2006 VOLKSWAGEN JETTA TDI

The Jetta has a new look this year and is available in three front-wheel drive configurations: a 2.5 L five-cylinder engine, a 2.0 L four-cylinder turbo, and the popular 1.9 L four-cylinder turbodiesel. The next diesel engine to come out of Volkswagen will be in 2008: New standards will take effect at the start of 2007 and the current engine does not meet them.

Interior and trunk

The front seats are very comfortable, and it’s easy for the driver to find a good driving position with the telescopic steering wheel and height-adjustable seat. Things would be even better if you could change the angle of the cushion. The seat adjustment lever should be on the door side to make it easier to move seats forward or backward before entering the vehicle.

The rear seat is comfortable for two adults. Legroom is good, but headroom is limited for taller passengers. The rear seatback splits 60/40 and the leather option adds a ski pass-through.

As usual with VWs, the trunk is very spacious. However the opening is a little on the small side. The hinges are on the outside of the trunk. Under the upper section of the trunk there is a small double hook where you can hang bags.

*Photo: Volkswagen*
**Convenience and safety**

The finish is excellent and materials are very high quality. Soundproofing could be better. There are lots of storage spaces, but the overall capacity is less than impressive, especially in the miniscule central console.

The instruments and controls are well situated with the exception of the cruise control lever, which is so close to the blinker lever that it’s easy to engage it by mistake. At night, absolutely everything is lit. The turn signal lights in the sideview mirrors could bother some drivers, giving them the impression that another vehicle is approaching, especially at night.

The manual heating and air conditioning work well, and being able to modulate the air distribution between each position is a nice feature. Moreover, there’s a handy diffuser on top of the center of the dashboard that blows air above you and not directly at you as with central air vents. Air conditioning and radio controls are basic and simple to use.

The wiper fluid nozzles are located under the hood, so snow could easily block them. The wiper fluid tank only holds three litres. The wipers have an unusual setting: once the engine is off, you can press the wiper lever down and the wipers will move into a vertical position to make it easier to clear snow off the bottom of the windshield. They don’t go back into position until you push the lever again. Now that’s a really good idea provided that you remember to take advantage of it. On the other hand, the following idea is somewhat less brilliant. The front roof pillars protrude above the windshield and trap snow, especially towards the bottom. Accumulated snow can strain the wiper motor as it prevents the wipers from completing their entire course.

In terms of safety, the Jetta comes with two front airbags, two front side airbags (curtain airbags and rear side airbags are optional), good headlights, four-wheel ABS disc brakes, and five headrests that don’t go quite high enough for taller people. Visibility is very good in all directions but it can be difficult to judge distances to the rear when in reverse. In U.S. government tests, the 2006 Jetta earned four out of five stars for front occupant protection in head-on collisions and five stars for all occupants in side collisions. In frontal offset tests by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, it was ranked “good,”—its highest rating. The institute deemed the headrests “acceptable”—the second best rating.
Engine and transmission

The 1.9 L four-cylinder turbodiesel engine churns out 100 hp and 177 lb of torque. Acceleration and pickup are quite lively for a diesel. Of course, the generous torque, typical of such an engine, makes for smooth driving and quite peppy pickup. The engine is well matched to the car, allowing for fuel economy while retaining honest performances.

The easy-shifting five-speed manual transmission is pleasant to use. The spacing between gears is good and the clutch is firm but progressive.

On the road

The suspension is stiffer than in the old generation and although the new Jetta is comfortable, some uneven surfaces can lead to a bumpy, almost jarring ride. The Jetta handles well on all types of pavement, largely thanks to the independent rear suspension that has replaced the semi-independent suspension from previous generations. The firm handling of the 1985 to 1993 models is back... with improvements, of course. You get the feeling that you’re driving a robust machine.

The electromechanical power steering is well calibrated, stable, precise, and fast. Unfortunately it doesn’t conduct any road feel. The turn radius is short. The brakes are powerful and resisted fading after several high speed emergency stops.

Our inspection of the Jetta at a CAA-Quebec Technical Inspection Centre showed that the underbody is robust and very well protected against corrosion. However, the brake fluid level is very difficult to check and the design of the front fender liners may allow dirt to accumulate behind them.

Conclusion

The new Jetta has gone back to the features that initially made it popular—firm suspension and handling aggressive enough for true driving aficionados. It’s also better equipped, and with a roomier, more comfortable interior. The turbodiesel engine is an excellent choice for anyone who regularly covers a lot of kilometres. In fact, extensive distance driving makes the extra costs of acquiring and servicing such an engine worthwhile.
**PROS:** Comfort, quality materials, handling, large trunk, efficient turbodiesel, simple controls.

**CONS:** Less-than-perfect soundproofing, insufficient storage space, lack of road feel from the steering, small trunk opening, wiper fluid nozzles under the hood, visibility when backing up.

**2006 VOLKSWAGEN JETTA**

**Engine:** 8-valve, 1.9-litre 4-cyl. diesel; 20-valve, 2.5-litre 5-cyl.; 16-valve, 2-litre 4-cyl. turbo  
**Horsepower:** 100 hp at 4,000 rpm; 150 hp at 5,000 rpm; 200 hp at 5,500 to 6,000 rpm  
**Torque:** 177 lb-ft at 1,800 to 2,400 rpm; 170 lb-ft at 3,750 rpm; 207 lb-ft at 1,800 to 4,700 rpm  
**Transmission:** 5- or 6-speed manual; 6-speed automatic  
**Suspension:** independent/independent  
**Brakes:** disc/disc  
**Length:** 455.4 cm  
**Width:** 176 cm  
**Height:** 146.1 cm  
**Wheelbase:** 257.8 cm  
**Weight:** 1,409 to 1,490 kg  
**Tires:** 195/65R15; 205/55R16; 225/45R17  
**Towing capacity:** Not available  
**Airbags:** Standard, plus two front side airbags. Curtain airbags and two rear side airbags optional

**Fuel consumption for the TDI engine and manual transmission**
According to Transport Canada:
- City: 6.6 L/100 km (43 mpg)  
- Test drive: 7.2 L/100 km (39 mpg)  
- Temperature: 18°C to 32°C

**Fuel tank capacity:** 55 litres

**Type of fuel:** 1.9 litre TDI: diesel; 2.5 litre: regular gas; 2.0 T: premium gas

**Acceleration with the TDI and manual transmission:**
- 60–100 km/h: 11.8 second  
- 60–100 km/h: 7.3 seconds

**Competitors:** Acura CSX, Honda Accord, Hyundai Sonata, Mazda 6, Nissan Altima, Volvo S40
Warranties:
- Comprehensive: 4 years/80,000 km
- Powertrain: 5 years/100,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 4 years/80,000 km
- Perforation: 12 years/unlimited km
- Pollution control system: 4 years/80,000 km on everything. 8 years/130,000 km on catalytic converter, electronic control module, and onboard diagnostic system

Factory replacement parts:
- Rear bumper: $553
- Front disc brakes: $102
- Brake pads: $111
- Muffler: $648
- Front fender: $365

Average insurance cost: (Quebec City, replacement cost endorsement, claim-free insurance record for male or female drivers 30 to 40 years old): $891 to $1,343

Price according to trim line:
- 2.0T: $24,975
- 1.9 TDI: $26,750
- 2.0T: $27,700

Main options:
- Automatic transmission: $1,400 (2.0T: $1,100)
- Luxury Package: $2,075 (2.0T: $2,350)
- Luxury Leather Package: $3,300 (2.0T: $3,575)
- Premium Luxury Package: $5,125 (2.0T: $5,400)
- Xenon headlights: $750 (2.0T)

Price as tested: $30,225

Freight and preparation costs: $1,310

No. of dealers: Quebec: 57 Canada: 167

© August 2006. All rights reserved, CAA-Québec