

DEALS

Bargain new and used motors

ENGINE

Engine options include 16v four-cylinder 1.8 and 2.0-litre units with 136bhp (the 2.0 was latterly available in 8v 115bhp guise), a supercharged 1.8 with 160bhp for the G60 model and a 190bhp 2.9 V6 for the VR6.

BRAKES

Check the slider pins are lubricated when servicing, because they can seize. Some owners fit the Brembo brakes from the Seat Ibiza Cupra. Changing them costs around £1500. ABS modules can fail on older cars. A replacement is about £1600.

TRANSMISSION

A five-speed manual gearbox was standard on all models, with an auto 'box as an option. The latter is most common on the VR6 but it's not as robust as the manual. A rebuild of either will cost between £700 and £1200.

CHASSIS

The car's renowned agility is largely down to passive steering on the rear axle. It's achieved via track-adjusting bearings and bushes, so check that original rear bushes (not stiffer aftermarket ones) have been fitted if they've been replaced.

CABIN

The interior wears well, but the sunroof can be problematic (if it's closed, leave it so) with parts impossible to find. The headlight switch can fail and cause fires. If it crackles or there's a delay in the lights coming on, buy a new one for £25 or so.

WHEELS, TYRES AND BODYWORK

Wheels are generally solid and the bodywork largely sound, but check behind the number plate, where over-long plate screws can damage the paint and cause rot. Rear outer sills and the lower front wing's rear edge can deteriorate due to stone chipping.

The Corrado's dark and gloomy cabin is at least hard wearing

VOLKSWAGEN CORRADO FROM £1000

Parts master

The Corrado borrowed much from VW's parts bin but stands proud as a used buy, says **Kyle Fortune**

If ever there was a car greater than the sum of its parts, Volkswagen's Corrado is it. The manufacturer dipped into its extensive parts bin to create this neatly styled, beautifully proportioned coupé – even if its Golf origins and Passat-derived suspension were hardly the stuff that dreams are made of.

The Corrado arrived in 1989, powered by a fairly unremarkable 136bhp 1.8-litre 16v engine, although that didn't stop the car featuring in virtually every performance car group test until it slipped off VW's price lists in 1996.

During those seven years on sale VW didn't do much to push the Corrado. Only the run-out Storm model really received any advertising, which might

account for the car's relatively small sales numbers – just 10,155 in the UK.

The model range was broadened swiftly after launch, with that 1.8 16v gaining a supercharger to become the 160bhp G60 (in left-hand drive only until 1991). A 2.0 four-cylinder with either eight or 16 valves was also added. The performance was raised again in 1992 when VW fitted its compact VR6 six-cylinder under the Corrado's blunt nose. Its 190bhp gave some real firepower to match the accomplished chassis.

The VR6 was popular, accounting for 3565 of the car's total sales. Only 1984 G60s hit UK roads, with the remaining sales made up of 1.8 and 2.0 machines.

Picking between the G60 and the VR6 is a motoring debate that will never

be fully resolved. Many preferred the G60's better economy, power delivery and lighter nose, while others liked the muscular performance and the better soundtrack of the VR6. The reality is that they're both great. Don't rule out those 1.8 and 2.0-litre cars, either. They were never brisk even when new but their handling is still a delight.

John Mitchell, of JM.:R John Mitchell Racing (johnmitchellracing.co.uk, 01903 718684), has owned a G60 since 1992 and now specialises in Corrados.

"The Corrado is a good, sound machine that's stood the test of time," he says. "With the correct alterations it can be brought right up to date."

The Corrado appeals both to people wanting it as the basis for a tuning

project or to those who like to keep their cars entirely stock and original. If you're after a G60, though, Mitchell has a few provisos. The supercharger will need regular maintenance, with a strip-down every three years or 35,000 miles – more frequently if it's tuned – at around £420 a time. He also advises installing an additional oil cooler to stop it all getting too hot under the bonnet. This will cost around £400.

The 1.8 and 2.0-litre engines are well proven, although their mechanical injection systems can become worn. The injectors leak around the seals, too, with poor cold starting being a clue to this. The injectors are still available at around £70 each, so expect to pay £500 or so to have all four replaced. The

Don't rule out the 1.8 and 2.0-litre cars. They were never brisk even when new but their handling is still a delight

fuel system, which lives largely under the body, can get corroded. Mitchell says parts to repair this are now hard to come by and new fuel pipes may need to be fabricated from scratch.

The transmission in all models is the same five-speed manual. The shift action of post-'92 cars is better than in pre-'92 examples thanks to VW adding a weight to the lever (some early models have had it retro-fitted). Mitchell says there's no real service schedule for changing the transmission oil but suggests it's done at the same intervals

as the cambelt, and that you use a synthetic rather than a mineral oil. This will cost around £90.

Slave cylinders on the hydraulic clutch get slow with age, and Mitchell suggests changing the clutch fluid at the same two-year intervals as the brake fluid. A pointer to those tardy slave cylinders is a snicking in first and second gears, which will eventually wear out the cogs, in turn necessitating a rebuild. Depending on what's required, this will cost at least £700. Many owners opt to put in a new →

What to look out for

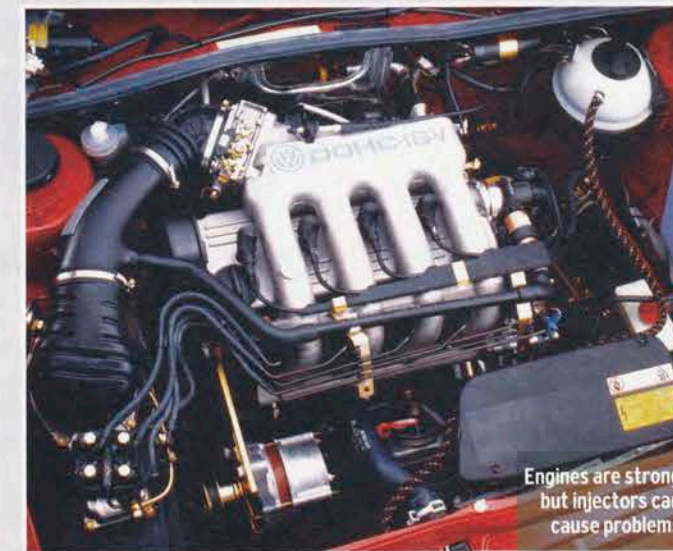
Try the handbrake – the fixing that attaches it to the chassis is known to shear off. If it's wobbling, it's on its way out. Seat runner guides can wear, too, so check for excessive movement.

Any wayward handling, or knocking up front could point to worn top mounts, particularly on the VR6. The engine mounts are known to wear as well, so listen out for any thumping under the bonnet when pulling away or changing gear.

The ABS can be problematic so some owners remove the dash warning light's bulb to mask issues – an MOT fail that will show up on a diagnostics check. Pre-'92 cars didn't have ABS.

Check the carpets for damp as the heater matrix can leak. If it has, the dash will need removing to fix it. No hot air from the heater also points to this. It'll cost more than £600 to replace.

Listen for whistling around the windscreen. Corrados are notoriously tricky to fit with replacement screens. Noise or water leaks mean new glass has been poorly installed.



Engines are strong but injectors can cause problems

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VW's rear-wheel steering system gives superb agility

← limited-slip diff at the same time, or change the first and second gear ratios for better acceleration. If you're doing this, the price will be more like £1200. The gears from the MK3 Golf TDI suit the G60's torque characteristics, with many G60s having them as a result.

Automatic cars are less sought after, and they're problematic as they age. Mitchell says an oil change every other year is a minimum. General servicing costs on the four-cylinder cars should be around £180 for an annual check-up, and £420 for a full service. The VR6 costs a bit more, but it's the only chain-driven engine, so you won't have

a four-yearly (or 60,000-mile) belt change, at around £300, to budget for.

The VR6's chain isn't entirely trouble-free. One of the tensioners requires the gearbox to be removed in order to check and replace it. It's often left, which wears the chain. If you're doing a clutch, add the cost of a new chain and those tensioners, and expect a bill in excess of £1500. VR6 cylinder heads can corrode. If the VR6 is difficult to start hot, or there's steam in the exhaust, it could be the head, and it'll cost around £1500.

Structurally, all should be sound, with any rust the result of stone damage or poor repairs. The suspension is strong,

too, although the rear requires the correct specification bushes for the passive rear-wheel steer to work – they cost around £300. The rear wheel bearings require regular adjustment for that same reason. The main subframe can corrode and it's no longer available new, although used ones can be found, or the Golf MK3's can be modified to fit.

The car's relatively humble mechanicals mean running one shouldn't prove to be too expensive. With prices starting at under £1000 and the very best around £5000, now's the time to see what all the fuss was about back when the Corrado was brand new. **A**

What we said then

Test date | 31.5.89

Passive rear-wheel steer turns an otherwise middle-of-the-road machine into a great drive

Design and engineering

The Corrado isn't pretty in a conventional sense, but its stumpy, rounded shape has real presence and near-perfect proportioning. It uses the Golf's floorpan, rack and pinion steering and MacPherson strut front suspension, while the rear torsion beam axle is lifted from the Passat.

Interior

Cleanly designed and solidly put together, the cabin possesses an air of quality and durability. What it lacks is flair, with the predominantly black trim of our test car verging on the oppressively drab. Front seats offer fair support but limited height adjustment. The split rear seat is a useful supplement to the modest boot.

Performance

Acceleration from a standstill is spirited rather than spectacular. Its 0-60mph time of 8.7secs, while respectable, wins no prizes in this class. VW claims a top speed of 132mph for the 16-valve Corrado, although that claim looks, if anything, a little on the conservative side.

Ride and handling

Perhaps the Corrado's strongest virtue is its balance. The 'passive' rear-wheel steer works superbly, and the car combines great chuckability with failsafe stability. It's a pity, then, that the ride isn't so well rounded.



Buying and owning

While hardly generous, the luggage bay is a reasonable shape, but with access limited by a high lip. Overall, the Corrado is impressively refined. It's only modestly thirsty, too. Our overall consumption of 29.5mpg is excellent.

Verdict

Essentially, it's a great driving machine.

Volkswagen Corrado 1.8 16V

Years produced 1989-1996 **Total made** 10,155 (UK sales) **Price** £16,699
Engine 4 cyls in line, 1781cc, petrol **Power** 136bhp at 6300rpm **Torque** 119lb ft at 4800rpm **0-60mph** 8.7sec **0-100mph** 23.9sec **Top speed** 130mph **Fuel economy** 29.5mpg

ONES WE FOUND



Price £1650 (1989, 102,000 miles)
 Grey 1.8-litre 16v Corrado in great condition with full service history. Only three owners. Lots of extras, including stainless steel sports exhaust and Momo steering wheel.
Call 07860 861117



Price £1850 (1992, 137,000 miles)
 A blue Corrado G60 that's had a lot of upgrade work done, including the installation of a stage 4 supercharger. MOT and tax are both due in August.
Call 07021 515899



Price £2900 (1993, 124,631 miles)
 Green Corrado VR6 in very good condition. Kept in a garage and comes with a partial service history. Taxed until the end of June with an MOT to August.
Call 07021 517086



Price £2950 (1995, 100,000 miles)
 Late VR6 in metallic green with black leather interior, manual gearbox, HPI certificate, air-con and a full service history. Excellent condition and low miles for its age.
Call 0208 660 3733



Price £3495 (1992, 124,000 miles)
 Red Corrado VR6 2.8. Outstanding condition throughout and with a full service history. Just had service and MOT, with parts and labour warranty.
Call 01442 768019