

MOTORING NEWS



SEAT Ateca

You have to admit that SEAT – from Barcelona – is a brand that was once in danger of being overlooked. No more is this so since the marque set a particular identity for itself within the Volkswagen Group in company with Audi and Skoda.

Breaking new ground for SEAT is the Ateca SUV, the first time the Spanish carmaker has ventured into this market to vie with the like of the VW Tiguan and Audi Q3. Just as Skoda has successfully stolen the limelight with its Superb in the bigger hatch and estate car markets, so the Ateca has won fame at the expense of its more expensive siblings.

It's not just the SEAT's pleasing shape that is responsible for it commanding rave reviews. Constructed around the new VW Group's platform that will support the latest mid-size Audi and Volkswagen SUVs as well as the eagerly awaited Skoda Kodiaq, the Ateca is exceptional in offering brilliant handling. The ride with its compliant suspension is class-leading, and the comfortable interior affords a remarkable level of comfort.

With the Ateca set to rival the Nissan Qashqai and its near relation the Renault Kadjar, it competes with the Ford Kuga, Kia Sportage and Hyundai Tucson. There's a wide range of models from which to choose: at the top end of the catalogue the all-wheel drive Xcellence, available only as a 2.0 litre diesel with optional automatic transmission, offers snow, hill descent and off-road profiles for those difficult conditions while being eminently suitable for adventurous driving itineraries. Recently at the wheel of a seven-speed automatic version over some 700 miles, it performed admirably, the engine's splendid torque making for relaxing driving.

For more modest requirements the front-wheel drive Ateca can be specified in 1.0 and 1.4 litre petrol, and 1.6 and 2.0 litre diesel versions. The big surprise is the entry 1.0 litre petrol model, and though only available in 'basic' S trim is well equipped. Despite its 999cc capacity, the three-cylinder engine is delightfully responsive and smooth, and with the six-speed manual gearbox boasts up to 54 mpg, though for general motoring will be around 48mpg. Prices range from £17,990 to £29,990.

Kia is on an audacious mission by introducing a prestige four- to five-seater sports grand tourer which goes on sale this autumn. Under the sleek and curvaceous fastback's bonnet will be found a choice of three engines led by a four-cylinder 2.0 litre turbo petrol, and for truly spirited performance there's the option

of a 3.3 litre petrol twin-turbo V6. There will also be a turbodiesel in the shape of Kia's all-new 2.2 litre affair. All engines are mated to Kia's own eight-speed automatic transmission which can be specified mating with rear- or all-wheel drive. Being a high performance car, the Kia Stinger will feature electronically adjustable suspension and will be luxuriously equipped. The price has yet to be announced.



Honda Civic

New also is the 10th generation Honda Civic. Prices start at £18,235 for the S model, rising to £27,480 for the Prestige.

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Kia Stinger



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