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WHAT CAR?

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CUPRA FORMENTOR 5-STAR REVIEW

Find out why CUPRA's all-new sports SUV is a strong contender for class honours



“BOY, IS THERE GRIP...”

Our in-depth on-the-road verdict



A STYLISH INTERIOR

Smart digital tech and voice control



SPACIOUS & PRACTICAL

Lots of room and versatile load space

REVIEW



CUPRA Formentor

CUPRA FORMENTOR. Now, if you know your cars and you're thinking "hang on, a performance car with a Spanish name; is it a Lamborghini?" that's a good guess. But wrong. Yes, Lamborghini does name its cars in Spanish, but CUPRA is a Spanish brand in its own right – the performance offshoot of SEAT – and the Formentor is its second sports SUV.

The first was the CUPRA Ateca, which is a very good car: quick and handy around corners, but, as far as looks are concerned, not dramatically different to the regular SEAT Ateca. The Formentor is a whole different ball game. As you can see, it's a visual feast of chiselled lines, muscular hunches and dramatic swoops. Now, we're not getting carried away with ourselves and saying it's a mini Lamborghini Urus, but put it this

way: there's nothing for the price that looks more like the Lamborghini.

Because the Formentor is such a new model, CUPRA hasn't confirmed all the details yet. We do know there will be a breadth of engines starting with a 1.5 TSI 150 turbocharged petrol, two plug-in hybrids (called eHybrid and with 202bhp or 242bhp), plus 2.0-litre petrols ranging from 187bhp to the top-spec 306bhp 4Drive – that's four-wheel drive in CUPRA speak.

So far, the 306bhp model is the only one we've driven, so click on through to read all about it and we'll also tell you everything we know about the rest of the range. We'll assess how the Formentor compares against rivals as well, like the BMW X2 M35i and Volkswagen T-Roc R.

At a glance

NUMBER OF TRIMS

5

AVAILABLE FUEL TYPES

Petrol

AVAILABLE DOORS OPTIONS

5

NUMBER OF ENGINES

2

MPG RANGE ACROSS ALL VERSIONS

32.8 - 44.8

How much is it

RRP PRICE RANGE

£27,395 - £43,840

PERFORMANCE & DRIVE ★★★★★

What it's like to drive, and how quiet it is

We've sampled the 1.4 TSI 245 eHybrid in the latest CUPRA Leon but not in the Formentor. Expect it to feel brisk rather than thrillingly quick, but, thanks to the swell of low-end shove added by the electric motor, effortless in everyday driving. And it's a plug-in, so it should do around 30 miles on battery power.

But for real performance, you'll want the 2.0 TSI 310 4Drive. This engine wakes up at 2000rpm and then romps away to its 6500rpm red line. If you use the launch control system to maximise the car's four-wheel-drive traction, CUPRA says it'll ping you from rest to 62mph in a smidge under five seconds – give or take, that's the same as the BMW X2 M35i and Volkswagen T-Roc R.

There are two issues, though: the Formentor's seven-speed dual-clutch

auto 'box is smooth but a little lazy to kick down gears, and the engine's noise could be more exciting. It produces a sporty note, but it's not hard-edged and invigorating like the T-Roc R's is when you order the optional Akrapovic sports exhaust system.

Now, this is a tall-ish SUV, so there's an element of the ham-fisted about its cornering routine compared with a truly lithe hot hatchback, but, like other good sports SUVs it's effective. Take the steering, which is far nicer than the X2 M35i's. It's direct, accurate and even offers a little detail about the patination of the road surface, just so you can key into the surface more readily and feel its grip. And boy is there grip. Even in the wet it carries serious speed, and if you push beyond what's available, just ease off the accelerator and it falls predictably back into line.

The body control is also great for a car of such stature. The adjustable dampers

fitted to our test car (and standard from V3 trim) have three default modes to choose from, but, if you're feeling dedicated, you fine-tune them from the multiple sub-settings.

As you crank them up to their stiffest settings they do an ever more impressive job of maintaining stability over bumpy roads, and even in CUPRA mode the ride isn't so cruel it'll addle your brain. That said, Comfort mode is the one you want for the smoothest passage; it's still a little firmer than the best-riding family SUVs but not brusque, and much more supple than the jittery X2 M35i.

There's a reasonable amount of road and wind noise at speed – although the fact that our test day was wet corrupted any assessments somewhat. The brakes are great and the solid feel of the pedal gives plenty of confidence, but there's also progression to the brakes when needed.





INTERIOR



The interior layout, fit and finish

The CUPRA Formentor's driving position is fundamentally sound. The pedals line up neatly with the steering wheel, while the driver's seat is comfy on long trips and supportive through corners. The heavily bolstered bucket seats fitted on our car are standard from V2 trim.

The smart digital dials are standard on all versions and great. They show lots of useful information, as well as frivolous things like g-force readings, and they can be set up in a number of different styles. It's a bit annoying, though, that after choosing a style other than the default one, every time you turn off the lane-keeping assistance, which you do from the instrument's menu, the dials change back to that default arrangement.

Our other complaint is that the Formentor doesn't have proper buttons and switches on its dashboard – the CUPRA Ateca and Volkswagen T-Roc R do, and they're much easier to find

while you're on the move. Instead the Formentor has touch-sensitive pads, which you can't find by feel, so you have to look away from the road to check you're not just pressing a random bit of the dashboard. That's distracting at 30mph, let alone 70mph.

The Formentor has reasonably thin windscreen pillars, so forward visibility is fine, but its chunky rear pillars can make reversing trickier than it is in some rivals. Front and rear parking sensors will be standard and a rear-view camera is added from V2 trim. LED headlights will be standard on all trims, with the option to upgrade to Matrix adaptive LEDs that can stay on main beam without blinding other road users.

The infotainment system includes a big, 12.0in touchscreen, sat-nav, a DAB radio, four USB ports, and Apple CarPlay and Android Auto smartphone mirroring. The screen is bright and clear and the operating system is responsive, although it takes a good twenty minutes of playing with the menus to grasp their slightly odd arrangement. The best

system in the class is the BMW X2 M35i's iDrive system, which has brilliant software and a rotary controller that makes operating it a cinch.

You also get a natural voice control function with the Formentor. To wake it up, holler "Hola, Hola", and then things like "I'm hot" and it will adjust the heater. It doesn't always work, though, and talking to it in such colloquial terms might make your passengers think you've gone nuts.

Inside is where the Formentor really trumps its key rivals – including the in-house Ateca, but even more so the plasticky interior of the T-Roc R.

Not only is the Formentor's interior strikingly similar to the dramatic-looking Lamborghini Urus's, but it's also solidly made and plush, with squidgy, dense-feeling plastic on the top of the dashboard and lots of CUPRA flourishes dotted about, including the brand's copper and carbon signatures. It still doesn't feel quite as premium as the X2 M35i, but that's to be expected as it's not as expensive.

PASSENGER & BOOT SPACE



How it copes with people and clutter

The sports SUV class includes huge cars, like the Audi SQ7, so the Formentor isn't going to absorb people and their things quite as well as that. But among its key rivals, such as the BMW X2 M35i and Volkswagen T-Roc R, it's pretty roomy.

There's absolutely loads of head room in the front and its seats slide back a long way, too. In fact, we can confidently say that, no matter how tall you are (within the bounds of reason), you'll fit just fine. And you'll find an array of storage spots for all your accessories as well.

And if you're thinking that the Formentor's rakish rear roofline will make it a less practical choice than its rivals, you're in for a surprise. Two tall adults fit just fine in the back, with as much rear leg room as they'd have in the T-Roc R and enough head room.

The CUPRA's boot is a bit bigger than the T-Roc R's – 420 litres plays 392 litres when both cars have their rear seats in place – but the X2 M35i beats that with 470 litres.

Still, expect the Formentor's boot to deal happily with all of the obvious requirements of holiday luggage, a buggy or your golf clubs. And if you're off skiing, there's a ski hatch for poking the obvious through, and there are 60/40 split rear seats for when you have something larger to transport.

COSTS & VERDICT



Everyday costs, plus how reliable and safe it is

The only pricing that's been hinted at is for the 2.0 TSI 310 4Drive, which will be a few hundred pounds more than the CUPRA Ateca and about the same as the Volkswagen T-Roc R.

That leaves the BMW X2 M35i as a pricier alternative for any cash buyers looking for real performance, but the Formentor will come in much cheaper varieties, like the 1.5 TSI 150.

We won't know the PCP finance costs yet, but with the Formentor's extremely strong predicted resale values, expect monthly payments to be competitive.

Even the entry-level V1 trim looks to have niceties including 18in alloy wheels and the infotainment, parking aids and LED headlights we've discussed already. As you progress up the trims to V2 you get bigger 19in alloys, a powered



tailgate and leather trim (with those bucket seats that we said were super supportive), and further up the add-ons include bigger Brembo brakes, a heated steering wheel and a sunroof.

SEAT's reliability record is fair to

middling, and this is relevant here because CUPRA is an offshoot of that brand. In the 2020 *What Car?* Reliability survey, SEAT finished in 19th position (out of 31), just above Volkswagen, some way below BMW and Skoda.



WHATCAR?



CUPRA FORMENTOR

NOVEMBER 2020

CUPRA Formentor



For: 2.0 TSI 310 4Drive is rapid; Surefooted and grippy handling; Smart interior

Against: Pricing has yet to be confirmed; Slightly hesitant automatic gearbox; Fiddly touch-sensitive buttons

WHATCAR? SAYS

Having driven the most powerful version, we can say that the CUPRA Formentor offers the firepower and handling prowess to keep pace with its sports SUV rivals, and offers decent practicality

and a nicer interior for the money. In fact, it's a strong challenger for class honours and – with cheaper models to follow, including a plug-in hybrid – there's the potential for a Formentor for everyone.



NEW CUPRA FORMENTOR.

LET YOUR HEART CHOOSE FOR ONCE.

YOU CAN CHOOSE THE STRAIGHT PATH, LIKE ALWAYS.
IT'S EASIER, LESS TROUBLE. OR YOU CAN CHANGE
COURSE AND CHOOSE ANOTHER WAY, ONE THAT YOU'D
NEVER HAVE THOUGHT TO TAKE. AND IF THAT FEELS
RIGHT, THE NEW CUPRA FORMENTOR IS FOR YOU.

DRIVE ANOTHER WAY.

*Official fuel consumption for the CUPRA Formentor range mpg (litres/100km):
31.4 [9.0] – 44.8 [6.3]. CO₂ emissions 143-203 (g/km).*

Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption and CO₂ figures with other vehicles tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load. Data correct at December 2020.

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