



Skoda Favorit



If you're thinking of buying a used Skoda Favorit, we can help. We've scoured our records over the last few years and have come up with the information you need to know if you aim to be the second owner.

WE FIRST SAW THE FAVORIT IN 1989 and, at a casual glance, the original five-door hatchback looks the same today. However, a lot of work has gone on behind the scenes to make the car better in terms of trim, equipment and electrical reliability.

By 1992, when the longer and commodious estate car was added to the range, a lot of progress had been made in all these areas, adding a deeper sense of reassurance to a model that, right from day one, possessed highly respectable road manners and accommodation features.

The Estelle's engine was carried over into the Favorit, but its repositioning at the other end of the car, mounted transversely, not only improved handling stability, but also made it very easy to work on.

In fact, the Favorit remains one of the few modern

cars that positively invites do-it-yourself servicing, and until exhaust emission regulations dictated the use of a catalyser with fuel injection, early in 1993, any competent home mechanic could tackle all routine tasks.

Top trim is well worth having; it adds close on £1000 to the asking price over that of a basic model, but it does pay off in terms of improved seat support and better noise control. There are also additional practical items of equipment, as shown in the sales brochure. The LS's alloy wheels were originally shod with better tyres, for example.

The introduction of the 67bhp E version in early 1994 restored the power of the catalysed, fuel-injected engine back to that of the original carburettored version; the 1992-93 LX/GLXi are down on power and acceleration is inferior. If you can't afford a 1994-95 E version, settle for a 1991-92 type 135 engine in an LS. This has an automatic-choke carburettor and develops just a shade less power than the original 136.

Engine and gearbox

Both these components are well tried and proven. Starting should be prompt and the engine should pull cleanly straight away, in a fashion that was never possible in the old Estelle.

Earlier carburettor versions should accelerate

smoothly, but the cat-equipped engine can feel a little ragged and uneven when accelerating on full throttle. This is the result of an old dog trying to learn new tricks, we guess.

Check how noisy the valves are when the engine is warm. Some ticking is normal and setting the clearances slightly on the tight side will do no harm to this particular engine, but overdoing things could result in the valve clearances disappearing entirely on a cold morning. If the valves can't close properly, the engine won't start.

After 30,000 miles, cylinder head gaskets can fail. Loss of coolant in the overflow tank is the first sign.

Some transmission oil seepage is permissible, but generally don't expect a messy under-bonnet view. Gears must be easy to engage, but some squelching sounds from the gear lever area are common.

Clutch and brakes

Some cars suffer from mild brake and clutch judder: this seems endemic, but make sure that it's not excessive. There should be a light, progressive clutch engagement, nevertheless. The brake pedal load for hard stops can be higher than is currently fashionable, but the pedal should be firm, with no excessive travel. Also check the welding of the handbrake pivot; this was a free recall on certain versions.

Electrics

Do all the electrical items work properly? We've experienced blown bulbs, faulty fuses (a modified fusebox helps), rear wiper motor problems and gritty facia switches. Battery failure can occur prematurely, too. The indicator stalk action is unpleasant; this is normal, but make sure that the switch works properly. A non-functioning intermittent wiper can be put right by simply plugging in a new control relay. If radio

reception is poor, fit a proper aerial – the one in the roof is ineffective.

Controls

Make sure that the various control cables are adjusted correctly; we've met cars with heaters that won't give cold air, carpet fouling the accelerator cable, and accelerator linkages that don't give full throttle. Facia rattles are common on earlier cars and can prove hard to remedy.

Bodywork

Unless the body has been subject to poor repairs, there should be no serious rusting. As with the earlier Estelle, you don't see many rotting Favorits, only unkempt ones with surface chips and blistering caused by neglect.

Check that the tailgate gas struts are up their job – those on the heavier estate car especially can make unloading as precarious as using Arkwright's till in *Open All Hours!*

Costs

Skoda runs a special insurance scheme with competitive premiums, so enquire there as well as with the AA quotations unit. Parts aren't especially cheap; they're dearer than for a Ford or a Vauxhall, for example, and similar to a Rover's.

So, to sum up...

The Favorit has been lumped together with other cut-priced east European imports for too long. Apart from its geographic origins, it has always been in a different league from the rest of them and a well cared for example makes more than a good-sense used-car buy. You'll also be pleasantly surprised when you drive one for the first time.

