

CARGAZING

GTI Gets a Boost

Volkswagen Adds 10 Horsepower to Its Iconic Hot Hatch

By Derek Price
CARGAZING.COM

Today's cars have improved in a lot of ways. Reliability, technology and fuel efficiency are at the top of that list.

One area in which they seem to be falling behind, though, is personality.

That's something the Volkswagen Golf GTI has in spades, and thank goodness.

Ever since it hit U.S. shores in 1983, the GTI has enjoyed a cult following among enthusiasts for its mixture of spunky style, everyday practicality and — above all — spirited performance.

It's the performance aspect that sees the biggest change for 2018, as the GTI's standard turbocharged engine gets a boost in output to 220 horsepower, up 10 from last year. It also makes the monster brakes from the Golf R and torque-sensing limited-slip



PHOTOS COURTESY OF VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTI

Thin red accents make the fast, powerful Golf GTI stand out while giving a nod to its history. Large wheels, a lower ride height and lower front fascia also set it apart from the more mundane Golf.

differential standard on SE and Autobahn trims.

While that much power makes the small, lightweight GTI a quick

car, raw speed isn't its strong suit. Instead, it's much more about balance and dynamics, the way it feels and responds while putting all that power to good use.

Rarely do I enjoy driving cars as much as I did in my week behind the wheel of an SE trim GTI with its engaging suspension and telepathic steering. It's a car that practically begs to be pushed hard, a big part of its engaging personality.

The other aspect is its one-of-a-kind sense of style. Unmistakable red accents on the body, a low-slung look — it rides more than half an inch lower than the standard Golf — and LED lighting give it a good mixture of contemporary modernism and knowing nods to its history for insiders.

The interior follows the same theme with the added benefit of soft materials and solid construction that evoke the

feelings you get in more expensive German sedans. Red lighting mirrors the sleek body accents, and it comes with my favorite funky GTI feature of all: standard plaid cloth seats.

One of this car's most appealing aspects is that it's extremely fun and eminently practical, an unusual mixture. The cargo space is as generous as some small crossover vehicles, and its fuel economy ratings of 25 mpg in the city and 33 on the highway are downright miserly for a car that feels so fast when you stomp the gas pedal.

Also noteworthy on a practical basis is the GTI's warranty. Volkswagen offers a six-year, 72,000-mile, bumper-to-bumper warranty that beats its competitors in both years and mileage.

While ordering a GTI with anything other than its heavenly six-speed manual transmission would be sacrilege, its quick-shifting DSG is one of the best

automatics in the world. If you're going to commit sacrilege, this is the way to do it.

Pricing starts at \$26,415, making it a fantastic bargain for a performance car at the entry level. Adding performance and luxury features raises the price considerably, up to \$30,470 for the SE trim or \$35,070 for the lineup-topping Autobahn version.

What was tested?

2018 Volkswagen Golf GTI 2.0T SE (\$30,470). Options: Leather package (\$695). Price as tested (including \$850 destination charge): \$32,015

Wheelbase: 103.6 in.

Length: 168 in.

Width: 70.8 in.

Height: 57.8 in.

Engine: 2.0-liter turbocharged four cylinder (220 hp, 258 ft. lbs.)

Transmission: Six-speed manual

Fuel economy: 25 city, 33 highway

RATINGS

Style: 8

Performance: 9

Price: 10

Handling: 10

Ride: 6

Comfort: 6

Quality: 7

Overall: 9

Why buy it?

It's clearly built by drivers, for drivers. It's invigorating to drive with sparkling handling, incredible brakes and steering, and far more than adequate power with 220 horses under foot.



Plaid seat cloth may be unusual in 2018, but that's one of the endearingly quirky reasons the Golf GTI is popular with enthusiasts. This classic hot hatch also has a unique sense of style.

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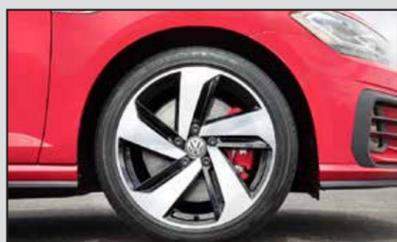
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A CLOSER LOOK



AT A GLANCE: FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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