

MOTORING MATTERS by Anthony Goodwin

SAY HOLA TO THE SEAT ALTEA

The original Altea was the first of the new generation of cars from SEAT – it has now been revised both inside and out and is even more fun and enjoyable to drive and be driven in. Let's start at the front - SEAT have made the car look sharper and wider than before, with changes including a new grille with chrome surround, larger headlights, a straighter bumper and the new SEAT brand ventilation slats which also add to the more sporty look. The rear has had some changes too; a broader rear window that stretches across the tailgate provides better visibility. As for inside, SEAT have paid attention to detail and the changes make the Altea have a premium feel to it.

As for space inside it's huge, every little bit of space has been used – there are over 30 storage compartments! Five full sized adults can sit in comfort in the cabin. Where some compact MPV models struggle with boot space, the SEAT Altea has a two tiered 409 litre capacity, this can be increased to 510 litres when the rear seats are slid forward. One of the many interior features I liked were the seats, being 6 foot tall many driver seat squabs are short and dig into my legs, but not in the Altea. It has a very good seat which on our test model had adjustable lumbar support. With a smart new multi-function steering wheel, it is easy to find a comfortable driving position. Another little touch that is gradually coming into many cars is the recommended gear selection display, great for making sure you are in the most appropriate gear and aids with fuel consumption.

For those of you that like high spec cars then you are in for a treat as the Altea comes with an impressive standard equipment list which includes ESP, TCS, ABS with EBA, 6 airbags, tinted windows and a 6 speaker sound system with aux in. We had the top of the range Sport



model on test which came with sports seats and suspension, dual zone climate control and all round electric windows. Our test model also had some optional extras which if I was buying the Altea I would seriously consider - the Technology pack with upgraded entertainment system, bi-xenon headlights and Bluetooth communication pack plus front parking sensors, convenience pack with auto windscreen wipers, headlights and dimming rear view mirror and rear parking sensors.

There are three petrol and four diesel engines to choose from, the petrol engines are the 1.4 ltr 85ps, 1.6 ltr 102 ps and a 1.4 ltr TSI 125 ps. Out of these engines I would choose the 1.4 TSI which has a combined 44.1mpg and Co2 emissions of 152g. All the new diesels come with common

rail technology so you get greater fuel economy and fewer emissions along with less vibration and reduced engine noise levels. We

had the 2.0 ltr TDI CR 170 ps on trial, which has a combined fuel consumption of 50.4 mpg and Co2 emissions of 146g. I found the engine responsive and smooth and made for a fun drive. There are also a 1.9 ltr TDI 90 ps, 1.9 ltr TDI 105 ps and a 2.0 ltr TDI 140 ps to choose from.

With safety in mind, the Altea has a full 5 star Euro NCAP result. This is achieved with a raft of features to protect the driver and passengers in the event of an accident. These include 6 airbags as standard, active footrest which is designed to resist impact without distortion which reduced the risk of ankle injury. The Altea also protects pedestrians with an energy absorbing soft surface bonnet so it achieves a 3 star result for pedestrians.

Prices start at £14,170 for the 1.4 ltr in S spec with the range topping 20Ltr TDI CR in sports spec £19,640.

MOT TEST FEES INCREASE

The maximum fee for testing private motor vehicles will increase by around 6% on 6th April 2010. This will see the maximum cost of a test for a private car go from £54.00 to £54.85 and the maximum fee for a solo motorcycle will rise from £29.20 to £29.65.

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