

# 1973 VW SUPER BEETLE

1973 Volkswagen Super Beetle

Owners: Bernie and Janice Taulborg Collection

Original price: \$2,300.00 (base) – \$3,100.00 (convertible) (In 1973: average household income: \$12,500; average home cost \$32,500; gallon of gas: 40 cents)

Number made: Total VW production, 1973 – 1,128,784

Engine, etc.: 96.7 cu. in.; 46 hp; 4-speed manual; rear engine, rear wheel drive; 1,740 lbs.

Adolf Hitler wanted a people's car capable of transporting three children and two adult at speeds of 60 mph. The car had to be inexpensive, costing the same as a motorcycle. Ferdinand Porsche was commissioned to produce such a vehicle. Various theories exist as to where the ultimate design originated, including the Tatra vehicles and Mercedes-Benz 170H.

In 1968, Volkswagen was selling over one million Beetles per year in the United States. U. S. autos including the Chevrolet Vega and Ford Pinto had entered the compact car market and offered stiff competition to the Beetle in terms of price, room, and fuel economy in a time of rising gas prices.

VW re-worked the Beetle, reduced its price, and introduced the Super Beetle. The first Super Beetle, the 1302, was finished in August 1970. It had a larger luggage compartment, greater comfort, and utility. The decision, costly for VW, required a new suspension, new chassis, and every panel on the front end had to be redesigned – rounder fenders, larger wider hood, new spare tire well, and more.

In February, 1972, the 15,007,034th Beetle was sold, giving VW the world production record for the most produced single make of car in history – breaking the 60-year-old record set by the Ford Model T.

The 1973 model, the improved Super Beetle called the 1303, was a huge step forward. To comply with proposed U. S. safety regulations for distance between passengers and the front windshield, Volkswagen introduced a sharply curved windshield which gave a remarkable 42% increase in visibility and improved aerodynamics as well. The hood was shortened and lost the traditional VW circle logo.

It had a full sized padded dash that replaced the traditional flat one in use since 1958. The redesigned air vents and dash board were made to accommodate future air bags and improve ventilation inside the car. It had the largest taillights ever installed in a VW and most likely any car of the era. However, they earned the name of "elephant's feet" in VW circles and were thought to be ugly compared to the previous "tombstone" taillights. Cargo space in the trunk was 9 cu. feet, an increase of 86%. Another added nice touch was a passenger side vanity mirror on the sun visor.

The 1303 sedan ceased production in 1976 and the convertible followed suit in 1980.

Sources: <http://www.superbeetles.com/history.htm>

<http://www.conceptcarz.com/vehicle/z12214/Volkswagen-Beetle.aspx>