

Seat Ibiza Hatchback



ON THE ROAD

Performance ★★★★★

Ibiza buyers have three petrol engines to choose from. The 69bhp 1.2 is fine for town use but a little too breathless for longer journeys. The 84bhp 1.4 is a much better all-rounder, but it still takes an age to rev. The 103bhp 1.6 sounds good on paper, but performance is nothing to write home about.

Ride & handling ★★★★★

The Ibiza's suspension is quiet and supple, and the body is well controlled. The handling isn't as overtly sporty as, say, a Mazda 2, but it is grippy and predictable, even if the steering is short of a little feel. It rides well most of the time, too, but there is some patter over bumps and potholes.

Refinement ★★★★★

The Ibiza shuts out road noise very well indeed, but the wind noise will try your patience after a while. It's nothing compared to the racket you hear from the old engines, though. Seat describes the three-cylinder 1.2 as 'characterful' – 'noisy' would be much closer to the mark. The 1.4 is smoother and more subdued, making it a much better cruiser. However, it's still miles behind the big-car refinement you get from the class best.

OWNERSHIP

Buying & owning ★★★★★

Ibiza buyers will love the bargain-basement prices, and there are some decent discounts to be had, too. Residuals are good for the class, so it's a safe place to put your cash. The engines are old, but they're still quite rugal and fall into low company car tax bandings. Servicing and insurance are also affordable.

Quality & reliability ★★★★★

Many of the plastics are hard to the touch, and these low-rent materials, plus the flimsy carpets, give the cabin a utilitarian feel. One thing's for certain: the Ibiza can't match the attractive mix of colours, textures and the classy feel of a Vauxhall Corsa. At least the proven mechanicals should be dependable.



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Safety & security ★★★★★

Twin front and side airbags are standard, and the side 'bags extend upwards to cover the same area as a curtain airbag would – in the front at least. However, stability control is part of a £280 pack that also includes hill-start assist. The Ibiza scored a maximum five-star Euro NCAP result for crash protection. It doesn't miss much on the security front.

IN THE CABIN

Behind the wheel ★★★★★

Most drivers will find it easy to get comfortable. The driver's seat is supportive, with all models getting height adjustment, and the steering wheel moves for both reach and rake. The fussy stereo and restricted rear visibility disappoints, however.



Space & practicality ★★★★★

There's lots of head- and legroom up front, but access to the rear is more difficult in the SportCoupe than in the five-door. Unfortunately, that rakish roof line and tight rear legroom means if you want to take a couple of mates along, there'll be plenty of arguing over who has to sit in the back. At least the 292-litre boot can easily swallow a baby buggy and jumbo pack of Pampers. However, a 60/40 split folding rear seat isn't standard across the range.

Equipment ★★★★★

Even entry-level S models come with electric front windows, remote central locking and an MP3/CD player with steering-column controls. As its name suggests, S A/C adds air-conditioning. SE brings alloy wheels, cruise control, split/fold rear seats and rear electric windows. Sport models get bigger alloy wheels, stiffer suspension and heavily bolstered seats.

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