

# Potent assurance

By  
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Sage

Volkswagen Touareg is available in models ranging in base price from \$43,995 to a hybrid at \$64,170. Hybrid aside, they cap out at \$57,360 for an Executive VR6 gasoline model, or \$60,860 for the same trim level in TDI diesel. The entry model is not available as a diesel, but add navigation and it is, at \$51,035. Our Lux model is the second-up of four TDI levels, each spaced about \$3000 apart. It's an easy decision from there, as Volkswagen is great about not confounding you with option variables. Our test model had no options at all.

The engine choice is also easy. If you like diesel power—pump price advantage is not what it once was, but fuel economy and power curve win big—you will be happy to pay the \$3000-or-so differential for TDI over gasoline.

For fuel economy, the TDI beats not only the gasoline engine's numbers, but also the hybrid's. City mileage is 17 MPG for the gas V6, but 20 for the diesel (which matches the hybrid). But on the highway, while 23 MPG for the gas V6 is barely beaten by the hybrid at 24, the TDI diesel is rated 29 MPG.

The world is finally more widely recognizing

that torque figures are as important as horsepower, and here the TDI (or any diesel) really shines. In horsepower, the gas Touareg puts out 280, which the TDI comes relatively close to hitting, at 240 hp (while the hybrid's combination of gas and electricity produces 333 hp). But the 406 lb-ft of torque from the TDI diesel—with has the additional advantage of availability all across the power band—blows away both the 360 lb-ft of the gas model and the surprising 325 lb-ft of the hybrid.

For more purchase economy, you can investigate the smaller Volkswagen Tiguan (\$22,995 to \$38,490), but it's of course smaller, has considerably less horsepower and torque, and barely beats the big Touareg's fuel mileage figures, actually losing to the Touareg with TDI diesel we are looking at here. Volkswagen has done a good job of positioning its lineup. For your final comparison, consider the Porsche Cayenne. The VW Touareg is built on the same platform, but the Cayenne is priced between \$49,600 and \$146,000, and you will quickly find yourself wanting or needing pricey options on those. Touareg is in the sweet spot. ■

## SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE .....3.0L 24v V6 TDI Clean Diesel  
POWER .....240 hp, 406 lb-ft torque  
TRANSMISSION .....8-speed automatic  
DRIVETRAIN .....4MOTION® all-wheel drive  
TOWING CAPACITY .....7716 lbs (3500 kg)  
MPG .....20/29/23 (city/hwy/comb)

**INCLUDED:** panoramic sunroof, touchscreen nav w CD, rear camera, mobile interface, keyless entry/start, dual-zone climate, 12-way power seats, leather, 40/20/40 rear seat, bi-xenon headlights, LED DRLs, fog lights, power liftgate, trailer hitch.

**BASE PRICE** .....\$54,975

**DESTINATION CHARGE** .....910

**TOTAL** .....\$55,885



The Touareg is a spacious five-seater with 32.1 cu.ft. behind the rear seats or 64 cu.ft. with those folded flat, and a power liftgate.

**LOGBOOK:**  
You have a feeling of solid assurance that this vehicle is going to accelerate when you step on it, turn where you point it, and ride steady and sure. Controls are especially intuitive and straightforward. The light growl of its TDI diesel reminds you there is some serious grunt on tap.

