



Volkswagen Golf VI

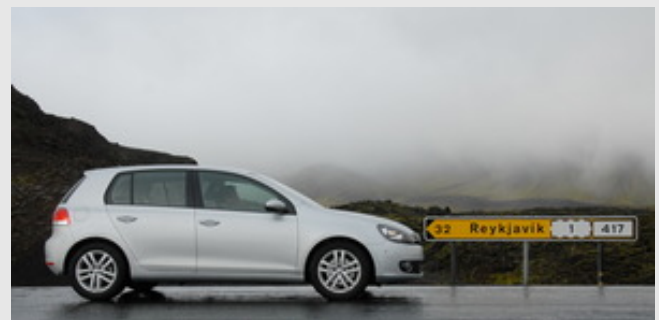
Wind of change

Volkswagen sells 2,100 Golfs per day. And there's a good reason for that. The Golf is the car that suits everyone and is accepted everywhere. Also the Golf was the first to introduce the GTI and was the first in its segment with a diesel engine. The Golf was the first convertible for a common man as well. Now it is time for the sixth generation of Volkswagen's evergreen. What's new this time?

If there's one place where fresh, new ideas will flourish it's Iceland. Although "fresh" is an understatement, because around the car ice cold wind is blowing and the rain hits the windows hard. But inside this sixth generation of the new Golf all is quiet. Serenely quiet even, which is not common for a car like this.

Comfort

It is clearly noticeable that comfort came first when developing the new Golf. And that goes a lot further than the usual sound isolation around the engine bay and wheels. Technology is used that was reserved only for top class limousines until now. In the windshield of the Golf VI a noise dampening film has been integrated and the outside mirrors have been aerodynamically shaped to reduce wind noise (and get less dirty!).



The quality of materials used in cars in this segment has improved in the last years, but Golf now raises the bar again. Volkswagen isn't very modest about this in its communication and not without reason. Everything feels firm and thorough, while also giving a true premium feel.

Equipment

Another significant difference between the Golf and many competitors is the equipment level. The new Golf can be fitted with all gadgets and luxury Volkswagen has to offer. The test car for example has a parking camera, a system to fully automatically park the car, cornering lights, a high end audio system (in cooperation with Danish specialist "DynAudio") and radar controlled cruise control (automatically maintain the ideal gap on the highway at

speeds between 30 to 210 km/h).

Regretably the latter failed in thick fog, while it is weather conditions like these where this system could have increased safety.



A number of small ergonomic quirks from the previous Golf have not been fixed with the new one. For example the cruise control is still switched on and off with a tumble switch on top of the indicator stalk. This results in accidentally indicating left or right when activating the cruise-control.

The control light that indicates whether or not the head lights are turned on, is fitted on the light switch. This is not a logical place. The floor of the boot is not flat, requiring extra lifting when loading luggage.

Design

The looks of the Golf VI have only been sharpened. Even an outsider will immediately see that this is a Golf, while the car has been modernised without a doubt.

The changes in the interior are more subtle. One could even assume to be sitting in the old Golf! As usual the inside of the Golf is sober and solid. Many knobs and levers have been altered and/or rearranged. While doing so Volkswagen's new design icon, the Passat CC, has been used as an example.



Because the Golf VI hardly grew (5 mm shorter, 20 mm wider, same height) the interior space remained the same. Just like before the Golf offers ample space in the front. The room on the back seats is average for a car in this segment. The cargo area (350 litres, expandable to 1,305 litres) is also of average size.

Engines

There is another reason to test the Golf in Iceland. The effects of global warming become ever more evident, especially here. According to the Icelandics the glaciers get smaller by the day, while snow falls later every year.



To reduce the effects on the environment the Golf VI is fitted with very efficient engines. First the relatively small 1.4 "TSI" petrol engine was tested. Thanks to ingenious technology this small engine delivers great power (160 hp / 240 Nm), but is still fuel efficient (6 litres per 100 km). While testing this highly economic power unit proved to be very eager to perform and made the "Golf 1.4 TSI" a seriously fast car.



The new 2.0 litres diesel engine (140 hp / 320 Nm) was also driven. This uses third generation "common rail"-technology and is therefore more efficient and refined than ever before. The larger diesel engine also makes a car heavier than the small 1.4 engine and therefore the Golf diesel is less agile and dynamic to drive.

DSG

Both engines can be combined with a "DSG" gearbox. This can behave like an automatic, but also lets the driver shift gears. In fact DSG is comprised of two gearboxes: one for the even gears and one for the odd. When one gearbox is in use, the other already selects the next gear. Shifting therefore takes very little time, making DSG faster and more economic than a traditional automatic. Especially the new seven speed DSG is recommendable: it make the Golf noticeably quicker and more fuel efficient.



Ride quality

No matter what engine or gearbox, comfort always comes first with the new Golf. The engines are hardly audible and perform with ease. Vibrations from the mechanics are nonexistent and that is a great contribution to the comfort

level.

When accelerating full throttle the 1.4 litre TSI shortly emits an exciting sound, but the power unit never roars for long. Therefore the Golf 6 drives (too) fast unnoticeable and is more suitable for long distances than ever before.

New on the Golf is the adaptive suspension ("DCC, Adaptive Chassis Control"). With the push of a button the driver can select a sporty or more comfortable ride. The difference is mainly noticeable in the power steering and throttle.



In both cases the springs are stiff and road handling excellent. Even when cornering fast or trying to unbalance the car deliberately, the Golf behaves exemplary. That guarantees not only a lot of driving pleasure, but also makes the car very safe.

The front wheels can easily handle the engine power, making the tyres rarely skid. The brakes are almost of sports car quality: the Golf VI can safely be stopped within a surprisingly short distance.

The news will continue for a while. The Golf VI will be available as an environmentally friendly BlueMotion and sporty GTI mid 2009. A new Golf Plus and Golf Cabrio have also been officially confirmed. Volkswagen is even developing a Golf hybrid. In other words: the Golf VI starts a true wind of change.



Conclusion

The Golf is the most sold Volkswagen and even one of the most sold cars in the world. That is not because the car excels in one specific area, but is very good on all areas. That may not make this a very exciting car, but it does make a Golf a rational and logical choice.

It is therefore understandable that Volkswagen didn't change the proven recipe for this sixth generation Golf too much. The car hasn't been radically changed, but only refined and modernised. The Golf VI especially offers more luxury and comfort than before. The new Golf is remarkably quiet, has an immaculate build quality and can be fitted with luxury that could only be found in the absolute top segment before. The engines are strong, efficient and perform with ease.

The new design is no more than a subtle wrinkle on the surface, but underneath the Golf VI offers a tsunami of improvements. ■

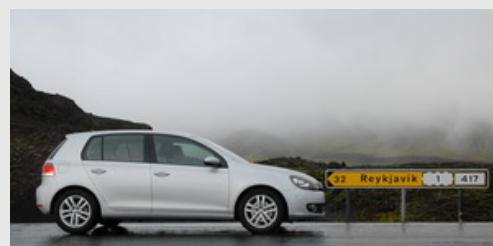


Specifications

Volkswagen Golf VI 2.0 TDI (140 hp) DSG SE

Size and weight

Length	420 cm
Width	178 cm
Height	148 cm
Wheelbase	258 cm
Kerb weight	1322 kg
Trailer	690 kg
Trailer - braked	1500 kg
Fuel capacity	55 l
Luggage space	350/1305 l



Engine and performance

Capacity	1968 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	140 bhp @ 4200 rpm
Max torque	320 Nm @ 1750 rpm
Drive	voorwielen
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	9.3 secs
Top speed	207 km/h
Average mileage	5.4 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	7.1 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	4.5 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	142 gr / km



Price

Price	£ 19,805
Price base model	£ 13,150