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Volkswagen Phaeton: cost-conscious luxury?



Volkswagen has announced a number of revisions to its Phaeton luxury saloon. And as sales of top-end cars take a nose-dive, perhaps the Phaeton - full of sophistication but lacking the kudos and the price-tag of more upmarket brands - is now a tempting proposition for the buyer?

Available with a 3.0-litre V6 TDI 240PS or 6.0-litre W12 450PS petrol engine, all models have 4wd as standard and come with a luxuriously long wheelbase. However, the 3.0-litre V6 TDI is now offered with a 'standard' wheelbase option, some 12cm shorter, and a starting price of just £44,235 on the road. This could make sound financial sense.

Inside, a new touchscreen sat nav and climate-control feature as standard, along with a redesigned centre console, instrument cluster and multifunction display. A Side Scan blind-spot monitor is now available as an option, as is a rear-view camera and 1000W Dynaudio soundpack, including a 12-channel digital amplifier and 12 speakers.

Exterior design tweaks are minimal, but there's a revised front grille, a range of new metallic paint finishes and three new alloy wheels, in 17in, 18in and 19in designs.

In terms of UK car sales, VW seems to be weathering the recent financial storm better than most (not to mention its brief role as the world's most valuable company after last month's hedge fund debacle). While sales have dropped, year on year, in recent weeks, they have seen a less catastrophic downturn than many of the big players. And perhaps, with the Phaeton, VW is set to score yet another success in these turbulent times.

The revised Phaeton is available to order now, with new cars arriving in the UK in January 2009.

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