Volkswagen ID.3 – Road Test

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The VW ID.3 Family Pro Performance tried by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency)…

Volkswagen's ID.3 is their first purpose-built electric car and it's good.

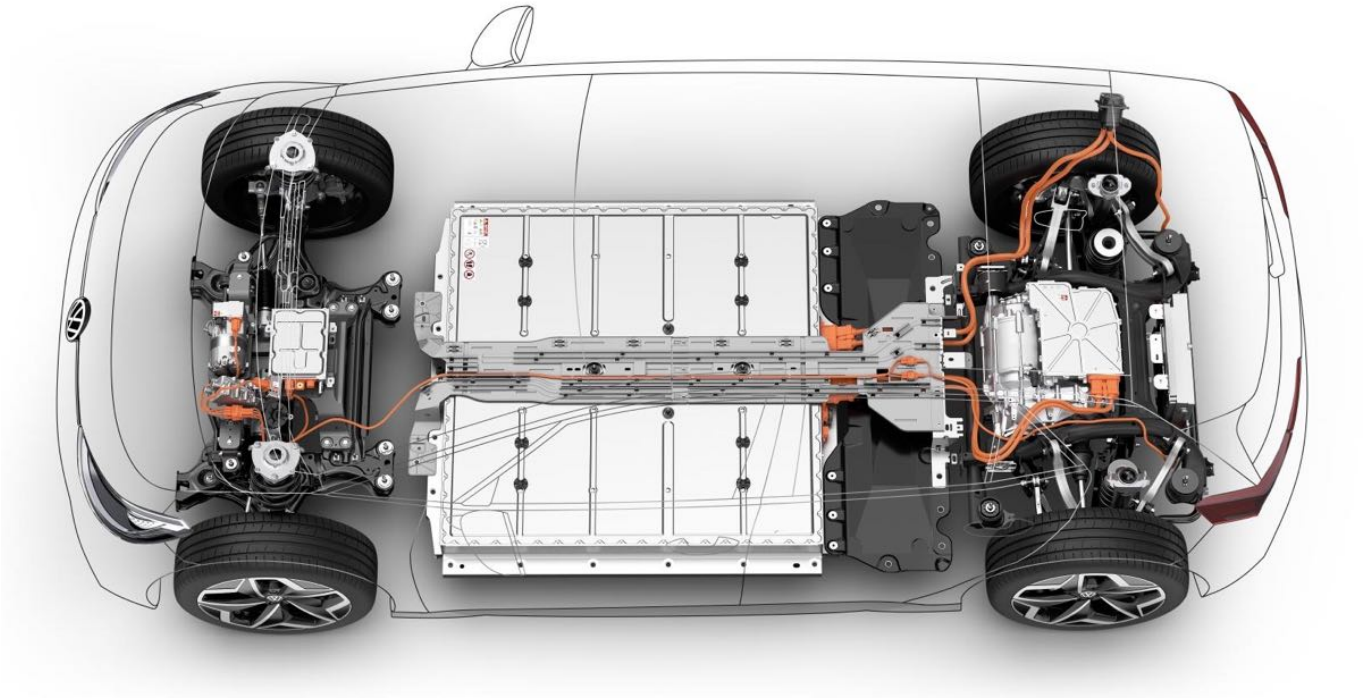
It's about the same size as a Golf, but the new modular electric drive matrix powertrain and floorpan gives it the interior space of the larger Passat.



The flexibility of the floorpan is mirrored by the range of batteries and motors that can be chosen to power it in a handful of specifications, Pure 45 kWh, Pro 58 kWh and Pro S 77 kWh. There are Life, Style, Family, Tech, Max and single Tour trims, and others will follow as VW wants to boost take-up.

Some models come in below the UK Government's Plug-in Vehicle Grant (PiVG) so you need to carefully consider what you want in terms of performance and packaging to benefit from the £2,500 assistance. The ID.3 range is priced from £29,635 to £38,815. All-electric models of any make costing over £35k are not eligible for the PiVG grant.

Our mid-range Family Pro Performance with 58 kWh battery and 204 ps engine included optional alloy wheels, winter heat pump and cycle carrier cost £36,210 which just pushed it over the price line for the PiVG.



VW say the compact electric motor will fit inside a sports bag and for its size the power output gives the car a very fit performance from standstill even in eco mode with comfort, sport and individual – controlling six aspects of power, chassis, handling – also available. The more you drive it and play around with the settings the better the experience of the ID.3.

The ID.3 Pro Performance had good acceleration once you learned to use the mode buttons and selected how much retardation assistance you wanted from the system through the column stalk which also determined forward or reverse as in an automatic gearbox.

It was possible to drive the car using retardation alone to slow down and only depress the brake pedal to engage the hold control as there is no separate parking brake. It may sound unusual but in reality it became second nature and all worked well.

There was a reasonably good turning circle but there’s not a lot of feeling incorporated into

the steering system unless you stray over a road's white lines and a gentle tug on the wheel is produced to ensure you are doing what you want and not dozing. A drowsiness alert is incorporated along with a break-time suggestion recommendation.

The acceleration is good and it easily maintains motorway speed for overtaking or cruising but you need to watch the range diminishing as speed increases and the ID.3 is best suited to A and B-roads with more bends and descents to push retard-generated electricity into the battery.

Use the satnav and with the car doing so much for the driver you could almost sit back and enjoy the armchair that is the driver's seat and matched on the passenger side. The cushions and squabs were well shaped and supporting with reasonable adjustment range for reach, height and rake and the steering column with small speedometer display attached moves up and down as well as in and out, so any desired set up is possible.

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In the back, the seats are also comfortable for three and all have plenty of headspace and legroom without a transmission tunnel, and with good access, including into the boot. The rear seats individually fold almost flat and the central backrest has a load-through facility for longer items. The boot-floor is high but removable to further raise carrying capacity alongside the dual charging cables.

Recharging is very simple and depending on charger, there are free units available at some Tesco stores with Podpoints, it can take under an hour or over eight to get a good punch into the pack. The sophisticated computer allows the user to select the charge times and capacity required, and that's very useful.

On the move, our test car was generally very comfortable on a 320 miles motorway and main roads trip with a mid-point recharge, but you are aware of bad bumps and there were

ever-present road rumbles and suspension bump-thump.





Mechanical noises are very low in this electric car with only a distant hum in the background and wind wuffle was also minimal thanks to the smooth lines.

Sensors and a reversing camera with AI overlays helped you park very precisely on your own or through the system and the visibility was clear all round with excellent big wipers along with bright headlights.

Interior comfort was maintained through a good heating and ventilation system but it meant you had to dip into the main display to select some features, which was distracting when driving. It’s all designed to be set up as you want before starting off, but how many times have you wanted to change something once underway?

A few controls on the wheelspokes gave basic commands but you can also, if it recognises your accent, use voice commands for media and climate functions. It has just introduced over the air updates for all software to keep owners and drivers informed.


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VERDICT

The Volkswagen ID.3 is a very technical car to drive and it takes time to master but the rewards are great and it could become another landmark model for the brand after the original Beetle and Golf.

For: Simple to drive, useful range, comfortable seats, roomy, excellent visibility, strong brakes, stylish interior, dual charging cables.

Against: Distracting infotainment display, firm ride and optional large wheels/ tyres produced continuous road noise, average warranty.



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

VW ID.3 Family Pro Performance hatchback



Price: £36,210

Mechanical: 58 kWh battery, 204 PS single-speed electric motor, rear wheel drive

Performance: 99 mph, 0 – 62 mph 7.3 seconds

Driving Range: 257 miles

CO2 emissions: Zero g/km

Taxation costs: BiK company car tax rating 1%, VED First Year £0, Standard rate £145

Insurance Group: 29E

Warranty: 3-years/60,000 miles

Size: L 4.27 m (14.01 ft), W 2.07 m (6.79 ft), H 1.57 m (5.15 ft)

Boot space: 385 to 1267 litres (13.60 to 44.74 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1805 kg (3,979 lb)