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Volkswagen Passat R-Line – Road Test

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The latest Volkswagen Passat is not only the sleekest shape to carry the name but also probably the most sophisticated, reports Robin



Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales).

It will surprise many to know that the original Passat was unveiled in 1973 and in 52 years there have been over a dozen derivatives, being sold as a hatchback, saloon and estate at various times around the world.

It is the brand's second best selling model behind the Golf and ahead of the iconic Beetle.

The current ninth-generation of the car went on UK sale in January 2024 only as an estate and has been a regular winner of safety, towing and estate competitions.

For those who travel a lot throughout Europe they may have noticed it is also the car of choice used by several police forces.

VW has an extensive line up of pure electric ID models but wisely is keeping options open with petrol models that also have electric motor assistance; mild and eHybrid which can be used in low emission zones without facing big penalties.

The current Passat range is available in nine versions based on a choice of four engines and in three trim levels from £39,610, £42,705 and £43,995.

Our test car came with a sunroof, 15-inch infotainment pack and folding tow bar, and was finished in Reef Blue paint with Soul Black upholstery, which together added £4,175 to the standard price.



The test car uses plug-in hybrid technology to boost its range, performance and economy, with a point on the nearside front wing suitable for AC or DC charging, and the petrol cap is on the offside rear flank.

Under the bonnet is a familiar straight four-cylinder 1.5 litre engine carefully tuned to work in conjunction with a 19.7 kWh battery pack good for 77 miles at best in our eHybrid test car. The results are remarkable.



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The indicated petrol range was over 250 miles and the battery pack would take it a further 70 miles or so, giving an easy 320 miles before needing refuelling or recharging. With the eHybrid technology you don't have to worry about being stranded without electric power as the internal combustion engine keeps you going for mile after mile.

And what an enjoyable trip that would be with the responsive, strong engine underfoot for covering miles with ease and economy as we saw over 50 mpg regularly on motorway and main roads.

The Passat came with a six-speed automatic transmission which was so smooth and quick changing with normal or sports mapping.

The technology behind the big touchscreen in the centre of the fascia controlled several chassis settings and functions to optimise handling, ride comfort and economy; these could be set and saved to a driver's preferences.

Parking assistance, dynamic controls and safety settings were available and adjustable as well.



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You can decide before setting off whether you want to use or save the stored electric assistance and the mapping even identifies charging points along a journey.

The 1.5 litre engine worked hard to haul the 1.8 tonnes car along and under load it was a bit noisy if you pressed hard on the throttle, and the tyres and road noise also rose but it was not unbearable.

The direct shifting gearbox was a select and forget feature where the right ratio seemed to be always engaged, silently slipping into place whether accelerating or slowing down. Sport mode was just a quick twist of the column-mounted beefy stalk when wanted.

Steering was delightfully precise without being twitchy or heavy and the brakes were strong and smooth.

Secondary controls needed familiarisation as they were spread about the wheel spokes, fascia, central console and in the infotainment system. These altered what was shown on the new and large digital display in front of the driver with big, clear dials for the essential elements along with a head-up projection in the line of sight.



Everything was clear and comprehensive once you became use to it.

The car's advanced heating and ventilation was also a mixture of controls in the central screen and underneath on the fascia lip and provided a lot of output, direction and temperature range.

The R-Line's comfortable front seats were not only heated but came with a massaging function for driver and passenger with six settings to enjoy, varying intensity and duration.

Not only were they very relaxing as a result but also excellently shaped to give a lot of height, reach and angled support. Combined with the multi-adjustable steering column and heated wheel the car was ideal to tackle a



long trip with minimum stress.

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Those in the back had good room and support and access was easy throughout with an offset split rear seat arrangement to cope with a variety of loading configurations behind the low rear sill and under the powered tailgate.

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Ride comfort could be selected and varied to requirements and the car's wishbone set up both ends meant it handled more like a sports model than family holdall, irrespective of the surface beneath.

It had very good pickup from standstill and when overtaking, plus effortless main road cruising ability to gobble up miles.

Visibility was very good through the windows with big wipers, efficient washers, powerful headlights including autodip, and slim pillars. A clear camera image was provided when reversing, although we found it did not like hedges when using the self-parking feature, and the car would unexpectedly stop.

The intelligent driving aids, once set up, worked faultlessly and almost unobtrusively to save from accidents or speeding fines, but some oncoming drivers obviously disliked the brightness of the headlamp beams even on dip.



VERDICT

I am not surprised the Volkswagen Passat has picked up so many safety awards and is one of the top towing cars because if you have to spend a lot of time on the road for work or pleasure it is a very civilised and safe selection.

For: Powertrain, economy, room & practicality, refinement & comfort with massaging seats, equipment, handling.

Against: Road, suspension and engine noises, average warranty.



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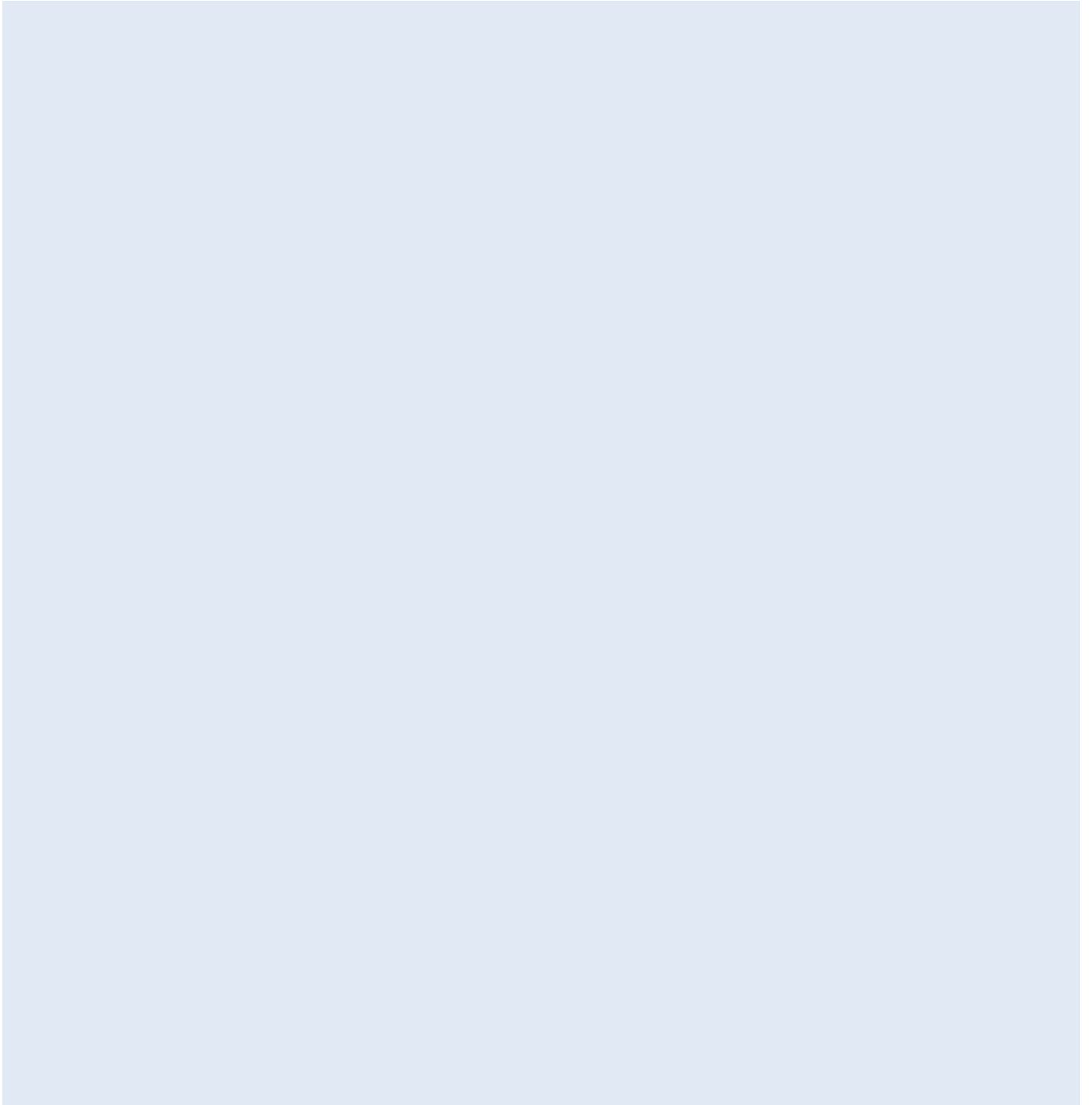
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Model:	Volkswagen	Passat	R-Line
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Price: £55,525

Mechanical: 272 PS 4 cyl 1498cc petrol hybrid, 6 speed auto

Max Speed: 140 mph

0 - 62 mph: 7.1secs



Combined MPG: 51.9

Insurance Group: 40E

C02 emissions: 9 g/km

Bik rating: 5%, fZeroFY, f590SRx5

Warranty: 3 years/ 60,000 miles

Size: L 4.92 m (16.14 ft), W 1.85 m (6.07 ft), H 1.53 m (5.02 ft)

Bootspace: 510 to 1,521 litres (18.01 to 53.71 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,858 kg (4,096 lb)