

VW New Beetle

Featuring 2.0 Litre



SCORECARD

Overtaking / pulling power

●●●○○

Fuel economy

●●●○○

Handling / steering

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Comfort / ease of control

●●●○○

Interior space / practicality

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Accident / injury avoidance

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Costs in service

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Depreciation prospects

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IF YOU WANT TO BOOST YOUR STREET CRED, the New Beetle is just the ticket. Perhaps it was the carnation that we put in its standard flower vase or bystanders' fond memories of the family Beetle years ago; whatever the reason, youths in baseball caps, giggly girls out with mum and elderly gents were all keen to have a good look.

Beneath its retro-styled skin the New Beetle is really a Golf GTi in disguise. Yet it's none the worse for that – the latest eight-valve GTi is arguably the nicest, most sensible Golf in the current line-up.

So the similarly set up Beetle is a two-litre Golf with attitude – and a few impracticalities as well, due to its shape. The windscreen has to be well forward and the pillars create serious blind areas for the driver who is already sitting on the wrong side – right-hand drive imports don't start until the end of this year. Passengers in the erect back seat have sufficient legroom, but their heads brush against the tailgate glass.

It's fine for the front occupants, however, with so much headroom and legroom that really lanky drivers should add it to their short-list. Lots of adjustments keep shorter drivers happy, as well, but more lumbar support should be provided. Good front seat tilt arrangements ease access to the back, and when it's flipped forwards, the rear backrest opens up a useful, nearly flat load area.

The New Beetle also has safety features that weren't thought of 25 years ago and its suspension is nicely set up to produce a smooth ride with deft steering response, with no sting in the tail when the electronic stability control is in use.

We think this latest two-litre engine is a marked improvement on the 20-valve 1.8 that the VW Group has been using in several of its models of late; the Beetle pulls more willingly from low speed and sounds more unruffled in general, with less gearchanging called for.

It may be a nostalgia trip and it's true that its shape imposes some restrictions, but this Beetle drives

HOW THE NEW BEETLE 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/kneerom - rear (cm)	Steering turns/ (p) circle (m)	Overall length (cm)
VW NEW BEETLE 2.0	4/1984/115	3460	10.4	20.7/15.1	35	24½/16	113	93/71	3.1/10.4	408
Ford Puma 1.7	4/1679/123	3565	8.6	18.9/13.2	37	24½/32	109	95/67	2.8/10.3	398
Vauxhall Tigra 1.6	4/1598/106	3480	9.5	22.7/15.6	38½	26/18	108	93/72	2.8/10.4	392
Audi A3 1.6	4/1595/101	3520	10.0	21.6/15.9	36	25/16	110	95/68	3.0/10.4	415
Peugeot 206 2.0GTi	4/1997/137	3430	7.2	16.7/12.4	35	25/20	108	94/66	3.1/10.8	384
VW Golf 1.6	4/1595/100	3540	10.8	23.3/17.3	35	27½/18	111	95/71	3.1/10.4	415

* all with ABS

(p) all with power steering

PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds

mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS		1.7	4.3	7.0	10.4
IN 5TH GEAR		5.0	9.8	15.0	20.7
IN 4TH GEAR		3.6	7.3	11.1	15.1

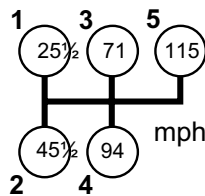
20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES		10.3/7.5		10.0/7.5	
			9.8/7.3		10.9/7.8

Maximum speeds

REVS PER MINUTE	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
		5700*		5700*	5700

* for best acceleration

Gearing gives 20.2 mph per 1000rpm
in top gear = 3460rpm at 70mph



FUEL CONSUMPTION

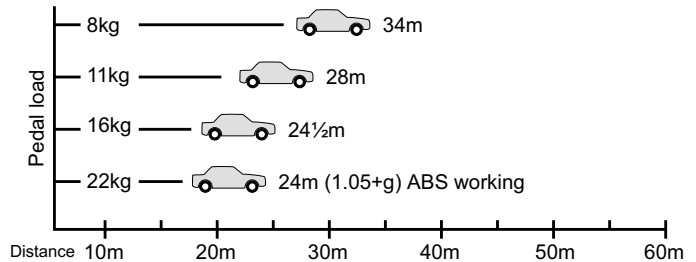
Fuel grade: unleaded Premium, 95 octane petrol	
Type of use - air conditioning off*	mpg
In the city - heavy traffic	23
In the country - quiet driving	42
Typical mpg overall	35
Realistic tank range †	48 litres/370 miles

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

BRAKES

Pedal feel ●●●○○ Behaviour in an emergency ●●●●○ Handbrake ●●●○○

Dry road stopping distance from 50mph (with standard ABS)
(A good-to-average best stop is about 26m at 15-20 pedal load)

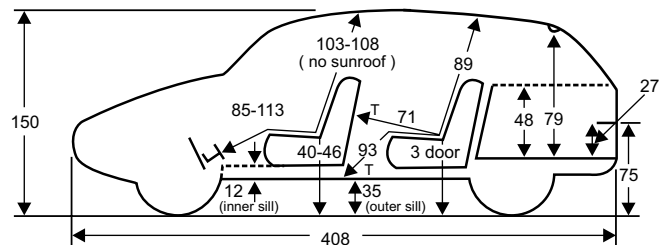


Fade test: pedal load required for a moderate (34m/.75g) stop:
8kg at start of test, 14kg at end of test (Ideal brakes show no change)

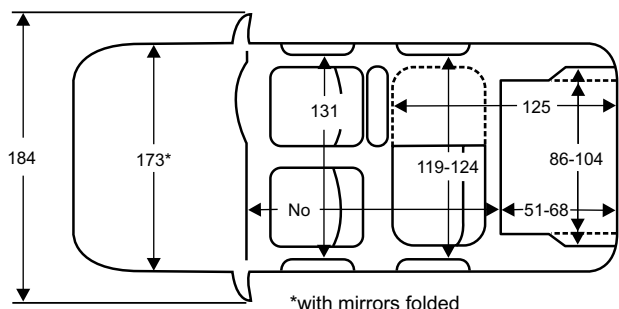
MEASUREMENTS

Centimetres

Three-door hatchback



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



LIKES AND GRIPES

Good wiper sweep and wash spray	...	but inadequate visors and thick pillars
Nice clutch and gears	...	but pronounced pedal offset
Electric mirrors and windows	...	but controls hard to decipher
Both front seats have height adjusters	...	but marginal lumbar support
High and low coolant temperature lamps	...	but no gauge
Radio/heater controls clearly backlit	...	but speedo obscure in poor daylight
Standard air conditioning	...	but can't deliver to screen and face vents together
Sunglasses holder and flower vase	...	but inadequate space for sizeable oddments