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Wheels: Seat's New Sedan Gives Fuel Savings and Space

By Tim Saunders

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Seat's new sedan takes successful elements from other similar vehicles like the Skoda Rapid and Audi A1.

Editor's note: Wheels is a new section featuring car reviews.

We live in extremely straitened times, when most countries continue to accumulate debt — Russia's is currently $624 billion, a 20 percent increase from last year. The prospect of a career for life has become virtually nonexistent. And house prices have continued to rise. Why has life become such a struggle? Most of us feel that there is less money with which we have to do more.

Consequently, the hard-up motorist craves a good deal, and Seat realizes this. It has responded with the Toledo, the family hatchback priced from under 610,000 rubles to just above 840,000 rubles ($19,600 to $27,000). Its diesel model also happens to be super economical, thank goodness. Perhaps life is not so bad after all.

Seat Toledo

Price range: 610,000 to 840,000 rubles ($19,600 to $27,000)
Economy: 27 kpl
Zero to 100 kph: 10.1 seconds
Top speed: 190 kph
Power: 103 bhp

Source: Seat

Named after the historic Spanish city, this is an extremely sensible car for our times. With its clean lines, it is a car to be proud of; the 1.6TDI SE test model is significantly helped by its rich burgundy finish.

Sharing the same chassis as the Skoda Rapid, which I tested only a few weeks ago, both models clearly share a good deal. This comes as no surprise as Spanish-based Seat is owned by Volkswagen, which also owns Skoda. The rear wash/wipe on both models has been borrowed from the Audi A1. The washer is built into the wiper and effectively projects a jet of spray across the window unlike any other wiper I have come across. Buyers pay a premium for such innovative features on the Audi, too.

Inside, the dashboard is very similar to the Rapid, with the same layout and controls. Then there's the good build quality and the hardwearing interior trim. Its seats could be more supportive, especially over longer journeys. Generally, it has a competent if bland ride. There is a folding armrest in the center of the cabin, which is useful for long motorway jaunts when gear changes are not required.

At speed, the Toledo does buffet a bit in the wind, but this is quickly forgotten when realizing that this little gem returns over 21 kilometers per liter at 70 kilometers per hour. Engine stop/start helps this model easily cover 1,120km on a tank of fuel. It's pretty gutsy too, hitting 100kph from standstill in just over 10 seconds. The five-speed box is as reasonable as you might expect; I don't have a bad word to say about it.

The new Seat Toledo is a good option for frugal families in today's economy.

Families need a massive boot and they won't be disappointed with the 550 liters of luggage space. If more room is required, the rear seats fold down and the center rear armrest conceals

a hole for long, awkward objects such as skis or piping.

Luxuries include electric front windows, electrically adjustable wing mirrors and air conditioning.

"Seat will be hoping that the Toledo can help dent the sales figures of popular established hatchbacks like the Ford Focus while pinning back newer entries into this market such as the Volvo V40," writes Parkers, the British-based car experts. "While it may have the appearance of a saloon, this latest version of the Toledo comes with a large, wide-opening rear hatch."

The Toledo, just like the Skoda Rapid, makes an ideal family proposition.

Other car reviews can be found at testdrives.biz

Video of the test drive.

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