



**THE NEW
JETTAS HAVE
ARRIVED!**

JETTA OFFERS VALUE FOR LOW PRICE TAG

Tony Whitney

Volkswagen's all-new Golf hatchback has been arriving at dealerships during the past few months, but fans of this model's sedan version have had to wait a little longer.

Put very simply, Jetta is really a Golf with a trunk, but there's really a lot more to this product than that.

According to VW Canada officials, the front-wheel-drive Jetta is North America's top-selling European sedan.

For readers planning to rent a car in Europe this summer, this VW is called Vento over there.

But whether you call it Jetta or Vento, this car represents something all too rare these days - a well-built, speedy, European-designed sedan at a very reasonable

price.

The Jetta GL I tried carried a sticker price of \$17,965, which should cause a few worried mutterings among Japanese competitors.

This is a good-looking sedan, with styling that falls into the "evolutionary" category. It now has a more rounded, contemporary appearance.

The frontal view looks pretty well identical to its Golf equivalent, but everything changes aft of the rear window.

A very high trunk line is featured. This adds modernity, while providing excellent cargo capacity.

All Jettas will come initially with VW's new 2.0-litre, four-cylinder engine, developing 115 horsepower. This transverse-mounted unit might not appear to be super-powerful on paper, but

behind the wheel it's a very impressive package.

Throttle response is excellent and power is delivered smoothly right up to the tach's redline.

I will outline performance figures when I get round to a full test, but I would imagine that 10-second zero-to-100 km/h times are well within reach.

Although this engine delivers 15 percent more power than its predecessor, fuel economy is maintained, according to VW officials.

A new electronic engine management system is fitted, to aid engine efficiency and economy.

I tried a Jetta with a five-speed, manual gearbox and this shifted smoothly and positively. VW has obviously worked on this transmission, because earlier versions were a little rubbery.

A four-speed automatic transmission is available as an option.

For enthusiasts of oil-burners, VW is offering its new 75hp, 1.9-litre turbo diesel. I've tried one of these engines in a Golf model and was surprised by its performance and quietness - two features not normally associated with diesels.

This version only comes with a manual transmission.

VW officials say that body rigidity has been improved by 30 percent - certainly the Jetta I drove felt very stiff and rattle-free.

Other enhancements include bigger front disc brakes, a wider stance and re-worked fully independent suspension.

Generally, suspension follows the layout of previous Jettas and Golfs and uses front MacPherson

struts.

My test car was trimmed in a patterned cloth material and I found this very easy on the eye. Seats are well-shaped and the rear one folds down in one piece, to create an almost Golf-like rear cargo area.

I never had any quarrel with earlier Golf and Jetta instrument panels, but they were never particularly attractive with their blocky lines.

The new panel (both Jetta and Golf feature this) is a much more satisfying job, with flowing lines and cleverly-integrated switches. Everything is very easy to reach, including lights, sound system, climate controls and other equipment.

Driver's seat height adjustment was a nice feature, and I like the steering wheel, which was just the right

diameter and thickness.

For one reason or another, VW always seems to get the driving position right on its products. Some makers seem to find it difficult to achieve a proper relationship between steering wheel, pedals and seat, but not VW.

After a drive in this sedan I found myself wondering why buyers are paying \$10,000 more for very similar European and Japanese products, with not that much more going for them.

VW has always managed to deliver automobiles with that distinctive European flavor, performance and feel, for very reasonable prices.

Volkswagen products are covered by a three-year, 60,000-km warranty, with no transfer fees or deductible charges.

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