

# SENSATIONAL SALOONS

# TWO FOR THE ROAD

Like having four doors but don't want an ordinary saloon? These two cars will be right up your street



**SKODA  
SUPERB 1.8**

THE new Superb looks and feels just like a normal saloon, until you try to open the boot. There are two switches behind instead of the usual one, because the lid can open normally or as a huge tailgate together with the rear windscreen.

That's special enough, but it's how precisely the electro-mechanical system has been engineered that really impresses. This Skoda has obviously inherited the high-class genes from parent company Volkswagen.

It also gets the VW Group's latest technical toys like a seven-speed twin-clutch gearbox, self-parking system and swivelling xenon headlamps.

The Superb isn't the most elegant of cars — the rear end is droopy and the sides awkwardly upright. But, if this is the cost of having a cavernous interior, it's a price well worth paying.

You won't find a car in this segment, or indeed from the one above, which pampers passengers as much. There's more legroom than you know what to do with, plus a separate clock and temperature display for those behind.

The rear doors are unusually long, all the better for easy back seat access. The left-hand one has a hidden compartment to store a wet umbrella.

What's nice is how Skoda has combined this kind of everyday utility with long-term solidity. Quality is as good as anything coming out of a German factory and all the switchgear feels built to last.

On the road, the Superb's size seldom

makes itself felt. It's surprisingly nimble around corners and there's good feedback through the steering. The self-parking system also works a treat.

Ride comfort is generally good, although the big 18-inch tyres tend to rumble on rough tarmac. The car is in its element on expressways, eating up huge distances with long-legged ease.

It acquits itself well in town, too, with a low first gear giving it punchy acceleration off the line. The 0-100kmh sprint takes just 8.5 seconds, which is almost indecently quick for such a big car with a 1.8-litre engine.

The gearbox occasionally stumbles and jerks at very low speeds but this is the exception rather than the rule. Most of the time, it's crisp and decisive with shifts, with the steering

wheel paddles adding a sporty touch to the drive.

Who is the Superb for? It doesn't carry a premium badge but matches its more expensive rivals every step of the way, and it's prettier inside than out.

If Skoda can just get potential buyers into the showroom, that's half the battle won.

**ENGINE** 1,798cc 16V in-line 4  
**POWER** 160bhp at 4,500-6,200rpm  
**TORQUE** 250Nm at 1,500-4,500rpm  
**GEARBOX** 7-speed semi-automatic  
**PERFORMANCE**  
 220kmh, 0-100kmh 8.5 seconds  
**PRICE** \$99,800 with COE



**VOLKSWAGEN  
PASSAT CC 2.0**

AS MUCH as Volkswagen would prefer otherwise, it's hard to find anyone who views the Passat CC as anything other than a four-door saloon. A supremely stylish one, but still a saloon nonetheless.

Is that such a bad thing, though? Everyone went "ooh" and "ahh" when Mercedes-Benz dressed the E-class up in fancy clothes, and the car has been a big sales success.

VW may not win any originality points for creating the CC from the standard Passat saloon, but the result is similarly striking.

This is one of the best-looking VWs ever made. If anything, the CC is even better proportioned than the CLS.

Long, wide and low-slung, it turns heads and draws admiring glances wherever it goes. Not bad for something costing half as much as the Merc.

Very little practicality has been sacrificed for style. In spite of the car's dramatically arched roofline, even taller folk won't want for headroom inside, while the 532 litre boot is massive.

There are only two seats behind but they are large, individually-sculpted buckets perfect for extended road trips. A big storage compartment with cup holders occupies the space in between.

A lot of the CC's cabin parts are shared with the standard Passat, but the low seating position and narrow side windows add a sense of glamour. The instruments are slickly presented, too.

As the car's name suggests (CC stands for Comfort Coupe), it's meant to be more

refined cruiser than hardcore sports coupe. An adaptive suspension system allows you to choose from Comfort, Normal and Sport modes, each giving a distinctly different driving feel.

The handling is tauter than the Passat saloon's but there's room for improvement in the steering, which is a bit dull.

One thing the CC doesn't lack for is speed, since this 2.0-litre model's turbo-charged engine is shared with the popular Golf GTI hot hatchback. The 200bhp unit is barely fazed by the CC's extra weight.

From a standstill, 100kmh comes up on the speedometer in just 7.6 seconds. Impressive, considering the CC has a standard automatic gearbox rather than one of VW's trick double-clutch transmissions.

One complaint: The engine whooshes and whines under acceleration, which is entertaining for the keen driver but slightly out of sync with the car's quiet elegance elsewhere.

The Passat CC may be neither here nor there, straddling the boundary between saloon and coupe, but it ends up being 100 per cent desirable. **COLIN YONG**

**ENGINE** 1,984cc 16V in-line 4  
**POWER** 200bhp at 5,100-6,000rpm  
**TORQUE** 280Nm at 1,700-5,000rpm  
**GEARBOX** 6-speed automatic  
**PERFORMANCE**  
 232kmh, 0-100kmh 7.6 seconds  
**PRICE** \$131,800 with COE



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