



Volkswagen Golf Convertible

Risky business?

Review | Volkswagen already has a great convertible on offer: the Eos. Also: the Golf VI has been on the market for quite a while now and its successor is expected within the near future. Yet, this is the moment Volkswagen choose to introduce a brand new Golf Convertible. Is that risky business or a well calculated risk?

To take the first doubt away: the Golf Convertible certainly has a right to exist next to the Eos. The price of a top spec Golf VI Cabrio is about the same as a base model Eos.

And there's another difference: the Eos is a coupé-cabriolet: a coupé with a metal top which folds neatly in the boot to convert the car into a cabriolet. The Golf Cabrio, on the other hand, features a soft top; just like its predecessors. The advantage of a soft top is that it weighs less, which benefits handling and performance of the car. Also, cloth is easier to fold than metal, so it takes less space in the boot.

Comfort

The Golf VI Cabriolet doesn't have just a basic soft top! To start with, the roof is operated fully automatically (opening or closing takes just 9 seconds); even manually releasing or fastening brackets is no longer necessary. Inside, the roof has a smart construction with beams in the length and width. These prevent the roof from changing shape at high speeds, making the vehicle more economic and quieter.

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With the roof closed the Golf Cabrio isn't just quiet, it is even quieter than some cars with a fixed head! Noises from the wind and tyres are hardly audible. If any sound does enter the cabin, it is from the car itself. Only the 1.6 litre diesel engine can be heard clearly; the petrol engines are all exceptionally silent.

When weather doesn't permit to drive with the top down, the Golf Convertible is as comfortable as a normal Golf. This also goes for the gadgetry: all gizmos available for the regular Golf, are available on the Convertible. Do take the audio system into consideration when configuring the car: the base radio is too weak and can hardly be heard when the roof is open. Upgrading to a more powerful audio system is therefore almost a necessity.



The dashboard and the space in the front are equal to that of any other Golf. To make the Convertible look special, the roof is considerably lower and that affects

the space in the rear. The legroom on the back seat is below average, the headroom is poor. Both with the roof up and down the boot measures 250 litres; that is enough for two medium-sized suitcases.

Open top

Like with most convertibles, the experience changes completely when opening the roof. Unlike previous generations of the Golf Convertible, a roll bar isn't visible. This gives an even greater feeling of freedom than before.



The windscreen is placed at a lower angle than with a normal Golf, to shield the occupants from the wind. Competing cars from other brands fit their convertibles with foldable spoilers, rotating windbreakers and other clever stuff to decrease turbulence; the Golf offers nothing of the sort. Despite this, comfort with the top down is exceptionally good! Even at speeds up to 50 mph, with all windows down, there's hardly any wind in the interior.

Diesel

Driving this drop top Golf feels like a party, so all available versions have been tried. Regrettably the party had a slow start with the "1.6 TDI". This base diesel engine simply doesn't want to play. The diesel can be kept at very low engine speeds, but this affects performance even more. To keep up with traffic the rev counter should be kept above 2,000 rpm at all times.



The diesel engine is noticeably heavy and pushes harder on the front wheels, resulting in heavy steering as well. To make up for its low performance the 1.6 TDI offers low fuel consumption as well: even on very demanding roads the test car consumed just 4.9 litres per 100 km (57.6 mpg).



Petrol

When powered by a petrol engine, the Golf Convertible is more convincing. That even goes for the base model: the "1.2 TSI". This relatively small engine develops lots of power while being very economic, thanks to the assistance of a turbo.

Even this low-powered model performs pretty well. Even the slightest touch of the accelerator results in wonderful acceleration. When releasing the throttle, the Golf keeps going like it is weightless and for a convertible that's unique. Only on steep ascents does

the 105 PS / 175 Nm strong 1.2 TSI lack power.

Fuel economy is improved by a well-functioning stop/start system and a shift indicator. When driving calmly the "Golf Cabrio 1.2 TSI" uses about 5.2 litres per 100 km (54.3 mpg). A sportier driving style costs about 6.1 litres per 100 (46.3 mpg) in real life.



The "1.4 TSI" doesn't just have a bigger displacement, it is also supported by a turbo and a compressor. The turbo delivers a bigger punch at high engine speeds, while the compressor does the same at low revs.

When simply going with the flow of traffic, there's hardly any difference between the 1.4 and 1.2 litre TSI. It's only when accelerating or climbing, that the 1.4 TSI is clearly the more powerful (160 PS / 240 Nm) of the two. On top of that, the bigger engine performs with more ease, thereby improving comfort. The 1.4 TSI used 6.8 litres per 100 km (41.5 mpg) on this test drive.

Fun, fun, fun

Those who are looking for a real party piece go for the 2.0 litre TSI engine. This develops 210 PS / 280 Nm and also propels the Golf GTI. The "2.0 TSI" is very eager to perform and makes this little Golf a truly exciting car to drive. The 2.0 litre turbo engine transfers its power through a DSG gearbox, which shifts gears extremely fast. The engine even has an exciting sound when revving hard. Due to its character, a test drive with this quickest Golf took more than 10 litres per 100 km (28.2 mpg).



Although the Golf VI Cabrio isn't a sports car, it does handle very well. This convertible has the same rigidity as a normal Golf. It's only during an emergency stop or extremely fast cornering that the Convertible is noticeably heavier than the regular model. The 2.0 TSI can be fitted with sports suspension, making it more agile and even more fun to drive.

It is obvious: Volkswagen didn't take a risk at all when introducing the Golf Cabrio. The previous generations sold 680,000 units and this new version offers everything to increase that number still further.



Conclusion

Did Volkswagen take a big risk by introducing a convertible three years after introducing the regular Golf VI? Not at all. Insiders say that the Cabrio was already planned in 2008, but internal politics merely

delayed the project.

The Volkswagen Eos certainly isn't a competitor to the Golf Cabrio. The Eos is a large, luxurious coupé-cabriolet, while the Golf is a mid-sized soft top convertible. The quality of the soft top is exceptionally high, making the Cabrio usable all year long. With the top down, the Golf Cabrio also excels with high comfort levels.

Only the 1.6 litre diesel engine is a let down: it delivers poor performance, while handling is affected by its weight. The petrol engines all perform very well, while fuel economy is excellent. In real life the 1.2 TSI is already powerful enough, while the 2.0 TSI offers the most driving pleasure. ■



Specifications

Volkswagen Golf Convertible

Size and weight



Length x width x height	425 x 178 x 142 cm
Wheelbase	258 cm
Kerb weight	1.383 kg
Trailer	740 kg
Trailer - braked	1.400 kg
Fuel capacity	55 l
Luggage space	250/250 l
Tyre size	205/55R16

Engine and performance



Capacity	1390 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	160 PS @ 5800 rpm
Max torque	240 Nm @ 1500 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	8.4 secs
Top speed	216 km/h
Average mileage	6.4 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	8.3 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	5.4 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	150 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 25,295
Price base model	Â£ 20,720