

2007 VOLKSWAGEN GTI



The GTI is the sport version of the Rabbit, without the name. The GTI shares several components with the Audi A3, including the platform, four-cylinder turbocharged engine and transmissions. This Volks is offered in two- or four-door hatchback models.

Interior and trunk

As the side bolsters on the seat cushions and seatbacks are relatively deep, accessing the front seats is difficult and you really have to raise yourself up, and not slide across the seat to get out because of the Velcro-like grip of the material. The seats are very comfortable and hold the occupant firmly in place at all times. Thanks to the telescoping steering wheel and seatback's wheel-type adjustment knob, the driving position is very good. With the sunroof, headroom is adequate for all but tall people. Legroom is good.

Getting to the rear bench is difficult in the two-door model. The seat is comfortable for only two adults as the tunnel that houses the exhaust system takes up most of the room in the middle. The 60/40-split seatback folds with a forward slope, not flat to the floor.

The hatch opens wide to provide access to a spacious and easy to load trunk area.

Convenience and safety features

Inside, the quality of finish and materials is very good. Road noise is not sufficiently suppressed. Without a roomy centre console, total storage capacity is barely adequate.

Gauges and controls are well laid out, but some drivers will find that the cruise control buttons are too close to the turn-signal lever. Everything except the glove compartment is illuminated at night.

Climate control is efficient and there is an infinity of air distribution settings. The audio controls are easy to use. The antenna mounted at the rear of the roof can get in the way of items carried on the roof.

The windshield washer nozzles are placed under the edge of the hood and can easily be blocked by snow. The washer tank, which holds just three litres of fluid, is ridiculously small, especially in a car with a rear wiper. The windshield wipers have a rather unusual feature to offset the fact that they are under the edge of the hood and cannot be raised to remove snow: with the engine switched off, press down on the wiper lever, and the wipers move to a vertical position to make it easier to remove snow along the bottom of the windshield. The wipers remain in the vertical position until you activate the lever again. It's a good feature as long as you remember to use it. Not such a good feature is the fact that the windshield is recessed from the front roof pillars, especially towards the bottom, leaving a gap where snow can accumulate. The accumulation can force the wiper motor and reduce wiper scope.

In terms of safety, the GTI offers dual front, side and curtain airbags; five head restraints; four-wheel antilock disc brakes; and good headlights. The outward view is good except to the rear, making it hard to judge distances when backing up. The three rear head restraints do not adjust high enough for tall people.

In U.S. government crash tests, the four-door GTI obtained four stars out of five for front occupant protection in a frontal impact, and five stars for all-occupant protection in a side impact. It was awarded four stars for rollover resistance.

Engine and transmission

The four-cylinder direct-injection turbocharged 2L engine develops 200 horsepower and 207 pound-feet of torque, providing vigorous acceleration at all times. As maximum torque is available between 1,800 and 5,000 rpm and the turbo engages below 2,000 rpm, pickup is instantaneous and very lively. The engine climbs easily through the gears, with torque steer not too noticeable despite all the power. The engine meets strict Tier2/Bin5 emissions control standards.

The well-gearred six-speed manual transmission is pleasant and easy to use, with smooth clutch action.

On the road

Considering the 18-inch, 40-profile tires, the four-wheel independent suspension provides a very smooth ride. Like all good German suspensions, it is firm without being uncomfortable or harsh on bumps, which are competently absorbed. Road holding is excellent on all types of pavement. Though the suspension may be too "supple" for the uncompromising performance enthusiast, for others who want a liveable day-to-day experience the GTI's suspension provides a happy blending of civilized ride and sporty handling.

The electric power-assisted steering is very well weighted, precise and relatively quick, and it keeps the driver well informed of the relation between the tires and the road. The turning circle is relatively short. The brakes are very powerful and fade resistant.

Inspection

Our inspection at a CAA-Quebec technical inspection centre showed that the GTI is very well built, with a sturdy underside that is very well protected against corrosion, as you'd expect with a 12-year perforation warranty. The emergency brake design indicates that the mechanism may jam fairly quickly. The overhead camshafts are belt driven.

Conclusion

The fifth generation of the GTI does honour to the first generation that made the GTI a legend. The new GTI delivers performance, tenacious cornering, comfort, a spacious and versatile interior and a civilized ride, smoothly melding capability with practicality.

PROS: lively, supple engine, pleasant manual transmission, comfortable ride, road holding, comfortable, supportive front seats, very powerful brakes

CONS: front access, non-lighted glove box, insufficient storage, washers under edge of hood, windshield lower than A-pillars, small windshield washer fluid tank

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Engine: 16-valve, 2.0-litre 4-cylinder

Horsepower: 200 hp at 6,000 rpm

Torque: 207 lb-ft from 1,800 to 5,000 rpm

Transmission: 6-speed manual; 6-speed automatic

Suspension: fully independent

Brakes: disc/disc

Wheelbase: 257.8 cm

Length: 421 cm

Width: 175.9 cm

Height: 147.9 cm

Weight: 1,500 to 1,520 kg

Tires: 225/45R17; 225/40R18

Maximum towing capacity: not available

Airbags: dual front, plus two side and two curtain airbags.

Fuel consumption with manual transmission:

Transport Canada rating:

City: 10.1 L/100 km (28 mpg)

Highway: 6.8 L/100 km (42 mpg)

Test result: 9.7 L/100 km (29 mpg)

Test temperature: 12°C to 25°C

Fuel tank capacity: 55 litres

Fuel requirement: premium grade gasoline

Acceleration:

0–100 km/h: 7.9 seconds

60–100 km/h: 4.5 seconds

Competition: Audi A3, MazdaSpeed3, Mini Cooper, Subaru Impreza WRX

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: \$580
- Front brake disc: \$102
- Brake pads: \$111
- Muffler: \$415
- Front fender: \$232

Average insurance premium (Quebec City, replacement cost endorsement, claim-free insurance record, male or female driver 30 to 40 years old): \$1,065 to \$1,247

Price according to trim level:

- 2-door: \$29,375
- 4-door: \$29,995

Main options:

- Automatic transmission: \$1,500
- Sunroof: \$1,400
- Leather and luxury package: \$2,580
- 18 inches wheels: \$900

Price as tested: \$31,395

Freight and preparation: \$1,310

Dealers: Quebec: 57 Canada: 167

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