



A Change Will Do You Good!

Classic VW Beetle Changes 1946-1979

From its beginnings as The People's Car to its permanent stature as an automotive icon, the Volkswagen Beetle has a rich history. That history includes changes to design and improved options as the Beetle evolved. Mid America Motorworks put together a general review of the changes the Air Cooled VW Beetle, from its initial offering to the mass public in 1946 through 1979.

Beetle or Bug: Known Throughout The World As A Type 1

This guide applies to US models of the VW Beetle, as VW changed styles and details at other times in other countries. For example, the UK had Oval Beetles until 1959 and France had 6 Volt Beetles until 1974 on 1200cc standard models. Mid America Motorworks lists the turn signal and taillight sizes in some cases, because these are common year group identifiers. Engine sizes are not listed in year groups, because in many years, VW offered multiple engine options. Keep in mind, this is not an exhaustive list of changes throughout the years; however, it does cover the major upgrades. This list does not include all Air Cooled Volkswagen models and types, as this would take an entire book or "VW Bible." It does give you an overview of changes to help you identify what's correct on your Beetle.

Standard Beetle Sedan Type 1 1946 – 1953 Split Window



- 1946-1953 Split Rear Window, known as a "Split"
- Single tailpipe on muffler
- 1131cc 25 HP engine until December 1953
- Semaphore turn signals until late 1955
- Feb, 25, 1947: First Beetle arrives in the US
- More than 21 Million Beetles produced from 1938 to 2003
- Curb Weight: 1535 lbs
- Length: 159 inches
- Note Ribbed Bumpers



Standard Beetle Sedan Type 1 1953 – 1957 Oval Window



- April 1953-1957 Oval rear window, known as “Oval”
- 1192cc 36 HP engine until late 1960
- Plain blade bumpers
- Semaphore turn signals until late 1955
- 1955 One millionth Beetle produced
- 1956 Ragtop sunroof introduced
- 1952-1955 Heart shaped taillights
- 1955-1957 ‘W’ shaped decklid
- 1956 Twin tailpipe muffler introduced
- 1958-1965 Smaller VW logo on hubcaps.
- 1950-1959 Pull door handles

Standard Beetle Sedan Type 1 1958 – 1964



- 1956-1970 L-shaped seat tracks
- 1958-1964 Large rear window and bumpers with overriders introduced
- 1192cc 40bhp engine until 1965.
- Bullet shaped 6” x 1 7/8” front turn signal lens
- 1960-1964 Square push button door handles
- 1962-1967 larger taillight lens, 6 1/2” x 3 1/4”
- 1963 ‘Fresh air’ heating and muffler introduced
- 1963 Metal sunroof offered by VW
- 1965 Last ‘Domed’ hubcaps on Beetle
- 33mm, 1 5/8” running board molding 1950-1966
- 5x205 rims with domed hubcaps till 1965

Standard Beetle Sedan Type 1 1965 – 1967



- 1964-1969 Front turn signals 5 3/4” x 3 3/16”
- 1965-1967 1300cc, 42 HP and 1500cc, 45 HP engine introduced.
- King and link pin front axle replaced with Ball Joints
- 1965 Start of VW VIN numbering system, 2nd number as model type, third number as year
- 1966 & 1967 2 year only 4” wide wheel rims with flatter two year only hubcaps
- 1965 and 1966 One year only door handles different both years
- 1966 Last 6 Volt Beetles (1967 in Europe)

Standard Beetle Sedan Type 1 1968 – 1970



- Padded dash and gas filler door on front panel moved from under hood. 1600cc 48 HP single port engine.
- Larger taillights and from 1970 front turn signals. “Europa” box shaped bumper introduced.
- 1967-1972 18mm, 11/16” running board molding
- 1968-1972 High back seats introduced with 2 buttons below headrest
- Taillight lens 7 3/4” x 4 1/4”
- 1968-1978 Paddle style door handles
- 1969 First IRS (CV joint) rear suspension on manual shift bugs.
- Dual circuit master cylinder from 1968

Standard Beetle Sedan Type 1 1971 - 1974



- 1600cc 50 HP Dual port engine
- 1970-1978 Larger front turn signals 7 3/4” x 4 1/16”
- 1970 Wheel width increased 4” to 4 1/2”
- 1971-1972 Taillight lens 8 3/4” x 4 1/2”
- 1971-1978 Slightly larger rear window
- 1971-1972 ‘T’ shaped seat tracks
- 1971-1978 Larger indent in door for fingerplate
- 1972-1974 Dash pad changed
- 1972 first year paper element air filter
- 1973 start of plastic seat frame covers
- 1973 start of mounting front seat in ‘volcano’ pedestal
- Reflectors on side of taillight housings
- 1973-1978 ‘Round’ taillight lens 9 1/4” x 6 7/8”
- 1973-1978 9mm, 3/8” running board molding

Standard Beetle Sedan Type 1 1975 – 1978



- 1974 Larger round impact shock bumpers mounts (US and Canada only)
- 1974 Heavier larger bumper introduced to comply with FDA regulations
- 1975 First fuel injected Beetles
- 1975-1978 GT Sports wheels by Lemmerz available
- Return to single tailpipe on muffler with single outlet on right side of rear apron
- Rear apron bulged to prevent muffler heat fading paint
- 1977-1978 Seat tilt lever moved to side of backrest
- 1977-1978 Detachable headrests

Super Beetle Sedan Type 1 1971 – 1972



- Spare tire lays flat under hood
- Flat windshield.
- MacPherson strut front suspension, coil springs.
- Known in Europe as 1303 (1300cc model) and 1303S (1600cc model)
- From door hinge pillar back same as standard Beetle
- T Shaped seat track rails
- Taillight lens 8 3/4" x 4 1/2"
- Reflectors on side of taillight housings
- Three bolt ball joints
- 1972 Marathon wheels by Lemmerz introduced

Super Beetle Sedan Type 1 1973 - 1978



- 1973-on curved windshield
- Spare wheel lays flat under hood
- 1974-on eavier front bumper
- 1974 Impact Bumper shocks introduced
- 1975-on Fuel injected
- 1974-1975 'Jeans Beetle' available in Europe. 1200cc Blue jeans finish to seats. All moldings, handles and bumpers black anodized finish. Jeans decal on door and rear panel available in yellow and orange only with GT Sports wheels by Lemmerz
- 1978 Last German manufactured sedans.

Beetle Convertible, Cabriolet or "Vert"

1948 in Osnabruck, Wilhelm Karmann converted the first Beetle into a Convertible. Production was approved by VW and started in 1949. 331,847 cabriolets were manufactured, with production ending January 10, 1980.

Standard Beetle Convertible Type 1



- Single tailpipe on muffler
- 1131cc 25 HP engine until December 1953, followed by 1192cc 36 HP
- Semaphore turn signals until late 1955
- Curb Weight: 1755 lbs
- Length: 159 inches
- Note Ribbed Bumpers
- Clean air intakes on decklid convertible only
- 1950-1960 Many small details on decklid design

Standard Beetle Convertible Type 1



- Paul Newman's 1963 Convertible
- 300 HP Mid Engine Ford V8
- Raised sills to assist structural stability
- Built by Jerry Eisart, Indy racecar builder
- Rear mounted 5 Speed ZF transmission
- Suspension, brakes and steering all from 1963-era Indy racecars
- Finned front drums to assist brake cooling
- Aluminum radiator in front with cooling fans
- Later restoration cut air ducts in front hood to assist cooling

Standard Beetle Convertible Type 1



- Curb weight: 1671.5 lbs
- 1962-1967 Taillight lens, 6 1/2" x 3 1/4"
- 1964-1969 Front turn signals 5 3/4" x 3 V
- 1965 Major body changes and upgrades through 1970
- 1965 Start of VW VIN numbering system, 2nd number as model type, third number as year
- 1965-1967 1300cc, 42 HP and 1500cc 45 HP engines introduced
- Ball Joints replaced King and link pin front axle
- 1966-1967 Flatter, one-year-only hubcaps
- 1966 Last 6 Volt Beetles



Super Beetle Convertible Type 1 1971-1972



- 1971-1972 Convertibles were all Super Beetles with flat windshield and spare wheel laying flat
- 1972 Marathon wheels by Lemmerz introduced
- MacPherson Strut coils springs on front
- T Shaped seat track rails
- Taillight lens 8 ¾" x 4 ½"
- Reflectors on side of taillight housings
- Three bolt ball joints

Super Beetle Convertible Type 1 1974 – 1979



- All convertibles were Super Beetles with curved windshield
- Spare wheel lays flat under hood
- 1973 Major changes to trim and moldings
- 1974 Impact shock bumper mounts
- 1974 Impact Bumper shocks introduced
- 1974-1979 Larger impact bumpers
- 1975 First fuel injected bugs
- 1975-on Fuel Injected
- 1975-78 GT Sports wheels by Lemmerz available (shown)
- 1979 Last German manufactured Convertibles

