



VW Lupo

—Featuring 1.7SDi S—



What's different?

A closer look at VW's new baby, concentrating on the diesel version.

THIS WAS OUR CHANCE TO BECOME MORE closely acquainted with VW's baby and, in particular, to ascertain whether this diesel version is (together with its Arosa cousin) the most frugal car currently on offer in the UK.

The answer is, for the time being, "yes – just!" "Just", because our rivals' table shows other contenders snapping at the Lupo's heels, including the livelier and roomier Vauxhall Corsa turbo-diesel.

In our experience, adding a turbo never compromises fuel economy unless one exploits the improved acceleration, so it's a pity this feature is often missing in the smallest diesel cars. In fairness, its absence must help production costs, and also simplifies the under-bonnet engineering.

By current standards, this Lupo is a very uncomplicated and reassuring long-term, high-mileage proposition. Perhaps more reassuring than exciting, to tell the truth, because its cornering prowess is less impressive than its ride. Also, its ultimate overtaking ability, when revved to

beyond 4000rpm through the gears, is mediocre. This isn't the initial impression because it pulls so vigorously *in* the gears, without any complaint, from little more than tick-over speed. The result is a great third- and fourth-gear performer in traffic, doing things the lazy way.

This is backed up by a lovely light clutch and a knife-through-butter gearchange (with a perfectly placed left footrest, as well).

Despite lots of soundproofing under the bonnet, this SDi isn't particularly quiet, with a harder gruffness beginning to intrude when cruising between 60 and 70mph. It feels unstrained, however, thanks to tall gearing. Fuel economy benefits on dual-carriageways for the same reason (so many small petrol cars suffer poor mpg on the motorway).

Like the Arosa's, the brakes are a shade over-servoed, so the (cheap) ABS option looks like a good idea.

VERDICT

The Lupo isn't without its little irritations, as our "Likes and Gripes" list makes plain. However, it comes over as an immensely sensible, reassuring little car that's obviously hewn from the same solid as its more illustrious stablemates.

PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds

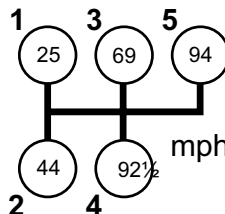
mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS		2.6	6.6	11.6	18.3
IN 5TH GEAR		7.4	15.5	24.8	36.5
IN 4TH GEAR		5.5	11.4	18.1	26.0

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES	14.7/10.9		17.4/12.6		
		15.5/11.4		21.0/14.6	

Maximum speeds

REVS PER MINUTE	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
		4500*		4500*	3625

* for best acceleration



FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade : low sulphur diesel	
Type of use - air conditioning not fitted*	mpg
In the city - heavy traffic	37
In the country - quiet driving	78
Typical mpg overall	62
Realistic tank range† (not nominal tank capacity)	28litres/380miles

† based on fuel gauge/warning lamp and filling station experience - not nominal tank capacity

*with air conditioning switched on, consumption will increase by 2-4% in winter and 4-8% in summer

FOR THE TECHNICAL

ENGINE

Type transverse four in line with iron block and alloy head; five main bearings

Size 79.5 x 86.4 = 1716cc

Power 60bhp at 4200rpm

Torque 84 lb ft at 2200rpm

Valves belt-driven single overhead camshaft actuating two valves per cylinder via hydraulic tappets

Fuel/ignition direct-injection non-turbocharged diesel with electronically controlled mechanical injection pump. Two-way exhaust catalyser and 34-litre tank, with low-level warning lamp. Compression ignition with cold-start glowplugs

TRANSMISSION

Type five-speed manual, front-wheel drive

Mph per 1000rpm 25.9 in 5th; 20.5 in 4th

CHASSIS

Suspension - front: independent damper/struts with integral coil springs and an anti-roll bar. Rear: torsion beam (anti-roll) axle with trailing arms, coil springs and telescopic dampers

Steering rack and pinion with hydraulic power assistance; 2.9 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 9.9m between kerbs, with 14.3m circle for one turn of the wheel

Wheels 5 1/2in steel with 175/65R13T tyres standard. Alloys with 185/55R14H Dunop SP Sport on test car. Full size steel spare

Brakes ventilated discs front, drums rear with vacuum servo (electronic ABS optional extra)

SAFETY AND SECURITY FEATURES

Assessed on their effectiveness and convenience (the more black blobs the better)

Seatbelts

front ●●●○○○ rear ●●●○○○ (two belts only)

Head restraints

front ●●●○○○ rear ●●●○○○

Interior

safety padding ●●●○○○

driver's airbag? ☒

other airbags? (1) ☒

side impact protection ●●●○○○

Fuel anti-spillage

●●●○○○

☒ standard on test car ☐ factory fitted option ☒ not available

Door locking

central locking? ☒

remote control? ☒

auto window closure? ☒

deadlocks? ☒

Luggage

secure from interior/hidden from view ●●○○○○

Alarm

engine immobilised? ☒

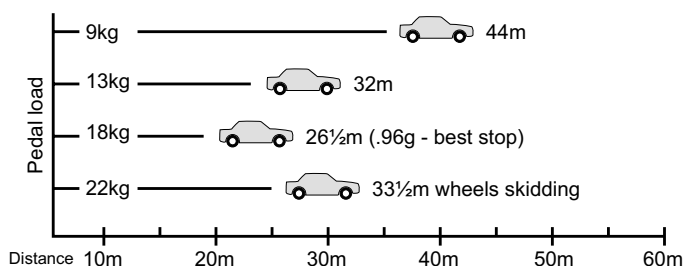
Euro NCAP crash test results - not available

BRAKES

Pedal feel ●●●○○○	Behaviour in an emergency ●●○○○○	Handbrake ●●●○○○
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Dry road stopping distance from 50mph (no ABS)

A good-to-average best stop is about 28m at 20-30kg pedal load)

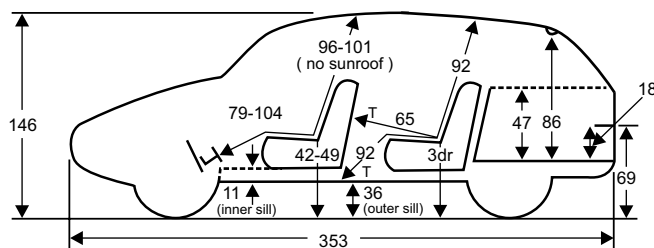


Fade test: pedal load required for a moderate (34m/.75g) stop: 10 1/2kg at start of test, 14 1/2kg at end of test (Ideal brakes show no change)

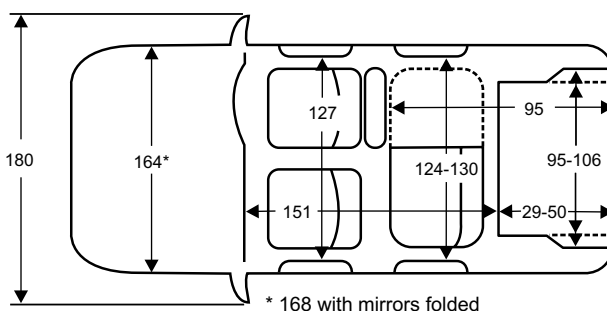
MEASUREMENTS

Centimetres

Three-door hatchback



T: typical back seat space behind medium-sized front occupants



* 168 with mirrors folded

LIKES AND GRIPEs

Radio/cassette performs well	...	but only space for CD storage
50/50 split back seat surprisingly convenient and comfortable	...	but no trim on rear of backrests, and no boot lamp
Three interior visors, grab handles of high quality	...	but floor slip-mats useless
Door mirrors fold	...	but not to body width, even though they're small
Versatile locking arrangements	...	if you can do without a handset
Generous warranty to match the build	...	but painted bumpers a liability
Wipers concealed when parked	:	flashy dials hard to decipher in UK



HOW THE LUPO COMPARES	Engine cap/power (cyl/cc/bhp)	Revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel economy (mpg)	Brakes best stop (m/kg)	Maximum legroom - front (cm)	Typical leg/kneeroom - rear (cm)	Steering turns/ circle (m)	Overall length (cm)
VW LUPO 1.7SDi	4/1716/60	2700	18.3	36.5/26.0	62	26½/18	104	92/65	2.9/9.9(p)	353
Peugeot 106 1.5 Diesel	4/1527/58	3100	19.2	37.1/26.5	61	29/27	106	89/64	4.1/9.8	368
Vauxhall Corsa 1.5TD	4/1488/67	2920	12.9	29.5/19/7	60	28/16	104	100/67	2.8/10.2(p)	373
Seat Ibiza 1.9 TDi	4/1896/90	2400	11.3	21.7/15.1	57	28/32	109	97/72	3.1/10.1(p)	385
Seat Arosa 1.4 (petrol)	4/1390/60	3180	13.7	25.5/18.0	45	28½/18	105	93/62	2.9/10.1(p)	354