

# VW GTi Performance Pack - original hot hatch, now hotter

 By [Luke Preston](#)

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With incremental power and torque increases over the stock GTi, and increased dynamic ability, is the GTi Performance Pack worth the extra cost?

When a car has been around since the 80s, has successfully transitioned through seven iterations and wears an iconic performance badge, there is heavy weight of expectation, both on it and on whoever drives it. The badge reads GTi and this writer has never driven one. Did I say expectations are high?

Let's be honest the Golf GTi VII is a far cry from its 80's forbear in almost every regard (bar its designation and hatchback intentions) and having never driven the original, I'll try not to get bogged down in nostalgia. The figures though warrant a closer look in order to put into perspective just how far time has moved on in the land of GTi.



Debuting in 1975 the Mk1 GTi followed a simple formula of adding a performance pack to an existing Golf hatchback. The results spawned what would become a cult motoring icon and year after year has set the benchmark for the now coined hot-hatchback nomenclature.

Sporting a 1780cc four-cylinder engine fed with Bosch fuel injection the Mk1 GTi had a respectable 80kW and 140Nm in a lightweight 810kg frame enabling it to blitz the 0-100km/h time in 9 seconds, unheard of at the time.

## So what's new in 2015?

Let's be honest, the biggest change for the Golf came with the introduction of the fifth iteration and so too with the GTi. Where the third and fourth generation hot-hatchback had become bloated and underwhelming, the 'V' brought back performance and visual appeal and wrapped it in an everyday package which couldn't be matched by the competition.

The evolutionary process in terms of design brought us the 6th generation Golf which importantly was far cheaper and quicker to produce than the 5th. Now in its 7th generation there is a definite 'same same, but different' sentiment happening, and for many the Volkswagen Golf is flying a little far under the radar. So too with the GTi.

The recipe over course is the same, take the existing Golf of the time and add a performance pack. Apt then that the revised Golf I've been driving for the week wears the same name after its iconic badge. Officially it is the Golf VII GTi Performance Pack and according to VW it is a standalone product within the Golf performance range which includes the 'standard' GTi and R derivatives.



In terms of power the Golf R sits proudly at the top of the range with its 206kW and 380Nm and 4-Motion all-wheel drive. The performance pack (PP) GTi adds a barely noticeable 7kW to the standard GTi's 162kW with peak torque output the same at 350 Newton Meters. But, it is in the drivetrain where the changes have been made.

For one, the Performance Pack GTi is only available in DSG guise with Dynamic Chassis Control (DCC) and a newly engineered front differential lock also included as standard. Of course, 'standard' is a relative term within the VW group because with these new standard additions the standard price has risen from R412 300.00 to R447 800.00. Time, and tech, has certainly moved on from 1975!

That's a heck of a lot of money for a hatchback.

## What does it all mean?

In short, sublime. If there ever was a vehicular execution of the consummate professional, then the GTi PP is it. There is just enough visual drama for it to announce its arrival in your rear view mirror over other vanilla Golfs, with that aggressive front bumper and 'side whiskers' treatment and bespoke grille with red GTi badge. The optional (R10 000.00) Bi-Xenon headlights do help.

Optional 19-inch Santiago alloy wheels, red brake callipers and extended side-sills endower the GTi with an aggressive profile, while large twin tailpipes offset by a black diffuser and unique red GTi badge round off the rear treatment. All-in-all while competition brands in the hot hatch segment shout about their abilities loudly, the GTi PP lurks quietly if somewhat menacingly in the background, confident in its ability.



It's the GTi's breadth of ability which is immediately noticeable. With a looming 600km trek to Johannesburg due to be my first encounter with a GTi I was assured of plenty of time to get to know this iconic car. Ensnared in beautifully trimmed, hip-hugging and low set bucket seats, from the get-go I instantly noticed the GTi's stiff ride and yearning to be let loose, hanging onto gears well into the rev range. A quick cycle through the DCC options via a button next to the gear lever revealed the previous driver had left it in Sport, for my long journey though I settled on Comfort, which enables a softer damper response and a more casual attitude from the dual clutch DSG gearbox.

With a full tank of unleaded, cruise control and speed limiter set to 135km/h and one of my favourite modern day features - high beam assist set to on (I would be driving in the dark), I set off for Jo'burg at 5pm and was at my destination by 10pm the GTi having consumed an indicated 8l/100km with 40km tank range left, and with me feeling as good as I did before I set off.

## And on the twisties?

Point the GTi at a set of tight switchbacks, select Sport mode and attack them in anger it'll change personalities from comfortable cruiser to experienced track star quicker than Clark Kent in a telephone booth. With imperceptibly quick changes from the 6-speed DSG 'box and almost no noticeable body roll from the dampers in their hardest setting the GTi hangs on in the corners like a hungry greyhound.

The electronic front diff does a supreme job in tight corners allowing you to power out under almost full throttle applying its electronic prowess to each wheel ensuring optimum grip in all conditions. Amazing really! Even for a ham-fisted drivers such as me, exploring the GTi's full potential is just so easy, no doubt made even more so by the DSG gearbox.

## Okay let's wrap this up

Are there cheaper, more powerful hot-hatchbacks in this class? Sure, the RS Megane (195kW/360Nm - R389 900.00), Ford Focus ST (184kW/360Nm - R394 900.00) are both and will more than satisfy those intent on either brand. The Opel Astra OPC (206kW/400Nm - R496 300.00) with its enormous outputs, 3-door layout and Brembo brakes points at its ambitions to be the most focused and hard-core, and it is, rather bolstering competition for the Golf R than genuine competition amongst this group.

Not being able to compare the Focus ST and Megane RS in a comparison test means it would be unfair to write-off either in favour of the Golf GTi Performance Pack, however as a standalone option with its superb interior, enormously capable chassis and powertrain the original hot-hatchback could very well be the best.

### Thumbs up:

- Super refined
- Hugely exploitable
- It has that badge

### Thumbs down:

- Very pricey
- Flies under the radar
- Stiff competition

## Pricing

Golf VII GTi manual - R412 300.00

Golf VII GTi DSG - R427 800.00

Golf VII GTi Performance Pack DSG - R447 800.00 (Driven)

Golf VII R manual - R510 400.00

Golf VII R DSG - R525 900.00

## ABOUT LUKE PRESTON

Luke Preston is head of Copy and Content at ROKKIT Digital Agency, and when not throwing himself headfirst into all things digital, he is usually to be found at the helm of something with four wheels. Having spent four years as a freelance motoring journalist, contributing to the likes of *topCAR* Magazine, *CARVagblog* and *Motorburn*, Luke now serves as Carshop's vehicular guru, contributing news, reviews and video content for the Carshop brand.

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