

VW's Eos 2.0T is a hardtop with heart

by Mark_Maynard

Got your eye on a European convertible but don't want to pay \$50,000?

That's what those four-seaters can cost, give or take a couple thousand, by the time you get them optioned to your liking.

EOS HARDTOP - The Volkswagen Eos is one of the few retractable-hardtop cars that's a good coupe and a good convertible. CNS Photo courtesy of Volkswagen. But not so for the new Volkswagen Eos 2.0T, a retractable-hardtop convertible with a sunroof mode. It's two cars in one, though the sunroof sounds like a better idea than it is.

The base model starts at just under \$30,000. My test car with options, which compare to those of a \$48,000 Audi A4, was just under \$37,000. And I liked the Eos better than the Audi.

Eos is also offered in a 250-horsepower V-6 version (\$37,480); however, the 200-horsepower, turbocharged four-cylinder gives the performance of a six, and it's cheaper to insure and maintain.

I'm not a fan of most retractable hardtops because they're often a better coupe than convertible, with trunk space seriously compromised by the top when it's down. And with as much junk as most people keep in the trunk, it's likely the top would be used very little.

The Eos trunk, however, leaves room for a few bags of groceries or soft-sided luggage for two on a weekend getaway.

Push one button - no latches to release - and the top folds back in enough time for a long traffic light. Airflow on the open road is good, even without the wind blocker.

Top up, sight lines are acceptable over the shoulder. The large rearview window allows plenty of visibility, unlike some backlights in soft-tops.

I know it took some ultra-engineering to design a sunroof position for this top, but it's not easy on the ears. Driving with the sunroof open generates painful buffeting above 40 mph, but that's also true of sunroofs in

some hardtops.

The standard transmission is a six-speed manual, but the test car had the automated-manual Direct Shift Gearbox. It's a \$1,075 option, but it's so much more than just an automatic, or is it a semi-manual?

VW's DSG gives three modes of use: Drive mode for fully automatic shifting, Sport mode for higher revs between shifts and Sport manual with steering-wheel shifters. Shifting the DSG is more fun than a manual.

Volkswagen added luxury-class conveniences to make this car easy to live with in all climates. The styling is contemporary, inside and out, with much attention to detail. It includes a height-adjustable center armrest, precise trim alignment and pleasing colors and textures.

This car will appeal to young drivers toasting the start of a career as well as a fine reward for the retiree for having made it through a career.

This is one of the few retractable hardtops that's a good coupe and a good convertible.

Copley News Service SPECS

2007 Volkswagen Eos 2.0T

Body style: subcompact, front-wheel-drive, four-seat hardtop convertible

Engine: 200-horsepower, turbocharged, 2-liter four-cylinder

Transmission: six-speed manual; optional Direct Shift Gearbox automatic

Acceleration: 0 to 60 mph, 7.4 seconds

EPA fuel-economy estimates: 23 mpg city, 31 highway; 91 octane recommended

DIMENSIONS

Trunk space: 6.6 cubic feet with top down, 10.5 top up

Front head/leg/shoulder room: 37.5/41.7/54.7 inches

Rear head/leg/shoulder room: 35.8/32.5/41.5 inches

Length/wheelbase: 173.5/101.5 inches

Curb weight: 3,505/3,569 pounds, manual/automatic

FEATURES

Standard equipment includes: automatic power retracting hardtop with panoramic sunroof and wind blocker; in-dash CD audio with MP3; remote locking; dual-zone air conditioning; cruise control; trip computer with compass and outside temperature display; front and rear power windows; power easy-entry front seats to the back seats; tilt-telescopic steering wheel; power (heated) mirrors with puddle lights; height-adjustable center armrest; intermittent wipers with heated washer nozzles; 12-way, power-adjustable driver's seat; eight-way, manually adjusted passenger seat; heated front seats; three-spoke, leather-wrapped steering wheel; fog lights; rear-seat (lockable) trunk pass-through; carpeted floor mats; LED taillights; 16-inch, all-season tires on alloy wheels; four-wheel disc brakes.

Safety equipment includes: front air bags, combined curtain and side air bags for front seats, rollover protection system, electronic stabilization, anti-slip regulation, electronic differential lock, anti-lock brakes, tire-pressure monitoring system, anti-theft alarm, radio immobilizer.

PRICING

Base: \$30,620; price as tested, \$36,985

Options on test car:

Luxury package, \$3,490, includes leather-trimmed comfort seats; multifunction steering wheel; wood trim; rain-sensing wipers; six-disc, in-dash CD; satellite radio; 12-way power passenger seat with lumbar adjustment; 17-inch alloy wheels and all-season tires.

DVD navigation system, \$1,800, includes armrest CD changer.

Six-speed, automated-manual Direct Shift Gearbox, \$1,075.

Warranty: four years/50,000 miles basic coverage; five years/60,000 miles powertrain

The competition: Audi A4, BMW 3-Series, Saab 9-3, Mercedes CLK, Volvo C70

Where assembled: Palmela, Portugal

PLUSES: A contemporary, nimble, technologically advanced, fairly priced convertible with trunk room.

MINUSES: Sunroof is useless above 40 mph. Front headroom may restrict some tall drivers.

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