

CLASSIC DRIVER

Lotus Europa S



Lotus is loved by those who appreciate something a little different. The Lotus Europa S, for example, is nimble, agile, and brings enormous driving pleasure, but it does require a certain measure of tolerance. This is no German supercar, with all the attendant attention to detail.



As a brand, Lotus has plenty of quirky appeal – much like its alliterative cousins, Lamborghini and Lancia. All these 'L' cars demand certain compromises so, if you are a teutonic purist, it might be better to jump four

letters further on in the alphabet and stop at P for Porsche. But to those who love Lotus, nothing can match the light, clever cars from Hethel, from the legendary Lotus Seven roadster of 1957 to the countless models across the decades: Elite, Elan, Europa, Eclat, Esprit, Elise and Exige. British E-mpowerment at its best.

The current Europa S has changed little in terms of the basic concept: a car reduced to the essentials, lightweight and sporty. It is positioned as a more refined, more comfortable version of the Elise but it retains that spartan feel in the cabin.



It is slightly larger than the Elise, too, using the same Lotus-designed aluminium chassis but with a slightly longer wheelbase, offering a higher roof, bigger boot, and generally more space inside. There are carpets and leather seats (leather, air-con and sat-nav are all standard), unusually luxurious for a Lotus, and the windscreen grants a generous view of the road. The rear view, however, is badly restricted, and the side windows hard to see through at all. One feels safe, snug and hidden from view... but I wouldn't fancy reversing until I'm more familiar with the car.



The Europa S is gracefully designed: a sharply-cut wedge that, despite its greater height compared with the Elise, still stretches to just 112cm tall. In front of the rear wheel-arches are dramatic air intakes, emphasising the mid-mounted engine. While the rear window is of limited use to the driver seeking rear visibility, it does give a nice view of that transverse engine – a 1998cc four-cylinder turbocharged unit, water-cooled with double overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder, multi-point sequential system fuel injection and electronic ignition.





We fire up. The Lotus vibrates briefly and then runs quietly. It's immediately evident that this engine is an industrious worker, delivering 200HP at 5400rpm and producing 272Nm of torque for the driven rear wheels to use. The Lotus leaps forward: first gear, second gear, third gear – we're moving up the six-speed 'box very rapidly, and now the red limiter is flashing to request us to shift up again. The gearchange is precise; the turbocharger whistles.

The Europa S sprints courageously past the 200km/h mark and stops when the speed is registering 240km/h. But top speed is not where this Lotus's strengths lie. Above 200km/h, the narrow Bridgestone Potenza tyres are somewhat less grippy than you might hope. There is something of the feeling of a Cessna, about to take

off... it demands the driver's full attention.



It is much more fun to tackle the twisty roads, the Lotus hissing cleanly through the bends and accelerating without complaint, up to the speed limit. With the window open, you can hear the turbocharger working - but the noise is not intrusive. Above 4000rpm, however, the twin-pipe exhaust system produces a strident note and the uninhibited four-cylinder engine roars joyfully into the dusk. In such a car, crossing Europe would be easy.

It could indeed be done. The Lotus Europa S offers sufficient luggage space, and with a combined fuel consumption of 30.4mpg, it's a practical proposition.



The price, however, of more than £33,000, isn't cheap. You can get an Audi TT, BMW Z4 Coupé or Mercedes SLK for considerably less. But then it all comes down to subjective preference. The Lotus expresses

individuality (and that necessary degree of tolerance). You pays yer money and you takes yer choice.



Text & Photos: [Mathias Paulokat](#)

ClassicInside - The Classic Driver Newsletter
[Free Subscription!](#)
Gallery

Source URL: <https://www.classicdriver.com/en/article/lotus-europa-s>
© Classic Driver. All rights reserved.