Volkswagen Golf Match – Road Test

Published: October 7, 2024

Author:

Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/volkswagen-golf-match-road-test/

The Golf has been the golden one for Volkswagen, writes Robin

Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales)…

Ever since its launch in 1974 when it set a new standard in the hatchback sector it has gone on to become *the* standard by which any rivals are judged and to which competitors are compared.

True, some are roomier, softer sprung, sharper handling and cheaper, but overall the VW Golf is an incredibly good all-rounder with a well-built, quality feel, strong residual value and good performance.

The Golf Mk8 was introduced in 2020 and some felt it was not as good as previous generations and was too high tech with frustrating finger-tip technology thrown in because it could, without really considering what drivers desired.

Now the so-called Mk8.5 has been introduced on the model's 50th anniversary, with fewer controls operated through the infotainment screen and returned to the steering wheel, and it's all much better.

It is a very wide range of models including highly sporting Golf R and GTI with five additional trim levels in eight engine and gearbox powertrains, hatchback or estate bodies. There are 1.5 petrol and mild-hybrid engines developing 114 or 148 bhp with manual six or seven speed automatic transmission, while high mileage motorists can pick 2.0 litre diesel units producing 114 or 148 bhp, again with manual or automatic boxes.

Finally, for now, there are 201 bhp or 268 bhp plug-in hybrids in the hatchback style while a 2.0 litre 201 bhp petrol joins the line up next year.

The new 1.5 litre petrol engine with six-speed box is a very smooth unit with a really slick,

well defined gear-gate and at steady motorway speed should return over 52 mpg as we briefly saw on test but after some mixed road motoring an average of 46.2 mpg was recorded.

KY24 RXR

We put this down to the long-legged fifth and sixth gears which saw it struggling on long gradients or when laden and progress was maintained only by selecting fourth gear and extended use of third during acceleration to keep up with traffic flow. It was no hardship because the clutch pedal was light and progressive and the change action very slick and quick.

Brakes were nicely balanced with assistance and power while the steering was easy and turning circle tight without being twitchy at speed.

Secondary controls are now tightly grouped on the wheel spokes or a small fascia panel to the right of the wheel, with the usual lights and wiper stalks just behind on the column, but partly hidden nevertheless.

The wipers front and rear were very effective at clearing the glass, the slim LED headlights particularly bright and far reaching. Visibility was excellent all round.

The safe and secure synergy extended to front and rear sensors with alerts and optional £325 camera watching both front and back, speed monitoring and radar reaching down the road to keep a safe speed and distance, as well as warnings if anything was overtaking or on the inside before pulling in – but they added £680.

The simplified but big near 13-inch infotainment screen was packed with features which could be selected from about 14 functions, quickly changed and always highly visible without being over complicated.

Heating and ventilation controls are now touch-sliders beneath the screen but work in conjunction with it to show temperature and there is also a similar arrangement for the speakers' volume. Our £475 winter pack included heated front seats and steering wheel, highly desirable.

Output controls for the temperature and distribution were plentiful, easily set and strong, backed up by four powered windows, but no sunroof on our Match spec model.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

Oddments space was good infront, slightly less useful in the back for a family car and it was the same with the seating, being roomy infront and short on legroom behind but elbow, shoulder and headroom space was generous throughout.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

Moving to the boot, the fifth door was heavy to lift and revealed a long, wide and deep compartment, particularly if you removed the floorboard and used the space normally kept for a spare wheel. The offset split rear seatback of the 60:40 arrangement quickly dropped almost completely flat to rapidly and gradually raise capacity, with easy access from the rear doors as well.

TOP TETHER

Passengers could conveniently get into the backseats or front and the driving position was near ideal with plenty of seat, column and wheel movement.

We liked the way the cushion and backrest helped locate those infront even if they were not well padded for comfort and may have contributed to the overall firm riding nature of the Golf on anything but smooth roads.

The optional 18-inch Catania Black wheels may have made the ride firmer than on standard 17-inch tyres, however. On motorways it was very smooth.

The Golf's handling was safe and roadholding sure-footed with no real vices to concern anyone. Press on through tighter turns and it would naturally want to run wide but immediately came back on line when the throttle was lifted or steering eased off.

VERDICT

The latest VW Golf Match with the new 1.5 litre engine felt very well put together even if a lot of plastic was used and visible inside, and felt as if it could go on forever serving an owner for many years, maybe even another 50!

For: Smooth powertrain and good economy, excellent handling and secondary controls, big loadspace, highly refined.

Against: Average rear room, modest performance, stiff ride, expensive.

Fact file:

Model: VW Golf Match 1.5TSI

Price: £29,810, inc options

Mechanical: 115 PS 4 cyl, 1.5 litre petrol, 6 speed, front wheel drive

Max Speed: 126 mph

0 – 62 mph: 9.9 sec

Combined MPG: 46.2

Insurance Group: 17E

C02 emissions: 127 g/km

Bik rating: 29%, £245FY, £190SR

Warranty: 3 years/ 60,000 miles

Size: L 4.29 m (14.07 ft), W 1.79 m (5.87 ft), H 1.50 m (4.92 ft)

Bootspace: 381 to 1,270 litres (13.45 to 44.85 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,304 kg (2,875 lb)

© *WheelsWithinWales*