km (Seat promises 5,8 litres per 100 km).

Road holding

The Exeo is available with standard and sports suspension. The difference between both is evident and defines the character of the car. The standard suspension (also known as "Comfort" suspension by Seat) makes the Exeo a fine, but not a very exciting mile muncher.

The sports suspension is obviously stiffer (front 30%, rear 25% stiffer dampers) and is lowered by 20 mm. This makes the Exeo feel like a firmer, more dynamic and more agile car. Especially on twisty roads the Exeo comes to live with this suspension and gives this four door sedan an unmistakable Seat-feel!



Conclusion

Seat faced a difficult challenge: build a four door sedan that is also sporty and low priced. By using an existing design, the Exeo offers excellent value for money while quality is already proven. The drawback of re-using an existing platform is that there's little room for innovative technology.

Whether the Exeo is a rebel or not, depends of the trim level. Especially the diesel engines are convincing thanks to good performance and low emissions. Only the sports suspension makes the Exeo a dynamic car.

Despite all alterations the Exeo still is a conservative four door sedan. That makes this latest Seats as rebellious as a business man in a suit, but with a flashy pair of sneakers underneath. ■



Specifications

Seat Exeo 2.0 TSI Sport

Size and weight



Length x width x height	466 x 177 x 143 cm
Wheelbase	264 cm
Kerb weight	1.405 kg
Trailer	750 kg
Trailer - braked	1.400 kg
Fuel capacity	70 l
Luggage space	460 l
Tyre size	225/45R17

Engine and performance



Capacity	1984 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/5
Max power	200 PS @ 5100 rpm
Max torque	280 Nm @ 1800 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	7.3 secs
Top speed	241 km/h
Average mileage	7.7 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	10.9 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	5.8 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	179 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 19,405
Price base model	Â£ 17,735