

2008 VOLKSWAGEN CITY GOLF



The City Golf has received a makeover for 2008. The exterior look has been modified, and inside, the radio and upholstery have been changed. The steering wheel is now the same as the Rabbit's. The engine remains the same, but the automatic transmission, an option, now has six speeds rather than four. The City Golf is available as a four-door hatchback.

Interior and trunk

Access to the front is easy. The seats are firmly comfortable, even after a long day of driving, for people of average height or less. However, there is no adjustable lumbar support. Heavily built or tall people will find the seats a bit narrow and the cushions a tad short. Thanks to the seat adjustments and tilt/telescoping steering wheel, drivers easily find a good driving position.

Entering and especially exiting the back requires a bit of flexibility. The bench seat is relatively comfortable for two adults, but only if they are of average height or less, because of the limited head and leg room. Already quite spacious, cargo capacity can be expanded by folding the 60/40-split seatback. When the seatback is folded down on the cushion, the floor inclines sharply upward towards the front. To get a flat floor in this area, you have to flip the cushion and remove the head restraints before folding the seatback.

Convenience and safety

The cabin is very well finished in good materials. Despite the efficient soundproofing, you can hear the engine at highway speeds. There are few storage spaces and above all, no roomy centre console.

Gauges and controls are well laid out, except for the heating controls, which are too low. The radio buttons are small. At night, everything is illuminated.

The heating system provides good heat but slowly, and the blower lacks power to circulate it. The doors lock automatically as soon as the car reaches 15 km-h, with a rather loud, cheap-sounding clunk.

The windshield washer nozzles are located under the edge of the hood, and snow can easily block them. The wiper fluid tank can hold half a litre more than before, but its 3-litre capacity is still at least one litre short, especially for a vehicle with a rear wiper.

From a safety standpoint, the City Golf comes equipped with dual front airbags, five head restraints, and four-wheel antilock disc brakes. Side and curtain airbags are available as options. The front head restraints are too far back from the head, and the rear ones do not adjust high enough for tall people. Visibility is very good in all directions, except on a $\frac{3}{4}$ rear angle because of the C-pillars, and rearward because of the bench seat's three head restraints. The outside mirrors are a bit small. The headlights do not have enough range, particularly in the low-beam position.

Engine and transmission

The 2.0L 4-cylinder engine puts out 115 horsepower and 122 pounds of torque. Acceleration and pickup are relatively sedate, especially at low and average speeds. However, generous torque and the progressiveness of the engine contribute to driving pleasure, even though acceleration is a bit disappointing. This engine's chief problems are its fuel economy figures and its noise level, particularly above 3,500 rpm. The accelerator, on the other hand, is a model of progressiveness.

The automatic transmission has three modes: six-speed normal, five-speed sport and six-speed manual. Sport mode shifts gears at higher engine speeds and holds the gears longer. However, gear changes are not as smooth. This mode is so efficient, it makes the manual mode almost useless. Acceleration and pickup are quicker in sport mode than in normal mode. Overall functioning is beyond reproach, but in our test vehicle, the transmission seemed to slip at times during warm-up. It also could downshift abruptly in a sharp deceleration. Sixth gear should run the engine at least 500 rpm less. The transmission lets you drive off in second gear.

On the road

Suspension performance is very good, combining authentic comfort and relatively sporty road holding. Despite its firmness, the Golf never jostles its occupants yet displays a tenacious grip in turns while remaining stable and predictable. The Golf has a solid, big-car feel, an invitation to hit the open road.

The well-tuned power steering is steady, precise and relatively quick, with a short turning circle typical of many European cars. However, it is a bit too discrete when it comes to relaying information on the relation between the tires and the road. With four-wheel disc brakes and ABS, braking is powerful, smooth and fade resistant.

An inspection at a CAA-Quebec technical inspection centre showed that the Golf is very well assembled and robust looking. What's more, Volkswagen does not skimp on rust proofing, which is more than generous, and offers a 12-year perforation warranty.

Conclusion

Even if it dates back to 1999, this Golf still has the earmark of a good touring car, though headlight range leaves much to be desired. Thanks to exterior cosmetic changes and a refreshed interior, Volkswagen has managed to rejuvenate a car that has already given a lot. On the other hand, the lack of a diesel engine, which was a popular choice, may be a turn-off to some buyers.

PROS: road comportsment, large cargo area, comfortable front seating, careful assembly, quality/equipment/price ratio, steering and brakes

CONS: noisy engine, insufficient storage, head restraints too far from one's head, weak headlights, slow heating, high fuel consumption

VOLKSWAGEN CITY GOLF 2008

Engine: 8-valve, 2.0-litre 4-cylinder

Horsepower: 115 hp at 5,200 rpm

Torque: 122 lb-ft at 2,600 rpm

Transmission: 5-speed manual, 6-speed automatic

Suspension: independent/semi-independent

Brakes: disc/disc

Wheelbase: 251.1 cm

Length: 418.9 cm

Width: 173.5 cm

Height: 144.4 cm

Weight: 1,246 to 1,277 kg

Tires: P195/65R15

Maximum towing capacity: 907 kg

Airbags: dual front. Two side and two curtain airbags optional.

Fuel consumption with automatic transmission:

Transport Canada rating:

City: 9.9 L/100 km (29 mpg)

Highway: 6.9 L/100 km (41 mpg)

Test result: 9.3 L/100 km (30 mpg)

Test temperature: -22°C to 0°C

Fuel tank capacity: 55 litres

Fuel requirement: regular grade gasoline

Acceleration:

0–100 km/h: 11.8 seconds

60–100 km/h: 7.2 seconds

Competition: Chevrolet Aveo, Honda Fit, Hyundai Accent, Kia Rio, Nissan Versa, Pontiac Wave, Suzuki Swift+ et SX4, Toyota Yaris

Warranty:

- Full basic coverage: 4 years/80,000 km
- Powertrain: 5 years/100,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 4 years/80,000 km
- Perforation damage: 12 years/unlimited km
- Emissions control system: 4 years/80,000 km (full coverage); 8 years/130,000 km (catalytic converter, electronic control module, onboard diagnostic system).

Factory replacement parts:

- Rear bumper: \$658
- Front brake disc: \$102
- Brake pads: \$115
- Muffler: \$311
- Front fender: \$240

Average insurance premium (Quebec City, replacement cost endorsement, claim-free insurance record, male or female driver 30 to 40 years old): \$681 to \$813

Price according to trim level: \$15,300

Main options:

- Automatic transmission: \$1,400
- Air conditioning: \$1,350
- Comfort Package: \$1,175
- Sunroof: \$1,200
- Cold Weather Package: \$275
- Side Curtain Protection Package: \$410
- Electronic Stabilization Program: \$450

Price as tested: \$19,795

Freight and preparation: \$1,335

Dealers: Quebec: 41 Canada: 131

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