

NEW VOLKSWAGEN POLO

By Jim Mc Cauley

It still has its 40th birthday to look forward to, but since the original model was launched in 1975, over 14 million Polo models have found favour with the buying public. The 5th generation model launched in 2009 saw the car move closer in size and performance to the all-conquering Golf, and now the 2014 model has been completely revised in technical terms to bring it even closer.

It may take a second look to confirm the exterior changes – new bumpers and LED headlights, but within the familiar shell are a range of new engines offering improved performance with greater economy and a host of innovative technical features making it the car with the greatest number of assistance systems in its class.



Thanks to the new engines and Bluetooth modifications, the latest Polo range sees fuel economy improvements by as much as 21%. The Polo TDI BlueMotion 75 PS (74 bhp) sets a new record in this respect to be the most fuel efficient 5-seater diesel car in its segment with a combined fuel consumption of 91 mpg and a CO2 emissions of just 82 gms/km.

However, the standard models in the range also show improvements as the 60 PS, 1.0 litre entry level petrol model returns 60.1 mpg on the official combined cycle with a CO2 emissions of 106 gms/km. Alongside this, the entry level 1.4 litre TDI diesel rated at 75 PS returns 83 mpg

with CO2 emissions of 88 gms/km. Available initially for their June launch in the UK are a pair of 3-cylinder MPI petrol units of 60 and 75 PS, two 4-cylinder TSI petrol units of 90 and 110 PS, a 1.4 litre TSI engine rated at 150 PS and a pair of 1.4 TDI diesels with outputs of 75 and 90 PS.

A selection of petrol and diesel engines driven at launch clearly highlights the advancements in the new power units, particularly in the refinement of the larger engines, and on German autobahns sitting well above the national speed limits at home, their impressive solidity and overall quietness.

Top seller here, however, is expected to be the 1.0 litre 3-cylinder petrol model in SE trim to raise it above the basic equipment levels in the range-opening S model, and available in a choice of 60 and 75 PS outputs. All models are available in a choice of 3 or 5-door bodystyles with the 5-door version carrying a premium of £630 over the 3-door model. Driving through a 5-speed manual gearbox 0-62 mph is achieved in around 15 seconds – only 1.2 seconds separates the two engine options – with top speed crossing into three figures. Other engine choices see the 90 PS 1.2 litre petrol model cover the benchmark 0-62 mph sprint in 11.4 seconds while the 90 PS 1.4 litre diesel records 11.9 seconds.

On-road and the new model feels like a much larger car in terms of overall refinement and ride quality. A new electro-mechanical steering provides greater accuracy bringing the car into clear Golf territory in terms of response, while brakes bite reassuringly and add to the overall confident feel of the car.

Supportive front seats provide comfortable positioning for the occupants, and provide a good range of adjustment with height adjustment adding to their positioning options.

Interior is familiar Volkswagen with a central touch screen taking care of infotainment, and where fitted on the higher specification models, satellite navigation. The optional MirrorLink system can extend the versatility of the infotainment set-up by making it possible to display and control the functions of a smart phone on the touch screen.

But it is the driver support systems that advance the new models over their predecessors, reflecting in many cases the equipment levels of the Golf. Standard in all models is the automatic post collision braking system which automatically initiates braking if it detects the vehicle having been involved in an accident to prevent a subsequent collision. An optional Driver Alert System is also available, an element of which will automatically apply the brakes to stop the car should the driver fail to respond in slow moving town traffic situations.



Accommodation-wise, the Polo provides adequate room in a car of this class for five adults with rear head and shoulder room very good. Luggage space is also generous with a twin-floor boot of 280 litres, extendible to 952 with the rear seat folded.

The initial UK launch will embrace 34 separate models covering engine transmission and trim choices, spanning a price range from £11,100 to £19,715 for the range topping 1.4 litre petrol engine Blue GT, which not only adds a performance edge with the twin-clutch DSG automatic gearbox, but also returns an official

fuel consumption figure of 60.1 mpg on the combined cycle. For those who really want to chase economy then the targeted model should be the 1.4 litre diesel where 83.1 mpg is the officially quoted figure for this 75 PS model.

While the latest 6th generation Polo may be difficult to distinguish visually from the current model, it is not until behind the wheel that the engineering and technical advances can be appreciated. The new range has very much narrowed the gap between what used to be a model sitting some distance away from the Golf to one that now features much of the Golf's attributes, offering close to its driving excellence and sharing much of its technology.

The new range is available to order now for June delivery when right hand drive models reach the showrooms.