



Is this the first vehicle with plastic bull bars? It's certainly the first inspired by the 'Frog Prince' fairy tale. Hopping in front of it like a demented amphibian is optional



SKODA FELICIA FUN

Fundamentally weird



Ha ha ha. Ho ho ho. Hee hee hee. This is a joke, right? A banana yellow pickup truck that transforms into a four-seater 'leisure vehicle'? Skoda are having a laugh, aren't they? I mean, I know they caused a stir with their top-ranking performance in our JD Power survey, but this could relegate them back to the comedy status they enjoyed before VW took them under its wing.

Based on the Skoda Pickup, the Felicia Fun is powered by the 1.6-litre, 75bhp engine that helped the Felicia score such a hit with our Power people. It feels livelier than its performance figures suggest, and the neat gearchange and decent, well-weighted steering make it feel more like a saloon than a workhorse to drive. Ride and handling

are distinctly non-agricultural, too. Only the brakes, which have a distinct 'keep your distance' feel about them, make you err on the side of caution.

But the Fun's designers threw caution to the wind when concocting its interior. Beating the Felicia's staid, sensible dash into submission is a riot of yellow leather on the seats, doors, steering wheel and gearknob. Even the dials are yellow, with numbers that seem to have been transferred on using an old Letraset kit. And there must have been some very strange substances floating around in Prague's drinking water when the seat fabric was created – inspired by the fairy tale of the Frog Prince, it features loads of the aforesaid amphibians sporting golden crowns. One thing's for sure – you'll need a sense of humour if you're going to live

with this crazy canary-coloured cockpit.

But it's when you literally look behind the whacked-out eccentricity of the cabin that you discover the feature that makes the Fun truly unique. Pop the locking knob behind the front seats, then tug a handle in the rear of the bulkhead and the whole rear wall of the cab pulls back, window and all, to reveal two extra seats. It's a design that's so simple, light and easy to use that those responsible for those heavy, cumbersome rear seats in people carriers should take note.

With this transformation activated, you have places for two adults to enjoy al fresco passengering, protected by three-point seatbelts and a substantial roll bar. You'd have difficulty squeezing a couple of basketball players in there, but kids will love travelling in



www.SkodaFeliciaFun.co.uk - a useful website for owners and enthusiasts of Skoda Felicia Fun Pickup Trucks



Children of all ages will enjoy using the Fun as a climbing frame. In fact, the interior seems to have been designed by a child with a hyperactive yellow crayon



the back, because, well, it's fun. Especially when you clock the startled looks of passers-by who can't quite believe what they're seeing.

Despite fairly basic padding, these occasional seats are well enough upholstered to keep you comfortable on an hour-long trip to the beach. Wind noise is less noticeable than the din of other traffic, and air turbulence is less severe than in many upmarket convertibles, even at motorway speeds. It's a very pleasant way to be transported about – as long as it doesn't rain, of course. Skoda plans a cover designed to protect the rear passengers from inclement weather – it'll need to be pretty effective to make using the rear seats a viable proposition for more than a few months a year in our climate.

Moving further back, we have the distinctly pickup part of this mutant vehicle – the flatbed. Clad with wooden strips, it can, apparently, accommodate a 'europallet'. Hopefully, this means that you can pull up at a French hypermarket and get them to load a

pallet of your favourite tippie straight onto the flatbed with a forklift truck. If it does, it's a great thing.

You can, of course, fill that open load area with whatever fulfils your utilitarian or recreational needs. Skoda reckons people will use it for bunging their mountain bikes/windsurfer/jet ski into. It's certainly more practical for this than most other 'recreational vehicles'.

Another plus point is that, as the Fun is classed as a commercial vehicle, if you can persuade Mr Inland Revenue that you'll be using it for business purposes, you'll get over £1,700-worth of VAT back from the £9,999 list price.

Skoda has already sold 100 of the 300 Funs earmarked for this country, and they'll have no problem getting rid of the rest. Because the Fun is a practical laugh rather than a practical joke. And the really funny thing is, I ended up laughing with it rather than at it. Ha ha ha. Ho ho ho. Hee hee hee □

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| FACT FILE | |
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| Model | mutant pickup/recreational vehicle |
| Engine | 1.6-litre four-cylinder, 75bhp |
| Performance | 0-62mph in 12.5secs, max speed 100mph |
| On sale in the UK | now |
| Price | £9,999 |
| Rivals | truck-cab pickup trucks of various descriptions or the ludicrous Suzuki X90 |



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