

World-beating Passat is here

 By [Henrie Geyser](#)

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A complete mind-changer is the only way to describe the eight-generation Volkswagen Passat which has just arrived on local showroom floors, bristling with executive looks, quality, space, performance, fancy technology and a ride quality unrivalled by anything else in its class.

SUV-besotted South Africans have for too long under-rated the Passat, in spite of the fact that it is one of VW's top-selling models, having notched up in excess of 22 million units globally. This time round the public would be foolish to pull up their noses at a car which has just won the Europe Car of the Year title.



In this country, family sedans, with the exception of the top three expensive German brands, don't really fare too well in the car-buying popularity stakes and the Passat will generally be at war with the likes of Honda Accord, Subaru Legacy, Ford Fusion and the Mazda6.

However, this time round it not only wears the crown in this company but VW reckons it is good enough this time round to take on the Audi A4, C-Class Merc and the BMW 3 Series. A tad too optimistic, some critics might mutter, but not really all that far-fetched when you compare price tags, cabin and luggage space, user-friendly technology, fuel consumption, ride quality, road-holding and German quality.

The only thing that really counts against it is badge-snobbery...

The range kicks off with an entry-level 1.4TSI 110kW/ 250Nm engine version (which already does duty in the Golf and Jetta). In spite of its relatively small engine the "baby" Passat still squirts from zero to 100km/h in 8.4 seconds. In standard six-speed manual guise it is claimed to consume 5.3 l/100km (5.2km for the optional seven speed DSG shift).

The next model step up is the 1.8TSI with 7-speed DSG as standard, follow by the flagship 2.0TSI which is mated to a 6-speed DSG transmission (a TDI 130k is also due later next year).

Buyers have the choice of two trim levels across the model range: Comfortline and Highline but standard across the range are features such as Driver Alert, Park Distance Control (front and rear), a Multi-Collision Braking System, LED tail-lights and multi-function steering wheel with gearshift paddles for the DSG models.

At the launch drive in the Eastern Cape I drove all three models and although they are in two very different segments I enjoyed the small-potted 1.4 and the full-punch 2.0 litre the most. I was impressed by the 1.4's looks, spacious interior (although the car has shrunk 2 metres in length, the front wheels have been move further forward and the back wheels a tad further back to grow the living space).



The Passat has also shed about 85kg in weight and the body rigidity has been improved so that it clings with increased tenacity to the tar.

In terms of looks the "baby" of the range is as attractive as its seniors and when it comes to price (R378 800 for the manual and R398 800 for the DSG) it could well be the winner of the model sales race.

However, if performance is your buzz then the range-topping 2/0 TSI R-Line DSG would probably be your choice, particularly as it has arguably one of the best performance engines under its hood - the same power factory that gives the Golf GTI such generous shove.

I just love the way this car sprints out of the starting blocks and the rapid response it dishes up when you flick the steering wheel flappies through its six-speed dual-clutch transmission. Even though it is the Big Brother of the new range it is in a class all of its own when being pushed through the twisties.

VW says it will do the obligatory 0-100km/h spring in 6.7 seconds while sipping 6.2 litres per 100km, but this is the claimed consumption if you drive granny on a sedate town and country drive and certainly not when you are heavy on the pleasure pedal as this car seems to invite you to do.

The cabin space across the range is generous and even Stormers forwards will have enough space at the back for their legs and heads. It will also come as a matter of pleasure to many that the new Passat comes armed with a full-size space wheel, even though it does reduce the packing space slightly.



As is the growing tendency these days, buyers have a choice of various optional extras. For instance the 2.0-litre comes standard with R-Line package but this is an option for Comfortline and Highline vehicles.

Optional features also add considerably to the basic purchase price of vehicles but then this is not a major issue with customers wanting more fancy kit and don't mind paying for them. The list of choices is much too long to talk about in detail here so best discuss it with your local VW dealer.

But as an indication of the high level of specification, the Comfortline comes standard with Radio/CD Media set-up with touchscreen, 8 speakers, USB port, Media-in and SD card, multi-function display, chrome trim side windows, fabric trim seats, leather-trimmed steering wheel, auto-dimming rear-view mirror and door mirror, rain sensor, front and rear Park Distance Control, fog lights, 16-inch alloy wheels, LED tail lights and single zone manual aircon.



The latest Passat certainly has a generous helping of all good things motorists should be looking for (as proven by Europe's highest accolade) and VW fully deserves to move more of them off the showroom floors because the time has come for the South African public to rate this car for what it is - a darn smart, class-leading family sedan with a proud heritage and record sales behind its name!

ABOUT HENRIE GEYSER

Henrie Geyser joined the online publishing industry through iafrica.com where he worked for five years as news editor and editor. He now freelances for a variety of print and online publications, on the subjects of cars, food, and travel, among others; and is a member of the South African Guild of Motoring Journalists. henrieg@iafrica.com

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