

One little VW with a whole lot of tricks

Affordable hardtop convertible fun

By Barbara and Bill Schaffer



The Volkswagen Eos 3.2L is available with bi-Xenon headlights and Adaptive Front Lighting that swivels the headlights horizontally at highway speeds to improve nighttime vision around curves.

According to Greek mythology, Eos, the goddess of dawn, rose from the ocean to open the gates of heaven so that her brother Helios (the sun) could ride his chariot across the sky every day.

It's much like the new Volkswagen Eos that opens its hard top at the touch of a button, to allow the sun to ride across the passengers as long as Helios is doing his job.

The new Volkswagen Eos is no myth,

however; this is kind of convertible we can get excited about. We've driven the 2.0T version both in Portugal and California and were impressed with its rigid body structure, agility, quality ride and level of performance.

Despite its petite appearance, the Eos is quite roomy inside with space for four adults. Like most coupes and convertibles, though, access to the rear seat is challenging, unless the top is down.

We've also driven the just-released top-of-the-line 3.2L, which is powered by the 250-hp

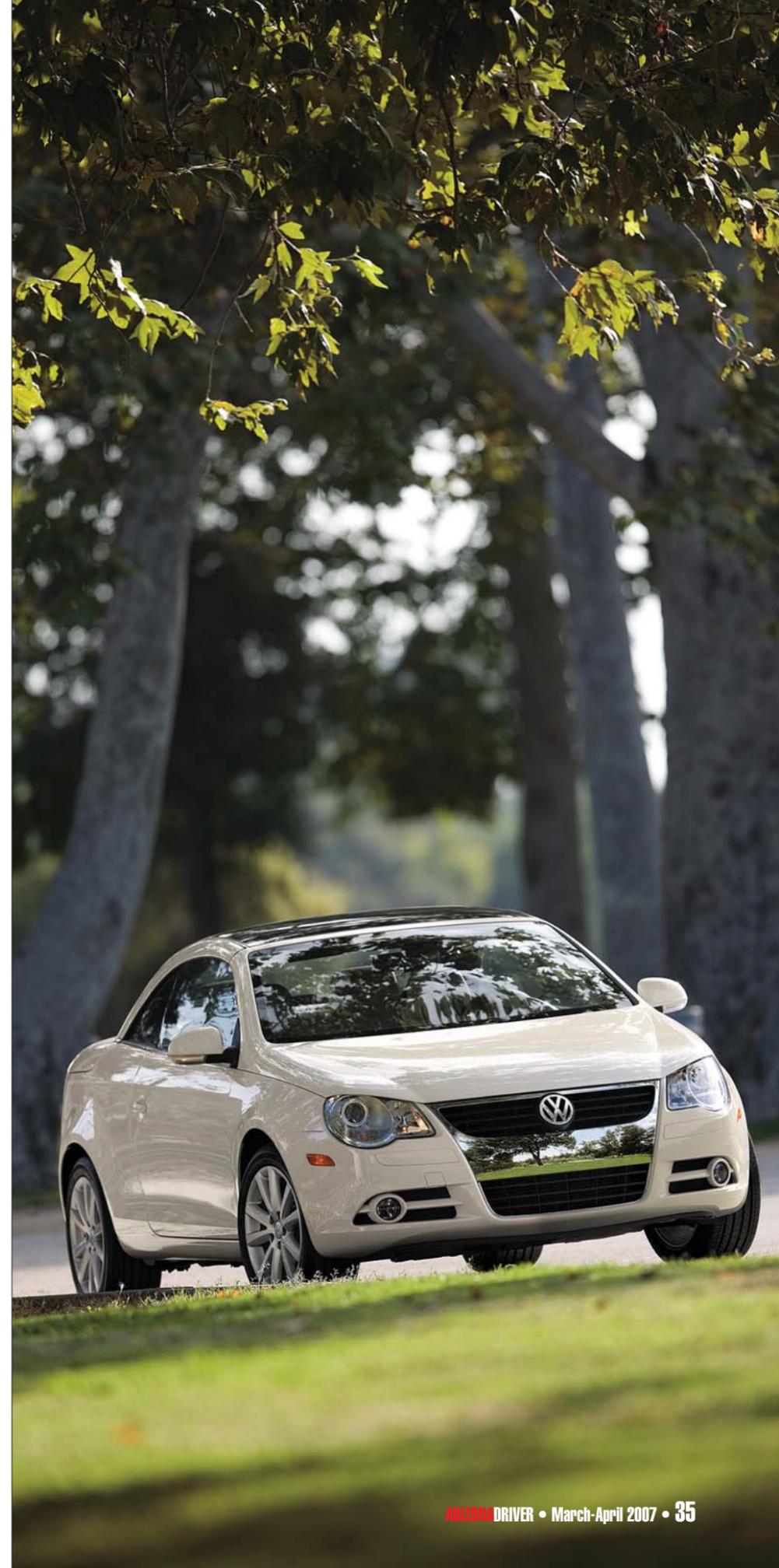
3.2-liter VR6 engine. Although we prefer driving the turbocharged four-cylinder 2.0T, the 3.2 engine adds another level of sophistication, first for the extra performance, but also for the higher equipment level that comes with the 3.2L package.

With the top up, the Eos is a solid coupe with a sliding glass sunroof that allows the driver to let in fresh air and sunshine without dropping the top. But when the mood strikes, a simple push of the button puts on a 25-second demonstration of folding roof

panels as the entire top tucks itself into the luggage area like a contortionist folding himself into a small box.

Some convertibles sacrifice nearly all their luggage space to make room for the top, but the Eos maintains space for a couple of small pieces of luggage. With the top up, the 2.0T starts with 10.5 cubic feet of cargo space and the top eats up 3.9 cu. ft., leaving a respectable 6.6 cu. ft. when the top is down. The

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Volkswagen Eos 2.0T

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Tire pressure monitoring system; Alarm system; Dual-zone climate control; Trip computer; Power windows; Heated outside mirrors; Cruise, Height adjustable and telescoping wheel; Heated front seats; Keyless entry; Auxiliary input jack; Power "easy entry" front seats; Panoramic sunroof; 12-Way power driver's seat, 16-Inch alloy wheel; Wind blocker; AM/FM audio.

Base Price: \$29,990

Options: Luxury package (Leather comfort seats, Leather multi-function steering wheel, Wood trim, Rain sensing wipers, 6-Disc armrest CD changer, Satellite radio, 12-Way power passenger's seat with lumbar support, 17-Inch alloy wheels) \$3,490; DVD navigation \$1,800; 6-Spd automatic DSG transmission \$1,075.

Total Options\$6,365

Freight.....\$630

Price as Tested.....\$36,895

DIMENSIONS

EPA SizeSubCompact

Weight.....3,505 lb.

Wheelbase101.5 in.

Length.....173.5 in.

Width.....70.5 in.

Height56.8 in.

Fuel Capacity14.5 gal.

Cargo Capacity6.6 to 10.5 cu. ft.

MECHANICAL

Engine2.0L Turbo 4-Cyl.

Horsepower200@5100

Torque207@1800

Transmission6-Spd. Auto.

DriveFront-wheel

BrakesDisc ABS

Tires235/45R17

PERFORMANCE

0 to 60 mph.....7.4sec.

Top speed.....130 mph

EPA economy rating23/31 mpg

Our actual fuel econ26.8 mpg

COMPETITORS

Audi A4 Cabriolet, Chrysler Sebring convertible, Ford Mustang convertible, Mini Cooper convertible, Mitsubishi Eclipse convertible, Pontiac G6 convertible, Saab 9-3 convertible, Toyota Camry Solara convertible, Volvo C70 convertible

3.2L starts with 9.3 cu. ft. and drops down to 5.4 cu. ft.

The Eos is available in three models: base, 2.0T and 3.2L. Prices start at \$28,620 including destination for the base model and goes as high as \$37,480 for the 3.2L. With all the available options the 3.2L tops out at just over \$42,000.

The base model is very well equipped with features like the power glass sunroof, rollover protection system, alloy wheels, wind deflector in windshield frame, alarm, keyless entry, all power, AM/FM audio with MP3 capability, CD player and rear center pass-through with lockable storage. For safety and comfort it also has height adjustable and telescoping wheel, pollen and odor filter, cruise control, electronic stabilization program and many other smaller features.

The base 2.0-liter 200-hp turbocharged four-cylinder engine in the Eos is one of our favorite engines. It produces very good acceleration sprinting from 0 to 60 mph in 7.4 seconds and with a top speed of 130 mph. The manufacturer lists 0 to 60 mph times for the 3.2-liter VR6 at 6.9 seconds with the same top speed.

Fuel economy is listed by the EPA at 23 mpg for city driving and 31 mpg on the highway. We averaged 26.8 mpg.

The base model is only available with a six-speed manual transmission, but the DSG™ six-speed automatic with Tiptronic® is available on the 2.0T for \$1,075 and standard equipment on the 3.2L.

This double clutch DSG transmission is one of the best transmissions on the market today. It shifts faster than you can shift a manual transmission and without the fear of doing damage. We also like the fact that the shift indicator always shows which gear the car is in, no matter what shift mode is being used.

The Eos has a broad spectrum of standard safety equipment including curtain and side

airbags for front seat passenger, rear head restraints and rollover protection system which literally explodes a roll bar from behind the rear seats in 0.25 seconds, should the system detect a possible roll. It also has tire pressure monitoring, seatbelt tensioners in addition to stability control, antilock brakes, traction control and electronic differential locking.

In spite of its 3,500-pound weight, the front-wheel-drive Eos rewards the driver with agile handling, impressive performance with either engine, plus the handling is on a par with many sports coupes. The Eos rides on a four-wheel independent suspension with standard 16-inch wheels and tires. Both 17-inch and 18-inch wheels are available.

Visibility has always been one of our pet peeves with convertibles. The wide rear top pillar normally makes backing out of a parking space like playing the automotive version of blind man's bluff. Of course, when the top is down, it's much easier. Fortunately, the Eos has a small rear pillar that makes rear visibility better than many sedans.

The Volkswagen Eos is a little pricey, but if you consider you are getting both a coupe and convertible, it's a bargain with a very enjoyable ride. We think the Volkswagen Eos is great. It's a nice size, comfortable and fun to drive. We give it two thumbs up. ■