

Motoring New Car Road Test

New Touareg asks: 'What

The Touareg R might be hugely powerful, but it's designed to be efficient too. **Jack Evans** finds out what it's like

THE most powerful production Volkswagen ever made. Sounds pretty impressive, doesn't it? Think of a car that would accompany that title and you might think of a performance hot hatch, a V8-powered saloon or even an electric vehicle but no, it's a large SUV – the Touareg R.

Not only is it hugely powerful, but the Touareg R is the first plug-in hybrid to wear that recognisable 'R' badge – so it really is a car of firsts. What's it like to drive, though? We've been finding out.

What's new?

The bulk of what's new resides underneath the bonnet of the Touareg R as it's a plug-in hybrid. However, we've also got a range of other innovations including an ultra-wide infotainment system, high-power IQ.Light LED Matrix headlights and even trailer assist – this is the only plug-in hybrid SUV to hit the market with the feature.

Then, of course, you've got all of the standout features you'd find on the regular Touareg such as a practical cabin and those big, imposing looks.

What's under the bonnet?

It's when you get to the powertrain that things get really interesting.

And bucking the trend, the Touareg doesn't use some tiny, four-cylinder petrol engine but a full-fat 3.0-litre V6 hooked up to an electric motor and batteries for a combined output of 456bhp and 700Nm of torque. It's much the same powertrain as you'll find in other Volkswagen Group SUVs, in fact, such as the Porsche Cayenne and Audi Q7 TFSI e.

It's capable of powering this huge car from 0-60mph in just 4.9 seconds and onwards to a top speed limited to 155mph. Yet, despite this performance, Volkswagen claims it'll return up to 95.2mpg while emitting just 67g/km CO2. It'll also manage a claimed electric-only range of 29 miles, while fully charging the 14.3kWh battery will take around two and a half hours via a 7.2kW home charger.



■ The body roll is kept in check well for such a large car, ensuring tighter roads can be taken at a decent pace. This car is, however, at home on the open road, where it settles down well



■ Could the Touareg be a little more over the top? Perhaps. But that's not really what we'd expect from a Volkswagen R model

What's it like to drive?

The Touareg R defaults into all-electric mode, so setting off you'll find progress undertaken in a silent, gliding fashion. In this mode, there's plenty of power for most occasions and for ambling around town it makes the most sense. However, head out onto the motorway and the electric range will quickly dwindle, calling the petrol engine into action. It's surprisingly muted for such a large, performance-orientated powertrain and even great bootfuls of acceleration aren't accompanied by anything more than a hushed grumble from the exhaust. It's not particularly R.

The body roll is kept remarkably well in check for such a large car, ensuring that tighter roads can be taken at a decent pace. This car is, however, at home on the open road where it settles down well.

How does it look?

Big and imposing – these are the Touareg hallmarks. In truth, even the regular car has a substantial amount of presence, but things are taken up a notch for the R version. This is mainly down to the suite of black accents dotted across the car's exterior, including the ultra-wide grille.

It's not a particularly out-there car in terms of design and doesn't do a lot to distinguish it from the rest of the Touareg line-up, but the R looks classy and nicely judged. That said, it's got a definite premium feel to it thanks to its ultra-large alloy wheels and intricately designed lights. Could it be a little more over the top? Perhaps. But that's not really what we'd expect from a Volkswagen R model. Just take the understated Golf R, for example.

What's it like inside?

There's little in the cabin to highlight that you're in anything other than a standard Touareg, but that's no bad thing as the regular car's interior is a classy and well-made affair. There are loads of high-end materials throughout, while the level of space on offer is really impressive. There's a good amount of room for those sitting in the back, too, with decent head- and legroom – though you'd expect that for a car of this size.

The plug-in hybrid powertrain does dent boot space, mind you, dropping it by 70 litres to 610 litres. That said, it's still flat and you can expand on it by lowering the rear seats down. There's no dedicated space for the charging cables, however, which means the bag they're located in takes a huge chunk of boot space. We ended up putting them in a rear footwell when not needed.



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is the meaning of R?'

Fast facts

- Model: Volkswagen Touareg R
- Base price: £71,995
- Engine: 3.0-litre turbocharged petrol with electric motor and 14.3kWh battery
- Power: 456bhp
- Torque: 700Nm
- Max speed: 155mph
- 0-60mph: 4.9 seconds
- MPG: 95.2
- Emissions: 67g/km CO2

What's the spec like?

The Touareg R sits at the very top of Volkswagen's range of SUVs and, as a result, gets plenty of standard equipment. You get diamond-quilted seats with contrast blue piping, four-zone climate control and a full panoramic sunroof with electric sunblind.

You get the same massive 15-inch infotainment system as the standard Touareg and it's here where you'll find satellite navigation and media functions, as well as connected mapping that can advise you on alternative routes on your journey to speed things up.

Next to this is a 12-inch digital cockpit which, as well as displaying features such as speed and revs, showcases remaining electric charge and charging times. These are just a few highlights of what is a very comprehensive list of equipment. Given that the Touareg R starts from just shy of £72,000, that's no bad thing, either.



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Verdict

The Volkswagen Touareg R feels like a bit of a muddle. On the one hand, it's a quiet and comfortable cruise with enough

electric range to see off shorter journeys around town in silent, non-petrol fashion. On the other hand, it's fitted with an R badge, which is usually a byword for outright performance and driver enjoyment – something that the Touareg R doesn't

really appear to major on.

It just reminds us of how good the regular Touareg is. Though the Touareg R might bring a little extra zip, if you're after outright comfort then there's no doubt the standard car will serve you right.