

SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Puebla, Mexico
ENGINE / TRANS	Mexico / Japan
CONTENT	Mexico 35% / US-Canada 5%
CLASS / SEATS	compact sedan / five
ENGINE	1.5L turbo-4 16v TSI DOHC alum/alum variable intake-lift
HP/TORQUE	158 hp / 184 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	11.5:1
TRANSMISSION	8-spd auto / Tiptronic
DRIVETRAIN	FWD
SUSPENSION	F: strut-type w lower control arms, coils, telescopic dampers, stblzr bar; R: torsion beam, coils, telescopic dampers
STEERING	elec pwr-asst rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 11.3x1.0 vented; R: 10.7x0.4 solid
WHEELS	17-in 2-tone machined alum-alloy
TIRES	205/55 R17 91H all-season
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	186.5 / 105.7 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	5.5 in
TURNING CIRCLE	36.7 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	38.5 / 37.2 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	41.1 / 37.4 in
CARGO CAPACITY	14.1 cu.ft
WEIGHT	3016 lb
PAYLOAD / GVWR	937 / 4167 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	reg unl / 13.2 gal
MPG	29/40/33 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$28,385
(CREDIT: not equipped w ventilated seats)	(200)
DESTINATION CHARGE	1095
TOTAL	\$29,280

2023 VOLKSWAGEN JETTA LINEUP

158-hp 1.5T S	MT/AT	\$20,655 / 21,455
Sport	MT/AT	21,555 / 22,355
SE	--/AT	24,385
SEL	--/AT	28,385
228-hp 2.0T GLI Autobahn	MT/DSG	31,585 / 32,385

As the Volkswagen Rabbit/Golf replaced the venerable Beetle in the 1970s, they recognized the need for a sedan in North America. So distinctive was the resulting Jetta, you had to hold up your thumb over the rear and squint, to confirm that it was basically the Golf, with a trunk added.

It has been a highly successful idea. Even in this SUV era, there remains an appeal to the sedan format, with its secure trunk and people-only cocoon. Jetta sales passed 10 million over a decade ago and are right about now surpassing the Model T's 16 million. Of four cars in VW's US lineup, 79 percent sold in 2022 were Jetta, which also outsells two of their five much higher-volume SUV models.

Out of the wide range of brands under the VW Group umbrella in the US, setting aside Bentley, Lamborghini and Porsche, we often find ourselves readily comparing Volkswagen models with their Audi counterparts. The price difference is obvious. Less obvious, the quality of build and content in a current VW feels competitive with a comparable premium Audi of not that many years earlier.

This has given the Jetta huge appeal to parents buying a first car as a kid heads off to college, as well as to young adults, perceiving great apparent

value as a German-built car but at a considerably lower sales and service cost than most—a concept that works well for anyone.

This inspires some quick math. At roughly 3,000 pounds in any trim—most with a 158-hp 1.5L turbo and a GLI Autobahn with a 228-hp 2.0L turbo—and with an ample trunk and five-person cabin, the payload is 937 pounds on most trims (1080 on one base trim). It's not hard to start pushing this with four or five people and all their gear for a year away at school—or even a weekend outing, with a big fun load of friends. Brakes, steering and suspension are quite capable, with some of the best stopping distances in the biz (*the best from 70 mph in most comparos*). Just don't overdo it.

While we appreciated the higher-end finishes and features in our SEL, someone who might push their load a bit could be a candidate for the win-win scenario of a lighter base model. Plus, you can get a manual, to master more life skills. Or, of course, if the higher end remains the most tantalizing, you can go the other way—push past that \$30,000 mark and check out that GLI Autobahn. ■

Formula win

by Joe Sage

