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**2009 Volkswagen Jetta (base trim)**

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## 2009 Volkswagen Jetta

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### 2009 Volkswagen Jetta TDI Clean Diesel

By Jason Cammisa

Parked out in front of a [Volkswagen](#) dealer is a white Jetta with green leafy stickers on it. A line of text on each side informs us that it's "Not A Concept Car." On the rear bumper, it has the URL [goodcleandieselfun.com](http://goodcleandieselfun.com), and a sticker on the trunklid says "take me for a test drive." So I did.

I drove a development mule [Jetta TDI](#) last year and loved it. Now that I've driven a full production version, I can say only: go buy one.

Yeah, yeah, I know that diesel costs more than gasoline these days. That's an unfortunate coincidence, but the math can still work out in favor of the diesel-powered Jetta. Looking at today's gas prices (6/30/2008), driving 15,000 highway miles per year, you'd save \$376.22 per year in fuel by driving the diesel Jetta.

Details on the Jetta TDI's \$21,990 base price are still sketchy, but we assume that the price premium over the gasoline-engined version is about \$1000. That means that the TDI will still pay for itself in less than 45,000 miles of highway driving.

But that's assuming that you wouldn't rather have the diesel in the first place. I, for one, would rather drive a Jetta TDI every day than a 2.5-liter gas Jetta - especially if it only had two pedals in the driver's footwell. The gas Jetta gets a conventional six-speed automatic; the diesel gets VW's wonderful DSG twin-clutch transmission. That's reason enough.

The 2008 Jetta 2.5 gained 20 hp over last year's Jetta, for a total of 170 hp and 177 lb-ft of torque. The



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2.0-liter TDI can't compete on horsepower, as it produces only 140, but it blows the gas engine away in torque, twisting out 235 lb-ft. And let's not forget that as a driving society, Americans love torque and the instant acceleration it provides.

Sales consultant Nick Low of Vallejo Volkswagen courageously hopped in the car with me (and two of my friends) and didn't scream once during our brief test drive. Even when the tires were squealing.

Off the line, even with air conditioning on and four people in the car, the Jetta TDI will spin its front wheels. It felt quicker than the V-12-powered 1991 BMW 850i six-speed I had just test-driven across the street. (The stunningly beat-up 850i is visible in one of the photos).

At around-town speeds, the TDI feels significantly faster than the gas Jetta, too. Last year's 150-hp 2.5-liter accomplished the 0-to-60 mph sprint in about nine seconds. The 170-hp 2.5 liter Jetta does it in 8.5 seconds, and though I'm guessing VW will rate the TDI at 9.3 seconds, the abundant torque makes the diesel Jetta faster off the line. Its top speed should be the same 127 mph as all U.S.-Jettas are limited to.

The DSG transmission is tuned perfectly to the TDI's engine; At 35 mph, you can downshift from sixth to second, hitting every gear along the way, and never feel a single shift. And forget about diesel clatter - you hear none of it from inside the car. Open the hood with the engine idling, and the Clean Diesel barely makes any more noise than the ticking injectors in a 2.0T Jetta GLI. It's remarkably quiet. Inside, the four-cylinder diesel sounds quieter than the five-cylinder gas engine.



As far as the EPA ratings go, the automatic 2.5 Jetta is EPA rated at 21/29; the TDI is EPA rated at 29/40 with DSG twin-clutch transmission. Volkswagen was unhappy with the EPA numbers and had AMCI, an independent testing company, run real-world fuel-economy tests on the Jetta TDI Clean Diesel. Their results were 38 mpg city, 44 mpg highway. Here's your homework assignment: go to the VW dealer, buy a Jetta TDI Clean Diesel, and let us know how it does.

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