

New cars: what the critics say

Sydney Morning Herald

Although there are "more exciting alternatives", the abundance of likeable features helps position the updated Octavia as a great deal. It's got a classy cabin with an aluminium-look trim, simple to use instruments and sports seats which are comfy and supportive. What brings it down is the "lazy steering and lack of aural drama". But it's "quick, composed and capable", as well as being easy on the eye.

Goldcoast.com.au

Despite being in a competitive market



Skoda Octavia RS TSI
From \$37,990

this fantastic car blows its rivals away. It runs on the 2.0-litre, turbo petrol four-cylinder engine that we have come to adore with the VW Golf GTI. "It handles like a sports sedan should, offering a taut feel and minimal body roll through turns,

strong brakes and quick steering." It's a better priced VW with a unique European style and character.

Mynrma.com.au

The Skoda is one of the fastest-growing brands in Europe, and the slow sales in Australia may pick up thanks to the latest Octavia. It will be of particular appeal to those looking for both performance and space. The facelift is a "welcome improvement" with trendy 18-inch alloy wheels and LED daytime running lights. It offers a superb list of safety and standard features, making it a pleasure to drive.

The best... beach accessories

As summer heats up and we head to the beach, these accessories can make a good day in the sun even better

SunnyLIFE Beach Cricket Set

You'll never again need to flip the esky on its end to use as stumps for a family Test match. This beach cricket set includes a cricket bat, ball, three stumps, balls and carry bag. Price: \$49.95. Contact: www.sunnylife.com.au.



SunProtections Beach Shadow Tent Made from Micro-tex, a UV protective fabric rated at the maximum Sun Protection Factor of 50+, this "easy to assemble" beach tent is lightweight, waterproof, portable and compact yet folds out to give four metres of guaranteed sun protection. Price: \$99. Contact: www.sunprotection.com.au.

POD Body Surfing Handboard

An ideal accessory for any keen bodysurfer, or the beach lover who wants to have a bit of fun in the waves. It features a contoured hull for maximum manoeuvrability and control, a leash and a neoprene hand grip. Price: \$69.99. Contact: www.rebelsport.com.au.



Coleman Foxy Lady Lounger Keep the sand out of your cossie with this comfortable sunlounger. It has a fully adaptable reclining design, with an adjustable and removable cushion for headrest or lumbar support. Price: \$199.99. Contact: www.foxy-lady.com.au.



Coleman 58L Xtreme Wheeled Cooler Rated "best buy" by Choice magazine, this esky with tow-handle and wheels can hold up to 85 cans - with ice. It also has extra insulation in the lid and case that provides "superior cold retention". Price: \$169.95. Contact: www.kellyscamping.com.au.

Tips of the week... how to barbecue to perfection

- Before turning on the barbecue you should brush the grill or hotplate with a thin layer of oil, then preheat to your desired temperature.
- If you put meat on a barbecue plate that isn't hot enough, you've got problems. Firstly, the meat will stick, which is a nuisance. Secondly, it won't caramelize properly which will affect its flavour.
- To maximise flavour and tenderness, meat should be at room temperature before barbecuing and, once cooked, allowed to rest for at least ten minutes.
- Everyone knows that it's a man's God-given right to turn the steaks 100 times if it's his barbecue and he's holding the tongs. The sign of real Australian manhood is resisting these natural urges and turning the steak just once.
- It's a lot easier to clean your barbecue's grill or hotplate while it's still hot. Clean after use with paper towels and an old oiled rag, ready to fire up next time.

And for those who have everything...



The Dyson Air Multiplier fan works differently to conventional fans. Its technology draws in air and amplifies it 15 times, producing an uninterrupted stream of smooth breeze. With no blades or grille, it's safe, easy to clean and doesn't cause unpleasant buffeting.
Price: \$379
Contact: www.dyson.com

Where to find... Sydney's top five secret beaches

- Milk Beach** This hidden gem boasts views of the CBD and Rose Bay and a seaplane-strewn skyline. *Next to Strickland House, 52 Vacluse Rd, Vacluse.*
- Lady Martins Beach** A long narrow stretch of sand tucked away in Felix Bay, perfect for a sly dip in the harbour. *Access via Wolseley Rd, Point Piper.*
- Little Congwong Bay Beach** A secluded nudist nook in Botany Bay National Park. There's nothing for miles around so take a packed lunch. *Access via Anzac Pde, Botany Bay National Park, La Perouse.*
- Flat Rock Beach** Ideal for cooling off after a bushwalk through the Garigal National Park or kayaking around Middle Harbour. *Track accessible via Killarney Dr, Garigal National Park, Killarney Heights.*
- Obelisk Beach** South of Middle Head is this nudist pocket of peace with splendid views of Sydney. *Access by Chowder Bay Rd, Sydney Harbour National Park, Georges Heights.*