

Škoda Octavia Touring Sport (1960): Successful return to international rally courses

- › Škoda returned to international motorsport at the end of the 1950s
- › The Spartak and sporty Touring Sport versions of Octavia models enjoyed great rally success
- › In 1961, the Finnish duo Esko Keinänen/Rainer Eklund clinched a class victory at the legendary Monte Carlo Rally with the Škoda Octavia TS, finishing 6th overall

Mladá Boleslav, 14 May 2026 – After the political situation eased slightly at the end of the 1950s, Škoda returned to international motorsport and competed in the prestigious Monte Carlo Rally in 1956 for the first time since 1949. The Škoda Octavia Touring Sport (TS) also secured numerous victories at international rallies in the early 1960s, continuing the motorsport tradition of the car manufacturer from Mladá Boleslav.

The tradition of dynamic Škoda vehicles that were also suitable for everyday use began in the mid-1930s with the RAPID. This model was slightly larger than the Popular, and the powertrains of the two series were also different. The tradition of sporty models from Mladá Boleslav continued in 1960 with the launch of the Octavia Touring Sport (TS).

Škoda returns to the international motorsport stage

The 1960s were a politically eventful decade: the Mladá Boleslav-based automaker also wanted to take advantage of the cautious opening of Czechoslovakia. Success in motorsport has always been a good way to promote new models, and Škoda sent its vehicles to compete in prestigious international events. Long cross-country rallies served as endurance tests for man and machine, and the ever more powerful and faster rally cars guaranteed exciting races. At that time, competing in motorsport events required minimal expenditure, and many teams modified their vehicles themselves. A solid and reliable basic model like the Škoda Octavia TS proved powerful enough to make it to the front of the field.

Škoda Octavia TS: Carefully considered modifications boost performance

The Octavia TS was available with two displacements and therefore also in two performance variants. In contrast to the basic version of the Octavia, the initial version with a displacement of 1,089 cm³ had two Jikov 32 SOPb downdraught carburettors. Later, the engine was fitted with a new intake manifold and, thanks to the deflectors on the pistons, had a compression ratio of 8.4:1. These modifications increased the output to 50 hp at 5,500 rpm, while the maximum torque of 74.5 Nm was reached at 3,500 rpm.

Octavia TS 1200 from 1962

Production of the modernised Octavia and Felicia was launched in 1961, and Škoda offered both models as 'Super' versions. For this variant, the car manufacturer enlarged the engine bore to 72 millimetres, thus increasing the displacement to 1,221 cm³. The Super version had a compression ratio of 7.5:1 and delivered 47 hp. Thanks to an even higher compression ratio of 8.4:1, the Octavia TS 1200 presented in January 1962 generated 55 hp at 5,100 rpm. The engine achieved a maximum torque of 86.2 Nm at 3,500 rpm. Among private customers, the model was a popular tuning project; with appropriate technical modifications and the necessary experience, the engine's output could be increased to just under 100 hp. More than 2,270 units of the Octavia TS and the Octavia 1200 TS rolled off the Mladá Boleslav production line between 1960 and 1964.

Octavia TS: 920 kilograms, four-speed gearbox and independent suspension all-round

Although the Octavia TS 1200 – with a kerb weight of 920 kilograms – was 20 kilograms heavier than the Felicia convertible, the manufacturer claimed identical driving performance with the same fuel consumption. The car achieved speeds of up to 130 km/h and averaged 9.1 litres of petrol per 100 kilometres. The second to fourth gear of the four-speed gearbox were synchronised; the gear stick was positioned in the centre tunnel. The four wheels were individually suspended from the central tubular frame.

First successes of the very slightly modified rally cars against the international competition

The vehicles modified for rally use had 15-inch rims with Barum tyres, and studded Michelin tyres were used for special stages on snow and ice. From the very first rallies, the Octavia proved to be a strong competitor in the under 1,300 cm³ category. This was noticed not only by Scandinavian teams but also by participants from Austria, Poland and Greece. Their decision to use the comparatively inexpensive vehicle from Mladá Boleslav paid off.

Esko Keinänen and Rainer Eklund dominate their class at the 'Monte' with the Octavia TS

The Octavia TS achieved its greatest successes in the hands of private drivers at the Monte Carlo Rally and the Finnish 1000 Lakes Rally. In 1961, the Finnish duo Esko Keinänen/Rainer Eklund finished 6th overall and first in their class in Monaco.

One year later, no fewer than 16 driver teams from eight countries were taking part in the Monte Carlo Rally with the Octavia. As in the previous year, the Finn Esko Keinänen dominated his class and triumphed against four vehicles from Alfa Romeo.

The factory team's cars at this Monte Carlo Rally were only slightly modified – the compression ratio was identical to the production version, and an aluminium oil sump was fitted. Altogether, two gear ratios were homologated, and the final ratio was set at 4.78. At the rallies, cut tyres of the Barum OS 11 5.60×15 type and studded Michelin Valiarts ensured adequate grip on any surface.

Octavia TS success story continues at the '1000 Lakes Rally' in Finland and the Tour d'Europe

At the 1000 Lakes Rally, Esko Keinänen outpaced almost the entire field – with the exception of Pauli Toivonen in the Citroën DS 19, with Keinänen dominating his class and finishing second overall. The Octavia TS continued its winning streak in 1963, prevailing in its class for the third time in Monaco, this time with the Norwegian duo Gjölberg/Karlan on board. It also scored a major success in Finland; on ice and snow, Esko Keinänen drove the car to fourth place in the overall standings.

In addition, Josef Vidner and Bohuslav Staněk took first place in the up to 1,300 cm³ class at the Tour d'Europe in 1963 and finished in an outstanding fifth place overall. The light and manoeuvrable Octavia TS repeatedly outperformed the international competition in the following years, as well.

Among the most famous Czech drivers of the Octavia Touring Sport and TS 1200 were the brothers Jaroslav and Václav Bobek, Miroslav Fousek, Vladimír Hubáček, Zdeněk Mráz, Leopold Lancman and Jiří Srnský.

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Škoda Octavia TS 1200

The Škoda Octavia Touring Sport (TS) secured numerous victories at international rallies in the early 1960s, continuing the motorsport tradition of the car manufacturer from Mladá Boleslav.

Source: Škoda Auto



Škoda Octavia TS 1200

The car achieved speeds of up to 130 km/h. The four wheels were individually suspended from the central tubular frame.

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Škoda Octavia TS 1200

The second to fourth gear of the four-speed gearbox were synchronised; the gear stick was positioned in the centre tunnel.

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Škoda Octavia TS 1200

Thanks to an even higher compression ratio of 8.4:1, the Octavia TS 1200 presented in January 1962 generated 55 hp at 5,100 rpm. The engine achieved a maximum torque of 86.2 Nm at 3,500 rpm.

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Škoda Motorsport

- › Škoda celebrates 125 years of Motorsport since the first efforts in 1901, garnering success in rallies as well as in circuit racing.
- › Highlights include winning the 1981 European Touring Car Championship (ETCC) with the Škoda 130 RS.
- › Since 2009, the Škoda Fabia celebrated numerous successes for the Czech manufacturer on rally stages worldwide.
- › Until 2014, the Škoda Fabia S2000 (2.0 naturally aspirated engine, four-wheel drive) secured 50 international titles and national rally championships. The Škoda Fabia S2000 also helped to win the FIA European Rally Championship (ERC) and the Intercontinental Rally Challenge (IRC) three times each.
- › The successor model Škoda Fabia R5 (1.6 turbo engine, four-wheel drive) entered the scene in 2015. Later renamed to Škoda Fabia Rally2 and followed by the further developed Škoda Fabia Rally2 evo, the model collected nearly 2,000 victories in 68 countries until the end of the 2022 season.
- › During this period, Škoda Motorsport factory drivers Jan Kopecký (CZE), Esapekka Lappi (FIN), Pontus Tidemand (SWE) and Kalle Rovanperä (FIN) won the FIA World Rally Championship's support category WRC2/WRC2 Pro. Škoda Motorsport also took the WRC2/WRC2 Pro Manufacturers' title five times in a row from 2015 to 2019.
- › Beginning with the 2020 season, Škoda Motorsport changed its strategy to supporting private teams. The success story continued: Driving a Škoda Fabia Rally2 evo run by Toksport WRT, Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR) und Emil Lindholm (FIN) became WRC2 Champions in 2021 and 2022. Mikkelsen became WRC2 Champion again in 2023 with team Toksport WRT, when the all-new Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 entered the scene. The Škoda Motorsport supported team Toksport WRT also won the WRC2 Teams' title three times in 2020, 2022 and 2023. In 2025 Toksport WRT took another WRC2 Teams' title and Nikolay Gryazin/Konstantin Aleksandrov of Toksport WRT become WRC2 Challenger drivers' and co-drivers' champions respectively.
- › Škoda Motorsport customer teams have also won titles in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC), FIA European Rally Championship (ERC), the FIA African Rally Championship (ARC), the FIA North American and Central American Rally Championship (NACAM), the FIA South American Rally Championship (CODASUR) and the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC).

Škoda Auto

- › is successfully steering through the new decade with the Next Level Škoda Strategy;
- › aims to become one of the top three best-selling brands in Europe by the end of the decade by offering its customers the best of both worlds through a range of attractive BEV, hybrid & ICE products;
- › effectively exploits the potential in important growth markets such as India, Vietnam and the ASEAN region;
- › currently offers customers 12 passenger car model ranges: Fabia, Scala, Octavia, Superb, Kamiq, Karoq, Kodiaq, Elroq, Enyaq, Slavia, Kylaq and Kushaq;
- › delivered more than 1,040,000 vehicles to customers worldwide in 2025;
- › has been part of the Volkswagen Group, one of the world's most successful car manufacturers, for more than 30 years;
- › is part of Brand Group CORE, an organisational merger of the Volkswagen Group's volume brands, with the aim of achieving joint growth and significantly increasing the overall efficiency of all five volume brands;
- › independently develops and produces components such as MEB battery systems, engines and transmissions for other Volkswagen Group brands;
- › operates three production plants in the Czech Republic; has production capacities in Slovakia, Kazakhstan and India, mostly through group partnerships, as well as in Vietnam and Ukraine in cooperation with a local partner;
- › employs around 40,000 people worldwide and is active in almost 100 markets.