

Polo GTI armed with manual box

By  [Henrie Geyser](#)

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The local Volkswagen Polo range, already one of the most popular and biggest sellers in this country (and 15 million sales world-wide) has been further enhanced with the addition of two new engine choices and a keenly awaited manual transmission for its hot little GTI.

The two new engines are a 1.0-litre BlueMotion TSI and a 1.4-litre TDI Highline, both designed to keep the polar bears happy because of their frugal use of forecourt juice and low emission rates.



The 1.4 TDI produces 77 kW and 250Nm and although it is capable of a 0-100km/h dash of 9.9 sec and a top speed of 194km/h, VW says it sips just 4.1 litres/100km in the combined cycle while keeping emissions down to 92g/km.

I drove the TDI between Pretoria and Witbank and enjoyed the typically pleasant cabin of the Polo, its excellent handling and willingness to cruise comfortably at maximum legal speeds although getting off the mark takes some getting used to. Because power only really starts kicking in properly from about 2 000rpm it feels sluggish and is prone to stalling at lower revs.



In standard, already fairly high specification format, the TDI does not come cheaply at R252 000 and our test car was

liberally furnished with optional extras such as Metallic paint, cruise control, rear view camera, park distance control, climatronic aircon, composition media, LED headlights, sunroof, leather seats, a towbar and 17-inch alloy wheels, all of which added a further R54 800 to its price.

The second new addition is a turbocharged, petrol direct-injection 1.0-litre BlueMotion TSI which is an absolute delight and has all the makings of becoming the star of the entire Polo show (with exception of the GTI, of course!). Although it kicks out a lot less punch than the TDI (70kW/160Nm) it feels much livelier and with a claimed top speed of 191km/h it is just 3km slower than the TDI's maximum pace. To add to the fun the baby engine has a delightfully cheeky growl when you stomp on the pleasure pedal and keep the revs up as you hustle through the slick five-speed manual box.

The TSI's price tag of R235 800 includes many of the goodies common to the Polo range but our test car was further dollied up with extras such as Park Distance Control, Light and Vision Package, Composition Media and Bi-Xenon headlights which increased the price to R248 150.

Then it was time to say good-bye to the truck-infested public roads and head for the Red Star Raceway to play with the manual Polo GTI, now equipped with a new six-speed manual transmission. Although VW reckons the DSG-armed version will remain the better seller of the two models, the real driving enthusiasts will be delighted with this manual version.



The slick- shifting box is a lovely match for the GTI's muscular 1.8 litre 141 kW/250Nm engine and it's a combination which edges the Polo another fraction closer to its slightly more rapid (and much pricier) bigger boet, the Golf GTI. As it is, only two seconds and 8km/h divide the two cars when it comes down to the 0-100km/h sprint and top speed. Just like its bigger brother the Polo GTI now also offers the choice of a 6-speed manual or 7-speed DSG transmission.

The Red Star raceway is a confusion of tight twists and turns and finding the right gear for the various corners will take a lot of practise laps but no doubt Polo GTI track-day fans are going to have as much fun with it as I had on the track.

Polo overview: The Polo sedan was launched in South Africa in 1996 to plug the gap between Citi Golf and Golf. In 2002 a new Polo, this time based on the German model, was launched locally and in 2003 it became the first Volkswagen to be awarded the South African Car of the Year title.



The Volkswagen factory in Uitenhage is one of the two plants in the Volkswagen production network that assembles the Polo for both the local and export markets. Since its launch in 2010, Polo hatch has consistently been the second best-selling passenger car in South Africa. The best-selling passenger car in South Africa since 2010 has been the Polo's sibling, the Polo Vivo.

The new Polo models and prices (including a three- year/45 000km Service Plan and a three- year/120 000km warranty) are:

Polo TSI 70 kW BlueMotion	R 235 800
Polo 1.4 TDI 77 kW Highline	R 252 000
Polo 1.8 GTI manual	R 313 300

ABOUT HENRIE GEYSER

Henrie Geyser joined the online publishing industry through iafrica.com where he worked for five years as news editor and editor. He now freelances for a variety of print and online publications, on the subjects of cars, food, and travel, among others; and is a member of the South African Guild of Motoring Journalists. henrieg@africa.com

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