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VW Passat Estate Business – Wheels-Alive Road Test

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Author: Keith Ward

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Keith Ward is your guide...

This is the eighth generation of the Passat, which since its launch in 1973 has racked up over 22 million sales worldwide and going on for half a million in the UK, where the estate version consistently outsells the saloon, £1,530 cheaper. Its star is not fading – in its latest form the Passat was named Europe's Car of the Year 2015. And a telling tribute to its



workaday appeal is that no fewer than eight out of every 10 sold new go straight to hard-headed fleet customers for business use.

All this despite prices on the high side. Ford Mondeo estates start from just over £21,000, Passats from a tad under £24,000 (1.6 TDI S) rising to well over £30,000 (2.0 TDI SCR 190 R-Line). From the 11-strong, all-diesel Passat estate range, covering five levels of trim and four newly-worked engines with power outputs between 120 and 240 PS, we try here the best-seller, a 2.0-litre 150 PS in newly introduced mid-range SE Business trim (meaning it includes navigation), fitted with an optional six-speed DSG automatic box at £28,390.

Included as standard are a driver alert system and automatic braking if your attention wanders, adaptive cruise control, front and rear parking sensors, air-con, eight-speaker audio with DAB radio and CD player plus the now-customary Bluetooth phone and aux-in connectivity. Our car came with more than £6,000-worth of options including, with winter in mind, heating for the steering wheel, front seats (in leather), windscreen and washer jets, as well as climate control instead of mere air-con and a towbar with electric release plus trailer assist – guidance to prevent you making a fool of yourself when reversing it.

The latest Passat may be shorter, lower and 85 kg (187 lb) lighter than the last, but a longer wheelbase allows extra interior space. And the vast, dual-floor boot is even bigger than before, expanding with the rear seats down to 1,780 litres (62.86 cu.ft), compared with 1,731 litres (61.13 cu.ft) previously, so outstripping just about all rivals except the gargantuan Skoda Superb Estate, with 1,950 litres (68.86 cu.ft). The rear seats of the VW are easily lowered via levers at either side of the boot to extend the cargo deck to a whopping 1,710 mm (67.5 inches) but, unlike before, it is not absolutely flat. Shame.



On the road, there is immediate evidence of the revised and lighter electromechanical steering and the claimed improvements in body rigidity - no tremors or rattles to detract from what is a comfortable, saloon- standard ride. The driver gets an “ergoComfort” seat.

Our car sported the optional dynamic chassis control (£705) giving a choice of suspension settings, and an XDS electronic differential lock (£185) to improve traction and handling.

The 150 PS diesel is pacy but relatively relaxed, its peak torque reached as low as 1,750 rpm. And it was recording more than 54 mpg, meaning a range on a tankful of well over 700 miles to please those typical long distance users.



There's a plushness about the cabin furnishings, which even stretch to an analogue clock. Switches are mostly to hand, the exception being those sited separately for foglights, a distracting grope away, low down to the right.

VERDICT

Practical, competent, feels solid, good to drive.



WHEELS-SALIVE TECH. SPEC IN BRIEF:



VW Passat Estate 2.0 TDI SE Business Five door estate.

Body: Five door estate; length 4,767 mm (15.64 ft); kerb wt 1,541 kg (3397 lb).

Boot: Length, 1,140 to 1,710 mm (3.74 to 5.61 ft); Volume, 650 to 1,780 litres (22.95 to 62.86 cu.ft).

Tyres and Wheels: 215/55; self-sealing, on R17 alloys.

Engine: Diesel; 1,968 cc; 4 cylinder; turbo; 6 speed DSG auto; stop-start.

Power: 150 PS @ 3,500-4,000 rpm.

Torque: 251 lbs ft (340 Nm) @ 1,750-3,000 rpm.

Performance:

0-62 mph: 8.9 seconds

Top speed: 134 mph.

Fuel consumption: On test 54.3 mpg; official Combined 62.8 mpg; tank capacity 66 litres (14.52 gallons), so theoretical range using our on-test figure, over 780 miles.

Emissions and taxation: CO2 emissions, 119 g/km; Euro 6; Band C; VED Nil first year, then £30 p.a.

Insurance Group: 19E.

Warranty: 3 years/60,000 miles; 3 years paint; 12 years body; 1 year breakdown.

Rivals (estates): Ford Mondeo; Mazda 6; Skoda Superb; BMW 3-series; Mercedes C-



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Class; SEAT Leon ST.