



Volkswagen Passat (2010 - 2014)

All-new and still the same

Review | Trust, that's what it is all about with the Volkswagen Passat. This company car does not owe its success to groundbreaking technologies or mind-bending design. Instead, even this seventh generation can be recognised as a trusty Passat in the blink of an eye. Trust is also present in the shape of solid build quality and proven technology. But if all is still the same, what is different about the "all-new" Passat?

Because the Passat buyer prefers a well-known product, Volkswagen choose the easy way out. The seventh generation of the Passat is based on its predecessor. Roughly, the chassis and suspension have been copied from the previous model. On top of that a new carriage was built. The engines are basically the same as well, although they have been improved to ensure the Passat VII is ready for 2011.

Trim level

Even those who do own a Passat right now, will hardly experience any difference when taking their place in the cabin of the new model. And that is meant as a compliment. As usual, the space in the front and back is ample. If preferred, the cabin can be executed in the traditional sober, yet immaculate materials. On the other hand, the test vehicle features classy beige upholstery, which gives the Passat cabin an unusual warm atmosphere. A noteworthy detail is the analogue clock in the middle of the dashboard, which has been copied from Volkswagen's top model: the Phaethon.

That isn't just by accident, because when it comes down to equipment levels the Passat 2011 comes close to top class limousines. For example, the seats don't just have a heating function, now there's seat-cooling and even a massage function built in. Keyless entry is taken one step further as well: the boot can now be opened by simply moving one's foot in the area under the rear bumper.





A radar assists the cruise control by automatically keeping a safe distance from the car in front. The radar is also used to warn the driver of slow moving traffic. At speeds lower than 30 km/h, the Passat can even come to a full stop automatically if a stationary vehicle is detected in the path of the car. Volvo has a similar system, but it is linked to a camera so it can distinguish humans from other objects. Volkswagen merely uses a radar and therefore markets "Adaptive Cruise Control" as no more than a driver's aid and not a safety feature.

During each drive a computer monitors the driver's behaviour patterns. When these patterns change too much after at least four hours of motoring, a warning will sound and the driver is advised to take a break.



Handling

When it comes to handling, the new Passat isn't a remarkable car. That doesn't sound very positive, but again it is meant to be so. Thanks to additional sound insulation in the windscreen and doors, the car is so quiet that any sensation of speed is missing. This is why long distances can be covered with great ease.

As stated before, the new Passat shares its suspension with the previous generation. The standard suspension is safe and comfortable, but this car isn't fun to drive at all.



The optional "Adaptive Suspension" offers the driver the choice between a normal, comfortable and sporty character. The difference between these settings is minimal. The biggest advantage is that the Sports mode gives the driver a bit more feeling with the car, making it easier to negotiate demanding circumstances (bad weather, slippery roads, etc.).

The biggest improvement to the new Passat over the old one is its efficiency. This starts with the eco tyres. These do not affect handling, safety or comfort levels. However, rolling resistance is minimal so the Passat will coast with remarkable ease. When the throttle is released, the speed hardly decreases and that gives a superior feeling.



Fuel economy

Volkswagen didn't develop new engines for the new Passat. Instead the existing engines have been modernised to deliver more power while using less fuel.

First the "2.0 Blue TDI" was driven. This four-cylinder diesel develops 140 PS / 320 Nm and performs very well, despite its green credentials. Especially when combined with the "DSG" automatic gearbox, the slightest touch on the accelerator is enough to accelerate swiftly. Volkswagen promises the car will do 54 mpg (5.2 litres per 100 km) and this was actually realised during the test drive.



The "1.6 TDI BlueMotion Technologies" is even more frugal. This base diesel engine develops a modest 105 PS / 250 Nm, yet it performs almost as well as the 2.0

TDI. The biggest difference between the two is that the smaller engine has to work harder to reach the same performance levels. However, the 1.6 TDI is even more suited to run at very low engine speeds (1,200 rpm is no problem) and therefore is even quieter on the long run.

Conclusion

"All-new and still the same" sounds like an impossibility. Yet that is exactly what characterises the new VW Passat. Its personality stayed the same. Its trump cards are still the familiar looks, the well-known cabin layout, the immaculate build quality and its proven technology.

The Passat 2011 has mainly been improved underneath the skin. The standard equipment is more advanced and active safety levels have been improved. The engines emphasise on fuel economy now, without affecting performance. While handling is fine, it isn't exceptional. The new Passat drives just like its predecessor, yet it does feel like a better car. ■



Specifications

Volkswagen Passat (2010 - 2014) 2.0 TDI Sport DSG

Size and weight



Length x width x height	477 x 182 x 147 cm
Wheelbase	271 cm
Kerb weight	1.460 kg
Trailer	750 kg
Trailer - braked	1.800 kg
Fuel capacity	70 l
Luggage space	565 l
Tyre size	235/45R17

Engine and performance



Capacity	1968 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	140 PS @ 4200 rpm
Max torque	320 Nm @ 1750 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	9.8 secs
Top speed	211 km/h
Average mileage	5.2 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	6.3 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	4.5 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	135 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 24,521
Price base model	Â£ 18,470