



auto BIOGRAPHIES

New SEAT Ibiza FR 2.0 TDI

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IT MAY be too small for some, but SEAT'S most successful and well-known model, the Ibiza, is looking hotter than ever.

The latest incarnation of the Spanish super-mini has sharp looks and handling to match. Add SEAT'S bizarre day-glow colour schemes to the mix and you can guarantee your car will be the one that stands out in your neighbourhood.

Even though space is tight in the rear, the sporty FR model, on test here, provides too many dynamic delights for you and your passengers to care. With a flick of the wrist the Ibiza will take corners like a race car. There is very little roll and the flat-bottomed steering wheel is precise and inspires confidence. The gears are slick, although the gearstick feels rather flimsy.

The great news for aficionados of SEAT'S sporty FR trim is that it now inhabits an even more affordable place in the wide Ibiza range. The 2.0-litre TDI 143 PS turbo diesel, lent to me, is available up to £1,100 less than the former model.

Of course, aside from the persuasive new price, the design of the new Ibiza FR has been fully updated in accordance with SEAT'S latest styling direction. Under the stewardship of new Head of Design, Alejandro Mesonero-Romanos, the Ibiza takes on many of the details which will be a hallmark of SEAT design in the coming years.

As a result, the newborn Ibiza shows off reshaped headlights that now include sculptural elements inside the clusters similar to the new Alhambra MPV and the recently-revised Exeo. Specifying optional bi-xenon headlights also adds LED daytime running lights for an even more vibrant appearance.

Elsewhere, the front grille is smaller and front fog lights take on a rectangular shape and, at

the front, the altered bonnet features a strong central crease line – a key design cue taken from the Spanish motor maker's concept cars.

At the back, the Ibiza'S tail lights have been redesigned. Curved and semi-circular elements have been replaced with distinctive lines, and the FR gains LED tail lights for an even more characteristic light signature. The rear bumpers have been changed, too, with strong contours tracing the rear 'diffuser' section.

Inside, contemporary typography on the instrument dials and a rejuvenated climate control display make things clearer on the brand new Ibiza. Finally even the glovebox has been enlarged, with appreciably more storage and the addition of an interior light.

SEAT celebrated record sales in the UK in 2011 and, if the impressive 2012 Ibiza FR is anything to go by, it looks set to continue that success for years to come.



FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 130 mph
- 0-62 mph: 8.2 secs
- Combined mpg: 60.1
- Engine: 1968 cc 4 cylinder 16 valve turbo diesel
- Max. power (bhp): 141 at 4200 rpm
- Max. torque (lb/ft): 236 at 1750 rpm
- CO2: 123 g/km
- Price: £16,840 on the road

PROS 'N' CONS

- **Looks** ✓
- **Road holding** ✓
- **Cabin** ✓
- **Steering** ✓
- **Flimsy gearstick** X
- **Rear space** X