

40 MPG, diesel torque, all inclusive under \$30k

by
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Some things never change. Some undergo all sorts of evolution but remain fundamentally the same. Volkswagen staked its spot in the US market decades ago with a formula of affordable purchase price and operating economy, in an appealing vehicle with easy maintenance.

And here we have that in their midsize sedan, the Passat. All of the above is all the better when delivered in its TDI diesel version, as there are few immediate satisfactions in the car world any more pleasing than the kick in the butt achieved by pressing the pedal on VW's diesel torque.

For value, compare and contrast with the Audi A6 on the preceding page. In the same size segment and with similar utility, the Passat comes in at 63 percent of the A6's base price, and at just 54 percent of its sticker price as optioned for our evaluation—an easy trick for the VW, as it came

very well furnished with flat-out zero options whatsoever—see sidebar.

Left to its own devices, the DSG makes noticeable jumps through 1st, 2nd and 3rd gears. From there, it heads to 6th so smoothly you may not even notice. Despite its diesel torque, we find ourselves shifting the manumatic down to 3rd and 4th around town.

But left in Drive, if we slow down for a surface street turn, it does well at shifting down and staying strong through the corner. To ensure it, we might still prefer applying the manumatic mode. It speaks to its solid capability, as well as the constant sportiness of its diesel, that if we owned this, we'd surely master that manual shifting quickly, do it as second nature and be quite happy with the whole scene. And we would enjoy all that in a spacious, comfortable 40 MPG sedan. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE.....2.0L 4-cyl TDI diesel
POWER.....140 hp, 236 lb-ft torque
TRANSMISSION.....6-spd DSG automatic
DRIVETRAIN.....Front-wheel drive
MPG.....30/40/34 (city/hwy/comb)
INCLUDED: 18" alloy wheels, ESC, ASR, EDL, ABS, V-Text leatherette seats, AC with rear vents, premium touchscreen audio w/ 6-CD, bluetooth, leather wrapped wheel, shift, brake, cruise, auto headlights, power driver's seat w/ lumbar, heated front seats, auto dim mirror, power windows, mirrors, locks, remote keyless, 60/40 rear seat, valet lockout, rear camera, power/tilt/slide sunroof, VW Car-Net equipped (subscription avail).

BASE PRICE.....\$28,295
OPTIONS.....none
DESTINATION CHARGE.....820
TOTAL.....\$29,115

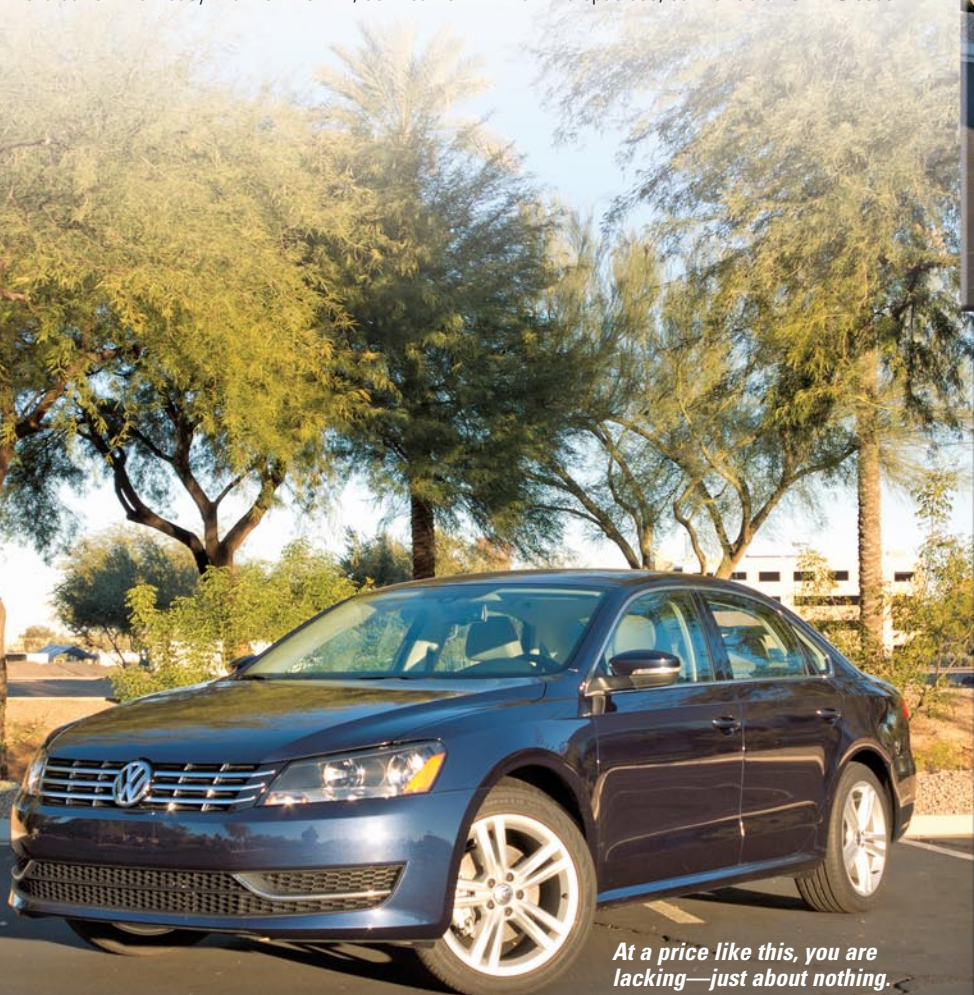


LOGBOOK NOTES

We've compared purchase price with its cousin the Audi, but one key difference is that this is front-wheel-drive. As such, we didn't suffer much front-steer torque, per se, but we did get some noticeable hops off pavement seams during some freeway-speed sweeping ramp maneuvers.

We wished we had pushbutton entry and start, but we realized this car has no cost options whatsoever. It's a tremendous high-featured bargain, with a touchscreen interface and other controls that are blessedly not overkill, e.g. just three knobs for HVAC, which we love. It does have heated seats, very welcome as our morning temps were in the 30s and 40s that week.

The taillights look pretty ordinary until you turn them on, revealing a variety of shapes and depth—horizontal, vertical, front-to-back stagger, and some more depth within that, which also reveals some part-circular lights reminiscent of the Camaro's outgoing lights—very nice job, Volkswagen.



At a price like this, you are lacking—just about nothing.

