



From Cargo Van to Pop Culture Icon

Air Cooled VW Bus Changes 1950-1979

The Volkswagen Type 2 is affectionately known as the Bus in the US and the Camper in the UK. It has secured a place in pop culture as the quintessential ride for road trips and adventures. While it has become a symbol of fun, freedom and the open road, the Bus began as a standard cargo and passenger vehicle. Join Mid America Motorworks to review the evolution of the VW Bus.

Bus Known As A Type 2

This information applies to US models, as VW changed styles and details at other times in other countries. The Volkswagen Type 2 received this factory designation as a style derived from the original VW Beetle, the Type 1. Produced from 1950 to 1979, the VW Bus was officially known as the Transporter, Samba, Pickup and Half-Cab based on various body configurations. This guide provides an overview of the changes that took place in the production life of the VW Bus. This is not an exhaustive list of changes throughout the years; however it does cover the major upgrades.

Split Window Bus Type 2



The First Type 2 Transporter - 8th March 1950

- April 1947 Dutchman Ben Pon sketched first Bus
- March 1950 The first Bus came off production line. Known as Split Window because of the Split Front Windshield, as opposed to the Split Bug Rear window.
- 1131cc 24 bhp Bug Engine
- 1953 Engine upgraded to 1192cc 30 bhp
- 1959 Upgraded to 1192cc 40hp
- 1963 1493cc 51hp introduced
- 1967-1970 1588cc 54hp
- 1971 1588cc 56hp



- 1956 “Samba” or 23 Window Bus used mostly for airport transportation.
- Small windows in roof are to enable travelers to see scenery better. Also has full length canvas sunroof. 1956 production moved from Wolfsburg to Hanover.
- In Australia Samba was officially named the “Alpine”
- Note Small 2 1/2” diameter front turn signals



- 1961 Westy conversion Westfalia-Werke Camper Conversion
- Westfalia converted approx. 1,000 Buses between 1951 and 1958
- Panel vans were also made as double door with cargo doors both sides.
- 1964 President Johnson imposed a 25% tariff on all light trucks imported into the US, because the Europeans had imposed a tax on US chicken exports. After this, most VW Buses imported were campers



Split Window Bus-Pickup Type 2



- The pickup was very successful as a construction truck in Europe as was the Doka (Double Cab)
- Note the painted hubcaps that VW used on all base models, including the later commercially available Vanagons
- No overriders on base model
- Storage boxes under rear bed commonly called "Treasure Chests." These run right though to other side so longer, heavy items could be stored along with tools.

Split Window Bus Type 2



- 1963 Camper
- 1963-1971 Bus taillight lenses 6 5/8" x 4 1/2"
- Models named unofficially by number of windows: 11 window, 15 window, 21 window and Samba 23 window.
- Note larger, round front turn signals 3.5" diameter
- 1967 Split Window Bus production ended
- Note Bumper overriders on later Split Buses



Bay Window Bus, Early – Type 2 1968 - 1971



- 1968 “Bay window” Bus introduced with one piece windshield, 12 volt electrics and ball joint front suspension
- 1968-1972 Curved bumpers
- 1968-1970 Front drum brakes
- Domed early style hubcaps until 1971
- 1968-1970 1600cc Single port engine
- 1971-1972 Body style upgraded. Larger rear taillights, box shaped bumpers, front brake rotors, wheels changed to 5/112 pattern with flat hubcaps.
- 1971-1972 Crossover model with late wheels but curved bumpers and turn signals low down. Last 1600cc motors in US, Dual Port for one year only.
- 1968-1972 Front turn signals 8 3/4” x 3 5/8”
- 1968 Engine air intakes moved to behind rear windows

Bay Window Bus, Late – Type 2 1972 - 1979



- 1971 Engine air intakes made larger to supply larger engines
- 1972 Front and rear wheel arches given rounded flare for styling and to keep body cleaner
- 1972-1974 1700-1800cc, 62-67 hp Type 4 “Pancake” motor with dual carbs
- 1973-1979 Body style remained same
- 1973-1979 Front turn signals 5 9/16” x 4 1/4”
- 1973-1979 Rear Taillights 12 1/4” x 4 5/8”
- 1975-1979 2000cc 70 bhp, Fuel Injected motor

