



Volkswagen Touareg Black Edition – Road Test

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For some, the Volkswagen Touareg is very old school, but for many newcomers it can still teach them lessons, says Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales)...

If you have to regularly cover long distances at all hours, with or without people or luggage, or have to tow a horsebox or trailer, the Touareg will perform such tasks without trouble.



Appropriately named after a nomadic Sahara group, the VW Touareg has been in production since 2002 and was a joint development with Porsche which led to the Cayenne, Audi Q7 and Q8 as well as the Bentley Bentayga and Lamborghini Urus. So, its pedigree and wider family is highly respected and regarded.

At its launch the Touareg was available with a wide range of powertrains and seating arrangements but this was rationalised over the years. Now in its third generation, the Touareg is even available with electrical assistance to lower emissions and has been given revised suspension and a welter of technical and convenience features.

For MY24, Volkswagen refreshed the outside of their popular big 4WD model to give it an up to date look with the brand's 'face' and included very high performance LEDs and an illuminated badge; while inside is the new Innovision Cockpit comprising digital instruments and 15-inch central infotainment touchscreen.

The mid-range Black Edition comes with 21-inch wheels, memory seats, air suspension and 360 degree camera system on top of the Elegance's panoramic sunroof and heated seats.

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There are Elegance, Black and R models in the current Touareg series, from £67,980 to about £80,710 depending on powertrain and trim levels, including two plug-in hybrid models alongside their famous 231 or 286 PS TDIs and 340 PS petrol.

The test car was fitted with a £1,195 power folding towbar and trailer assist in the optional meloe blue crystal effect paint with black Vienna leather upholstery which lifted the price from £68,215.

You step up into the Touareg and immediately appreciate this is a big car by British standards and exceptionally roomy for five, particularly for those in the back seats. This is a family car and even if all seats are taken the luggage space is excellent and very easy to load and empty.



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The well developed, hard core turbo-diesel engine was an instant starter, pulled very strongly even from low revs and packed a hefty punch when the throttle was floored. What's more the comparative composure of the engine under load or when cruising at the motorway limit was commendable.



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It was perfectly matched with a sophisticated eight speed automatic transmission so you always had the right gear for any task and the changes up or down were truly creamy and not at all jerky even with harsh throttle or brake pressure.

You have the benefit of seven mode settings for the 4WD transmission and an additional low grip feature on very icy tracks and combined with the good ground clearance and grippy tyres there is little likelihood of becoming stuck in snow or mud while crossing rutted ground.

Steering where you want to go was effortless and assistance was high for parking but gave more feeling at higher speed with a reasonable turning circle as well. When you needed them, the brakes incorporated a good progressive action with steady power build up and quickly brought the 2-tonne-plus car to a controlled stop - and the parking brake securely held on a steep hill.

The plethora of secondary switches were mostly grouped on the wheel-spokes, the column or scattered across the central console panels, and up and into the infotainment display, which was large, well marked and very clear by day or night.

In front of the driver was a wide, deep, clear multi-purpose screen for the speed, engine revs, fuel and fluid levels as well as usual alerts and the driver can select other features to display in a small central part of this screen.

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Heating and ventilation was straightforward to use, wide ranging with good directional output, temperature control and backed up with heated seats, steering wheel, front and rear windows as well as powered windows and a big sunroof.

Places to put small items for a journey were plentiful throughout and the comms system easily integrated a mobile phone for safety and had inductive charging to keep it topped up.



For the driver and passengers, access was very good and once inside the big seats were extremely comfortable with a lot of adjustment on the front pair and excellent support for everyone. Leg, shoulder and headroom was very good and the boot-space easily and generously expanded to turn the Touareg into a massive load lugger if required.

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No matter how it was loaded the Touareg handled with ease and agility, it gripped twisting turns and never felt it was getting away from a driver. It is a big car but never bullied a driver, just did what was expected. The addition of parking assistance also meant it was at home in a high street.

Bright long range and wide spread headlights inspired confidence in the countryside at night and the illuminated rear badge is not just a gimmick but adds to the attention grabbing rear view. Big, effective wipers back and front with high capacity washers also made poor conditions safer.



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The Touareg's air suspension is an excellent piece of equipment with adjustable load height, quick responses and a good balance between comfort and control at speed. There's no wallowing or wandering, excessive roll or rigidity, just a very good compromise with fine control when a particular driving mode was selected.

Road noise was present but largely muted and the near absence of wind and low mechanical noise gave it a very refined character over a long journey.

Being a Volkswagen, the interior details are good if a bit hard in places but that means it should wear well.

VERDICT

It's a big and heavy car and the engine had to work hard if quietly under the massive bonnet so the fuel consumption was reasonable, not exceptional, but at least you don't have to stop for an hour or more to recharge but simply get on with your job or journey. Now there has to be a lesson in that for serious motorists.

For: Highly sophisticated powertrain and chassis, extremely well equipped, roomy for five with luggage, very quiet and comfortable in all conditions.

Against: Big to park and drive in towns, only reasonable economy, high insurance and taxation costs.

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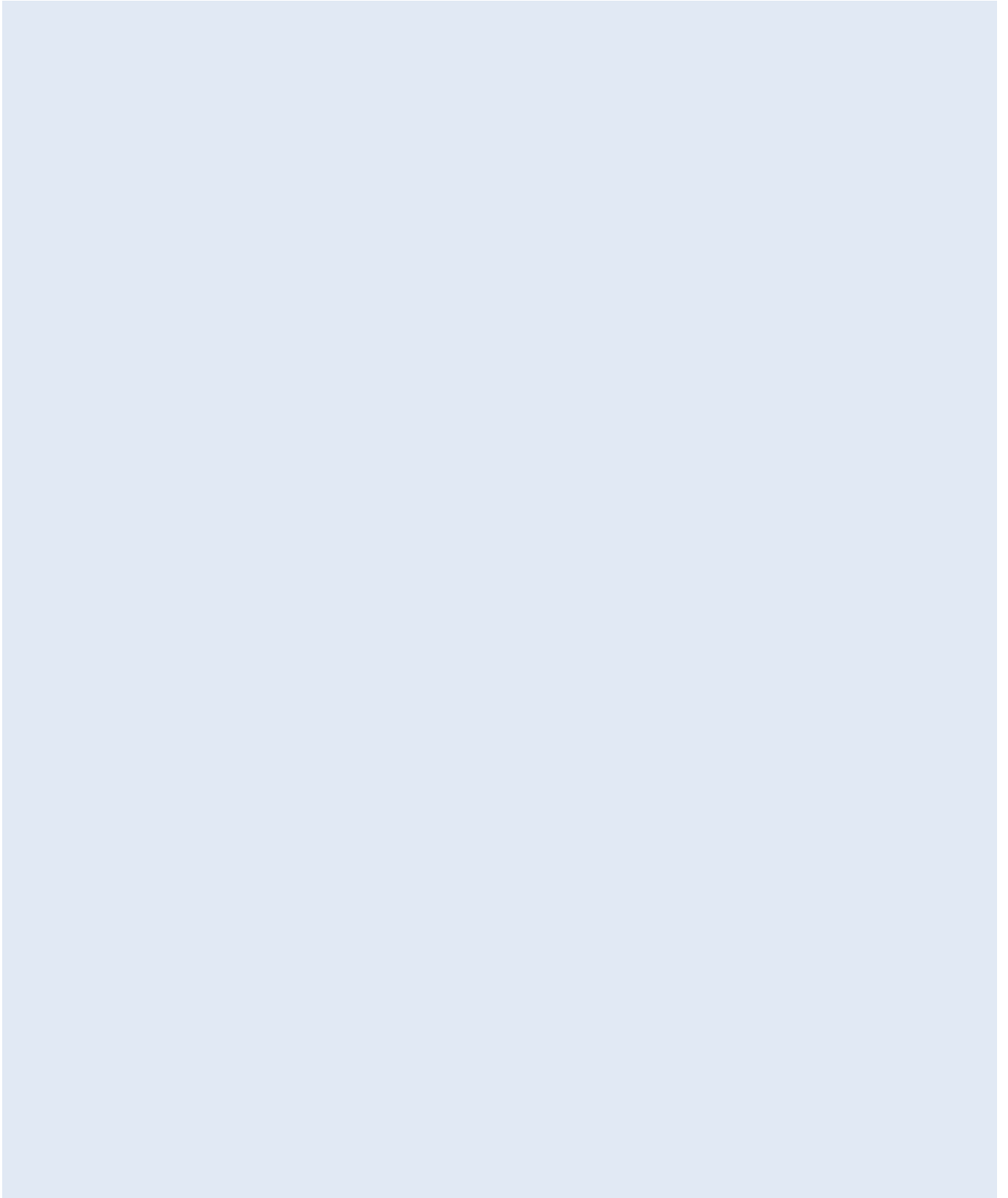
FAST FACTS

Model: Volkswagen Touareg Black Edition



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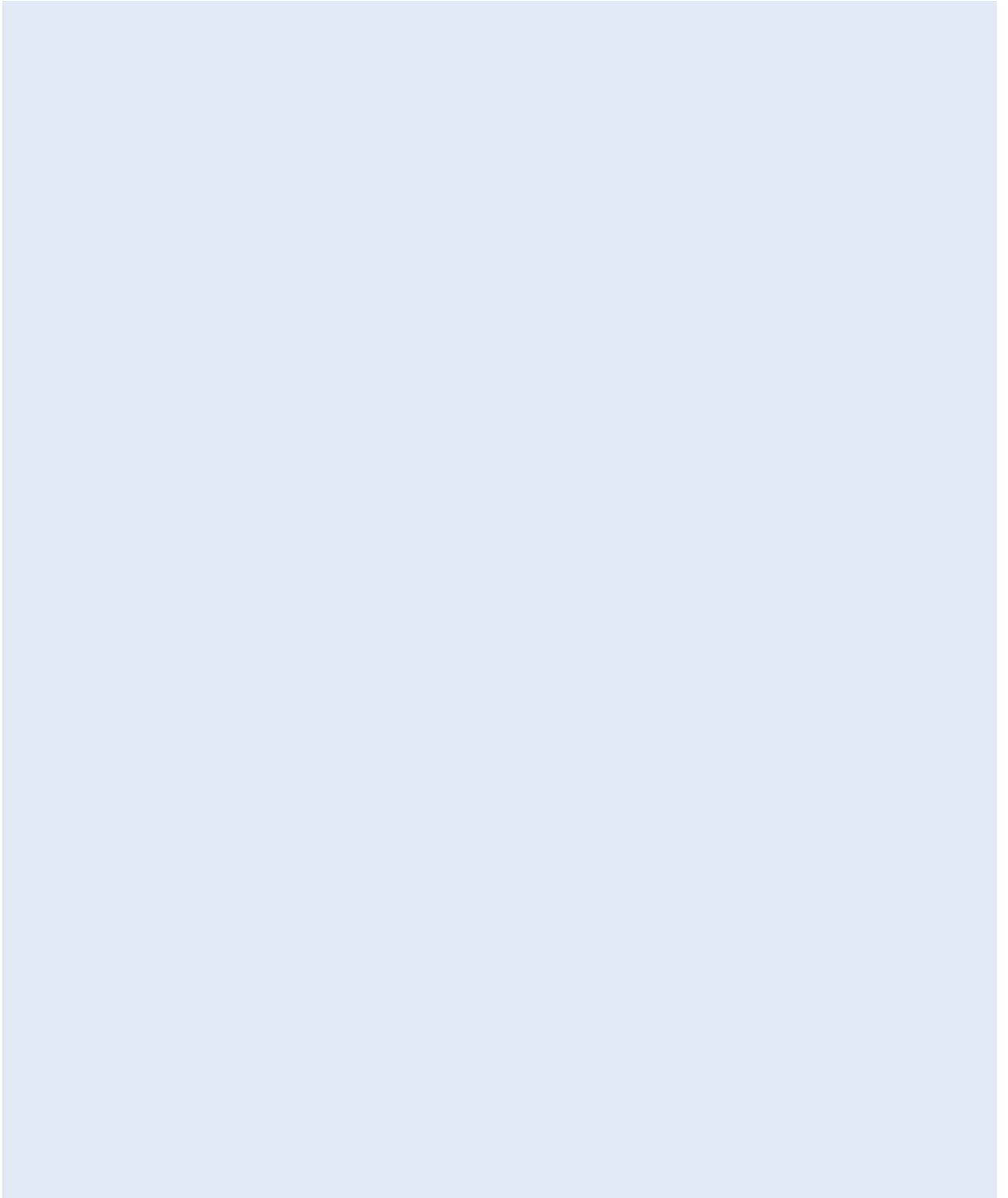
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Price: £73,240

Mechanical: 286 PS 3.0 V6 turbo-diesel, 8 speed auto 4WD

Max Speed: 147 mph

0 - 62 mph: 6.4 secs

Combined MPG: 36

Insurance Group: 45E

C02 emissions: 215 g/km



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Bik rating: 37%, £1,565 FY, £570 SRx5

Warranty: 3 years/ 60,000 miles

Size: L 4.91 m (16.11 ft), W 1.99 m (6.53 ft), H 1.70 m (5.58 ft)

Bootspace: 665 to 1,800 litres (23.48 to 63.57 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 2,118kg (4,669 lb)

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