Latest Volkswagen Passat – First Impressions

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REVISED VW PASSAT ESTATE PUT THROUGH ITS PACES…

…By Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

Volkswagen has treasure in its 46-year old Passat name, now brightly polished into a

gleaming facelifted eighth edition.

From its launch in 1973 it is now the VW with the longest-lived name-plate after the Beetle went out of production this year and it even predates the Golf name by a year. With over 30 million sold worldwide in 46 years, the Passat is the best-selling mid-size car in the world after seven versions have been launched.

The enhanced 8.5-generation now reaching showrooms delivers the latest technology in another version of the VW MQB platform, with updated but familiar engines and gearboxes.

The latest version of this spacious vehicle is offered in SE, SE Nav, SEL, and R-Line trims from launch and a limited Estate-only R-Line Edition will also be available alongside Alltrack and PHEV plug-in hybrid GTE and GTE Advance versions.

Prices have risen by up to £1,500 model for model but the GTE is actually around £2,500 less than the version it's replaced. Prices for the Passat range start at £25,370 for the 1.5 litre TSI EVO 150 hp six speed manual saloon with SE specification, rising to £45,050 for the R Line Edition Estate with a 2.0 TDI 240 hp engine and seven speed DSG auto gearbox with 4Motion traction. The full UK range of engines comprises of three petrols, four diesels and a PHEV petrol-electric plug-in hybrid powertrain.

The revised Passat is also the first Volkswagen fitted with Travel Assist, a system that allows the car to be driven at up to 130 mph where legal in a partially automated mode. It combines the latest version of Adaptive Cruise Control, version 3.0, which can now auto adjust the speed including temporary speed-limits as well as slowing for junctions and corners, fed by information from road sign recognition and GPS.

This is combined with Lane Assist version 2.0 which can now recognise kerbs and grass verges as well as road markings and this new driver-assistance technology will be standard across the Passat range which is the most technically advanced model ever sold by Volkswagen.

The Travel Assist is standard, along with LED headlights and always-on wifi for instant communications as parts of the very sophisticated features in the new range.

The popular Passat GTE returns with an increased 34-mile electric range in the hybrid, while the Passat Alltrack is updated and comes with raised suspension, underbody and wheel arch protection for some off-road use.

Two petrol engines are available at launch, a 2.0 litre TSI four cylinder available with 190 hp or 272 hp. Both come with DSG transmission, while the 272 hp version is equipped with 4MOTION all-wheel drive. Later this year a 1.5 litre TSI EVO four-cylinder power plant with Active Cylinder Shutdown will join the line-up.

The battle for diesel sales is still raging among high mileage company users and a new extensively reworked 2.0 litre TDI EVO with 150 hp, will be available with either a six-speed manual or seven-speed DSG and is the first for a Volkswagen-brand diesel engine to have cylinder deactivation to save fuel when it’s not really needed for performance.



Volkswagen UK anticipate 68% of new Passat registrations will be among fleet users with the estate outselling the saloon 2:1 and the most popular trim is SEL with about 47% sales being diesel, 28% petrol and 25% hybrids.

First Impressions



Volkswagen has again raised the bar with the latest Passat series. Giving more for more seems an unusual tactic but in the competitive world of fleet sales where the Passat Estate in particular will be competing with rivals from Audi, BMW and Volvo, the concept will go down well among the company bean counters. With more automation, better connectivity and stress-relieving bright headlights as standard the burden of going out to work will seem lighter.

The anticipated best selling 150 hp diesel was not available to test at the UK press launch but I opted for the second version, the 190 hp SEL Estate and it is easy to live with thanks to good access throughout, very comfortable seats and a reasonably compliant if firm ride.




PASSAT
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You could hear the suspension working away with the 18-inch wheels and tyres but rarely did they jar the interior. Our test car was fitted with the optional £900 extra variable suspension, 18-inch alloys, tyre pressure monitoring and powered tailgate as well as rear view camera.

The large wheels meant it picked up more impacts, but the adjustable suspension softened their effect in its comfort mode, but in normal mode it became much harder.

Handling was surefooted and there was little body roll or pitching, the steering was light, brakes progressive and the DSG changes were smooth, even when pushed hard.

VERDICT

I think roominess is the main attraction whether in front or rear seats, its versatility and capacity are also appreciated at this price and quality.



For: Very roomy with excellent access, good seats, well laid out controls, smooth powertrain.

Against: Slow engine response and modest flexibility from low revs, some engine and constant road noise intrusion, infotainment system intermittently lost its signal, ungenerous warranty.



Mini Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Volkswagen Passat SEL 2.0 TD 190 hp Estate.

Price: £34,085 (as tested £37,455).

Mechanical: Four cylinder, 190 hp, 2.0 TD, seven speed DSG auto gearbox, front-wheel-drive.

Performance: 144 mph, 0–6 2mph 8.1 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 47.3 mpg, CO2 120 g/km, VED diesel rate First Year £210, Standard rate £145, BiK company car tax 32%.

Insurance Group: 25E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions: L 4.78 m (15.68 ft), W 2.09 m (6.86 ft), H 1.52 m (4.99 ft), boot/load space: 650–1,780 litres (22.95–62.86 cu.ft).