Volkswagen Golf R-Line 1.5 TSI Evo 150 – First Impressions.

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Launched earlier this year, the Ibis Sweden-based Volkswagen Golf has recently been supplemented by a new petrol engine that is set to become a big seller for the model. Chris Adamson has been putting it through its paces.

(All words and photographs by Chris).

In the UK market, Volkswagen was one of the leading diesel exponents until ‘dieselgate’, so now there has been an inevitable shift towards petrol engines as the brand attempts to win back buyers.

Enter a new high-tech, high efficiency four cylinder petrol engine – the 1.5 litre TSI EVO

that features a totally new block with two output options and Active Cylinder Management that can shut down up to two of the four cylinders to reduce fuel consumption – but more of that later.

In its latest guise, the Golf looks purposeful yet still very restrained, this is a gentle evolution of the characteristics that are unmistakable as a Golf – its conservative styling is perhaps part of the charm.

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Comes with all the usual Golf attributes of amiable good looks, excellent packaging, loads of

functionality, good fit and finish and bags of practicality.

This is exemplified by the clear digital instrumentation and controls that all fall conveniently to hand in a logical precise manner.

There is a large optional 12.3 inch Active Information Display touch screen that operates the infotainment system and allows the operator to swipe between menus.

The 150 PS version of the new engine (there is also a lower output 130PS alternative) is only available in two grades. The version I tested was presented in R-Line trim level so that means it comes with its own sporting front and rear bumpers, rear roof spoiler, chrome trimmed radiator grille, black mesh front air intake side skirts, trapezoid exhaust tailpipes, halogen headlights and tinted rear glass.

Inside, the kit list runs to black roof lining (which does make it a bit claustrophobic), R-Line sports seats with side bolsters and lumbar support, Piano Black trim inserts in the centre console, stainless steel pedals and door sill protectors and chrome plated air vents.

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Technology items include Adaptive Cruise Control, Driver Personalisation profile which allows the driver to set personal preferences for aspects such as radio stations, phone connectivity default addresses in the satellite navigation.

Topping this up are options such as Lane Assist with Dynamic Light Assist, climate control air conditioning with allergy filter, Vienna leather upholstery, electric driver’s seat, headlight washers, wireless smartphone charger, heated climate control windscreen and rear view camera to accompany the front and rear parking sensors.

On the Road

At the heart of this R-Line is a relatively modest sounding 150 PS transverse mounted 1.5

litre direct injection turbocharged petrol engine but… the bare figures don't prepare you for the sustained acceleration that this unit is capable of.

The maximum delivery is reached between 5,000 and 6,000 rpm so the engine is never fully under stress and there is plenty of torque delivered over a sustained period from 1,500 rpm to 3,500 rpm so that it picks-up speed quite rapidly and continues its momentum without fuss.

The Active Cylinder management system is a clever computer-operated system that shuts down the engine when the driver releases the accelerator – a system that up until now has only been found on hybrid motors. This is in addition to automatic stop-start.

For the driver there is no obvious indication that this is happening, the muted engine note is no give away so you have to trust that all is working efficiently.

Even with this eye on efficiency, the Golf is still fun to drive and invigorating when you push it hard to the limit.

The six speed manual transmission is slick and positive allowing you to make the most of the power on tap.

I was enjoying myself so much that a check on fuel consumption in just a relatively short period is not really representative so the computer read-out of 31.3 mpg seems to be a bit misleading.

There was never any obvious indication that the engine had shut down two of the cylinders, probably due to me not giving it much opportunity to do so – a figure of closer to 45-50 mpg should be expected on a longer outing, while the Euro 6 compliant unit pegs CO2 down to 116 g/km.

To go with the new engine is the expected immaculate Golf handling – everything feels just right.

The assisted steering is accurate and well weighted while the ride quality is not as firm as many in this category, the front coils and telescopic shock absorbers and rear multilink axle with XDS electronic differential lock doing their job very well.

Supplementing the main mechanicals is a safety package that includes anti-lock brakes with Hydraulic Brake Assist, Electronic Stability Control including Electronic Differential Lock and ASR Traction Control.

Verdict

As a model line-up the Golf has always been the class leader and the seventh generation maintains that reputation while the new efficient petrol engine is helping to re-gain the brand some much needed confidence.



Wheels-Alive Tech Spec in Brief:

Vehicle: Volkswagen Golf R-Line 1.5 TSI Evo

Engine: 1498cc four-cylinder turbocharged petrol

Transmission: Six-speed manual

Power: 150 PS @ 5,000-6,000

Torque: 250 Nm (184 lb.ft) @ 1,500-3,500

Performance:

0-62mph: 8.3 seconds

Top Speed: 134 mph

Fuel Consumption (Official Figures):

Urban: 45.6 mpg

Extra-Urban: 64.2 mpg

Combined: 55.4 mpg

CO2 Emissions: 116 g/km

Price (On the Road), from: £25,095 (£31,950 as tested)