

Volkswagen Beetle in India - Review, Features & Pictures

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Volkswagen Beetle, the original people's car is coming to **India**, within a next few months. The new edition of the **Beetle Car** is now in **India** but the new bug is called the **New Beetle**, though you shouldn't be looking for badges to that effect anywhere in the car - because there aren't any. But hey, that is triumph of design for you. When Jay Mays attempted to recreate the iconic exterior form of the original bug, he made sure that the new car retained the fundamental lines. The result is a car that can be identified from space. Even bigger victory is when children who do not know the existence of the original still love the New Bug. Simply put, this is a suitably huggable automobile.



But there are a few things one should know before starting with a road test. Volkswagen has perfected the art of platform sharing and deep under the stunning shell of the bug lies a VW Golf (ditto with other VW Group models like the Skoda Octavia, Audi TT and so on). That means the new car features a front-engine, front-wheel drive lay out instead of the rear-engine, rear-wheel drive lay out of the original. No more 'bonnet' jokes alright?

The **New Beetle** was launched a decade back and has since spawned a convertible version too. The 'retro' design is so good that it has not received any major update till now - and as long as the car sells on the way it looks, it does not need any.

Beetle Exterior Design

Clean lines comprised of three adjoining semi-circles pay homage to the original beetle. But the designer has done a major clean-up job by creating a clutter-free, smooth profile that looks oh-so-cute from all angles. Seen in twilight you will wonder whether the car is 'going' or 'coming' though - because the tail lamps are housed on the fender like the headlamps up ahead. Brilliant. I have driven some serious machines on the streets of Mumbai and only exotic supercars got more eyeballs than the New Beetle. People stopped to ask about the price, fuel efficiency or just to tell me that the car looked great. If you want to attract some attention on the road, there are not many better choices in India today.

Volkswagen Beetle Interiors

'Thoroughly modern yet simple' is how one can put the interior design of the New Beetle. Cues to the car that inspired this creation are many - including large dials and, believe this, a flower vase by the side of the steering wheel.

A functional yet good looking three spoke steering wheel allows you to monitor the information laid out in the single large dial that houses the speedo, the rev counter and the fuel gauge among other things. Scores of round dials, switches and air-con vents keep up with the overall 'ovoid' design theme. Extremely good quality materials and a twin-tone treatment cannot be missed. The New Beetle feels very spacious for a boutique car.

Both the front seats 'lift-fold-move forward' easily to provide access to the rear seats. Unlike other (sportier) coupes, the rear seats are meant for humans and not just grocery and pets. What can be slightly annoying to the Indian buyer though is the vast area of plastic before the windscreen meets the bonnet - problem for those who like to see the edge of the car that they are driving. Nothing so serious that you cannot get used to it.

Beetle Performance

You do not buy a Beetle for burning rubber but hey, you have to live up to the 'Herby goes to Monte Carlo' reputation too, right? Only one engine option is made available for India and that is a 2000 cc, four cylinder unit that develops a relaxed 115 bhp. Not really a stonker of an engine going by today's standards.

The power is sent to front wheels through a six-speed automatic gear box. Despite the paucity of power on paper, the Bug is fun to drive. The steering is direct and power delivery smooth and without any lag. The power train lends a cruiser (than a bruiser) approach to the car - perfect then for a flowing road that borders the ocean! It takes 12 odd seconds to do 100 kph - so she aint no drag queen! That said the engine car manage to hold a steady 150 kph when you are blessed with an express highway.

Safety Measures

The New Beetle is as safe as a last generation Golf - which is not a bad thing at all. Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) and an electronic stability control comes standard along with four airbags (driver, passenger and side airbags).

Comfort On Indian Roads

The car runs on 15 inch wheels with substantial rubber - good enough to absorb pothole-impacts in sub-continental driving. Ride quality is surprisingly stiff for a car (and engine) of its kind. The ride height is enough to handle most speed breakers too. Admit it, this is the car you are going to show-boat in city streets - and the car is comfortable for that.

Volkswagen Beetle Road Test & Mileage

Our road test returned a consistent 10 kpl for a mixed driving cycle comprising of highways and suburban roads and it dipped to an alarming 8 kpl in congested metro driving conditions. At Rs 20.45 lakh (ex-showroom, Delhi) the Beetle is a buying decision that is to be taken with your heart. Compared to the Fiat 500 (Rs 15 lakh ex-show room Delhi) - the only real competition for this car, you get a more practical machine overall. You can always buy that Jetta or Passat and drive around with three empty seats and two unused doors. With the Beetle your commute will attain attitude. Get used to the kind of adulation usually reserved for film stars in our country though.

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