



Weekend roadtest: Skoda Citigo

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Author: Robin Roberts

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The smallest Skoda in modern times is big news in the city car sector.



The Skoda Citigo 16-model series is available from launch on 1 June with manual gearbox in three-door body style and a five-door and automatic will follow this autumn.

For now there is a new single 1.0 litre three-cylinder petrol engine electronically tuned to give either 60 or 75PS and both transmissions are new as well.

Either engine output can be ordered with a GreenTech package which features low rolling resistance tyres, start/stop, and brake energy recuperation. With this in use it can cut consumption by about 10pc and emissions for the respective engines are just 96gkm and 98gkm so qualifying Citigo as a congestion-charge buster. Even the highest figure is just 105gkm.

At a little over 3.5M for either bodystyle it is a compact car which is smaller than the stablemate Fabia but it will seat four people and has a 251 litres bootspace which rises to 951 litres when the back seats are folded, and the five-door manages a slightly bigger 959



litres maximum.

Inside there are clever storage solutions including document holders and bag hooks, and top models come with a Personal Infotainment Device, a sort of smart satnav cum phone, and media player. It can be detached and used with a suitable mount in another vehicle, or removes for security, and it's optional on all models.

Unusual at this end of the market is the laser monitored City Safe Drive, an option which can automatically slow the car before the driver reacts in nose to tail traffic conditions and thereby reduce damage and injury.

There are S, SE and Elegance trim levels with prices starting at £7,630, £8,530 and £9,470 respectively and the most expensive is £10,415 and you can specify a selection of tailored option packs to personalise each model.



Skoda has been encouraged by assessments which suggest Citigo will retain anywhere between 47 and 51pc of original prices over three years and 30,000 miles.

Skoda product marketing manager Chris Horrell believes Citigo will help raise the brand's presence in the business market. "Last year we sold about 45,000 Skodas in the UK and this year we are looking at 50,000 and by 2015 we believe this will rise to 80,000 units," he said.

"We have not had a small three-door to sell in Britain for a number of years and with the changing economic climate, companies are looking for the most economical cars to run and with Citigo I believe it will put us on more shopping lists. I can see it appealing to fleets,



small businesses and even the typical district nurse who wants economical transport with comfort and convenience features.”

Citigo joins the Skoda range at £2,200 below the entry price of Fabia so it will appeal to existing drivers of the brand and bring in conquest sales from rivals that are dearer and not as well equipped.

Horrell said he believes Citigo registrations of the five-door next year will account for over 60pc of the model sales. He also believes the demand will be equally split between the two power outputs but is less certain about which of the S, SE and Elegance trim levels will prove most popular.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Skoda Citigo is a very appealing car.



The three-door body is pleasantly styled with good access to the cabin and reasonably roomy boot, has good seats and a low waistline for good all-round visibility.



There are some useful and attractive features inside, especially if you order the PID which performs as phone, satnav, and on-board computer and integrates with the media system to permit use of your own entertainment devices.

The engines and transmissions are new, work well together, and provide flowing and economical performance but you will have to decide which best suits you, the 60ps or 75ps tuned engines, which recorded 52 and 57mpg approximately.

There were on launch only five-speed manual models in SE and Elegance trim with and without GreenTech systems, and they were highly economical without suffering from a sluggish nature.

I liked the responsive electro-hydraulic steering's weight and feedback, the nicely balanced disc/drum brakes and the surefooted handling. Citigo coped well with most bumps but the damper action was too sharp for my liking and the road noise was ever-present and contrasted with the surprisingly quiet 1.0 engine.

Low insurance costs, modest fuel consumption and indicated healthy residual value all add up to figures which would really please a city banker in these tighter belted times.