

Magic Carpet Ride

By Joe Sage



Highlight from "Favorite Cars for 2009" by Barbara & Bill Schaffer

Last year, Bill and Barbara drove more than 150 different cars doing two weekly evaluations and reports on manufacturer introductions. They are often asked which is their favorite, so they prepared a recap of a dozen favorites from the 2009 calendar year. They say this group may not represent the best values or most practical vehicles, but they were simply favorites. The CC made the cut, as follows:

Volkswagen CC – We're spoiled by normally getting to drive the top models of each brand, but on a long trip we fell in love with the base model Volkswagen CC Sport. It is stylish, with the trendy four-door-coupe-look, plus is very comfortable and roomy. The engine is one of our favorites, the 200-hp 2.0-liter turbocharged four-cylinder that acts like it's much more powerful. It also gets great fuel economy.

Mercedes-Benz did it first, with the CLS in 2004. A case could be made for the Dodge Charger in 2006. The so-called "four-door coupe": a swooping roofline, but with full-door access to both front and back seats. A coupe was classically defined as a car with two doors, front seats and a luggage compartment (think '32 Ford). This went out the window decades ago, as often-torturous back seats were added (think 911). The minimal door count and sloping roof normally limit both access and the rear seat's height and width. (The Volkswagen CC in fact has a 5-passenger version, with three in back, available in Europe but not yet in the US.)

CC stands for Comfort Coupé, and that is the promise: four-door convenience and headroom in the rear. If you look twice, you'll see that the coupe effect is more pronounced in the window line than in the roof itself. Interior numbers compare as follows between the CC and the Passat from which it is derived:

2010 VOLKSWAGEN	CC	PASSAT
passenger seats	4	5
headroom (in.)	front 37.4	38.4
	rear 36.6	37.8
legroom (in.)	front 41.6	41.4
	rear 37.3	37.7
shoulders (in.)	front 56.0	55.7
	rear 54.7	54.6
volume (cu.ft.)	front 50.4	51.2
	rear 43.2	45.0
passenger vol (cu.ft.)	93.6	96.3
trunk (cu.ft.)	13.0	14.2

Loss of headroom is only about an inch in the CC, while shoulder room and front legroom are actually a hair better in the CC, with rear legroom reduced by less than half an inch in the CC. Passenger volume is a little less on the CC, as is trunk space, but as a four-seater compared with Passat's five, volume per occupant is actually higher in the back seats and the trunk (though lower in the front seats). This, then—unlike stiletto heels or a suit when it's 115°—appears to be a case where the style penalty is actually quite reasonable. The deciding factor, taste aside, may simply be whether you need that fifth seat. And that may become moot if the Euro five-seater comes to our shores.

In line with some performance brands, we anticipated the "Sport" version of the CC being at the higher end of the lineup, but no. We quickly noticed there is no backup camera, no nav, no keyless entry, no automatic HVAC and so on. Turns out there are four models available, and the Sport is the base model.

The base-level CC Sport features a 2.0-liter 200-hp TSI 4-cylinder turbo and manual transmission. Upstream from that is a CC Luxury model, with the same engine but adding a 6-speed DSG with Tiptronic. There are then two



Volkswagen CC Is 2010 "Best Buy"

Four models from Volkswagen's 2010 lineup—the Jetta, CC, Tiguan and Routan—have been ranked by Consumer Guide® Automotive as among the best. Editors evaluated over 150 vehicles across 18 categories for power, real world fuel economy, ride and handling, room and comfort, cargo space, and overall quality through everyday scenarios that a typical owner would experience, such as shopping, commuting, long highway trips, and stop-and-go city driving. For 2010, the CC received the Best Buy title among "Premium Midsize Cars."

models with a 3.6-liter 280-hp 6-cylinder engine: the CC 3.6L VR6 Sport with 6-speed Tiptronic automatic, and a 4Motion® all-wheel-drive version of that.

Our Sport was the 4-cylinder base model, but had the DSG automatic, an \$1100 option. With a base price of \$27,760, that plus destination took this car out the door at \$29,660. Still twentysomething, though barely. Luxury starts at \$33,080, VR6 Sport at \$39,310 and VR6 4Motion at \$40,420. Quite a range.

As you can also see from Barbara and Bill's "favorite cars" comments at left, the base Sport turns out to be a very pleasing iteration. (And we of course would prefer the standard manual.) Fuel mileage for the 2.0-liter is 22/31 city/highway, while the VR6 achieves 18/27 or 17/25 with 4Motion all-wheel drive.

That's enough economy range (both price and fuel) to spur as many comparatives as you dare. We greatly enjoyed the CC and would prefer its style over the Passat. It also has a wider range of models and trims, including all-wheel drive. Now if only they sold 4Motion with a stick. In the absence of that, we'd be highly inclined to buy the base 2.0-liter with manual transmission and savor the bargain. ■



VW CC SPORT LOGBOOK

- Keyless entry but not ignition: you stick it in a slot on the instrument panel. Not an all-bad idea, but hard to pull back out.
- Mirrors give very good visibility. Over-the-shoulders three-quarter view, considering the streamlined shape, is quite good.
- Radio setup is more straightforward than most, and the audio has tons of range.
- First drive, up the freeway from the airport, rubberized asphalt and all, reveals a very nice, smooth ride. Headline written.
- The usual 9-10 manuals, plus some other inserts, CDs and so on, but no 600-pagers and all in one neat 4-ring-bound book that fits in the glovebox. Nicely executed.
- We dig into the manuals to see if we can make the locks not beep. It describes a switch we can't find in any of the stalks or steering wheel buttons. There are a great many things you can call up on the IP—auto lock, auto unlock when you take the key out, do a single door, do all the doors and so on, but nothing about the beep. If this were your own car, sooner or later you'd no doubt conquer all the loose ends. In the scope of a test car for a few days, we just have to let go. Typical enough.
- Over our head, a very nice silverish headliner complements the shape, and the cabin feels very spacious. What seems to curve down from outside seems to curve up inside. Happy with no sunroof taking up height or interrupting the shape.
- When we get in, sit down, then the other doors unlock, it sounds as though someone just hit us with a "padded SUV." We look back over our shoulder more than once.
- Have to turn the recirc back on every time we get in. Not unique to this model or brand, but a deficiency in an AZ summer.
- Pulling the visor down launches a particularly bright light above the "make-up mirror" (those are already a bad idea). If you're tall, it's like the sun in your eyes.
- Good wide Continental performance rubber happily does not degrade cornering or contribute to torque steer.
- There are three shift options: leave it in D, put it in S (button on side), or slide it from D into DSG (direct-shift gearbox) +/- mode. Many rave about the DSG, but we think if you're in automatic, you may forget you have to shift at all. Plus we've auto-shifted up to 5th out of six gears before we decide to swap into it. However, if we use it for 1st, 2nd and 3rd (since D is doggy from a stop), we like that, then from 3rd we slide it back to D. If you stay in DSG, though, it returns to 1st on its own when you stop, a big plus. Either way, our fuel consumption readout is the same: 22.8. We feel the change from D to S, but don't really feel a difference in general driving at speed. We conclude that around town, the S setting is best. It only drops our fuel mileage from 22.8 to 22.7 in a short test. But it gives a whole lot better spunk from a get-go, and then you can forget about it, unlike the DSG.—JS