

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

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CONCOURS HIGHLIGHTS
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Volkswagen
ID. BUZZ

VEHICLES • EQUIPMENT • TECHNOLOGY • PEOPLE • EVENTS • DESTINATIONS • ATTRACTIONS



Past meets future

BY JOE SAGE

HIGHLY INTRIGUING, WITH MORE FUTURE TO FOLLOW

Everyone has a great VW bug story, and almost as many have one with the VW bus, both of them ubiquitous at the happiest end of the scale, especially during the turbulent and adventuresome 1960s and '70s, especially here in the States. Fun. Simple. Useful. And economical, to buy and to operate. Easy to fix (which was fortunate, given the ridiculous miles some people piled on them). It's no wonder people have long clamored for them to return, or something like them.

Volkswagen did bring back the bug—twice—earlier this century, first as the highly stylized New Beetle, then as a more conventional simply-named

Beetle, with shared modern chassis and power-trains and to enthusiastic audiences.

But everyone still wanted to see the bus again. Appropriately named, the new VW ID. BUZZ not only answers the age-old question of whether the VW bus might ever return, but it returns as a highly anticipated addition to the growing VW EV stable.

The commonalities of style and form factor between the classic VW bus and the new VW BUZZ are readily apparent. There are also evolutionary differences large and small.

Huge interior capacity carries forward similarly. The US version has three rows, and cargo volume

is huge in any configuration (see specs).

We were surprised to receive one in pure Metro Silver Metallic, as promotional materials had all shown it in two-color schemes, more in line with the classic and available in a wide range of colors (most in color plus white, one in red and silver). There is also an all-black. Despite the nostalgic appeal of the two-tones, we also liked our silver sample. Atop its already long, lean stature and shape, it makes it almost a whole different vehicle, reminding us variously of an Airstream trailer or a self-propelled rail car from the streamliner era. So, we'll take one silver and one two-tone, please.

This color helps with those perceptions, but its length is what defines it, almost as long as a single-cab full-size pickup. And yet it proved highly maneuverable, easy to navigate and park in town. (In fact, although we generally tend toward all-wheel-drivers, the rear-drive version has an almost five foot tighter turning circle, an intriguing variable.) We wondered about the possibility of a future shorter two-row version, discovering that this already exists as an alternate build in Europe.

Its length also suggests room for a very large battery, though its range (231 miles) is not all that much. A shorter version would presumably be even less. (Europeans generally do shorter drives.)

Despite sliding doors—plural, both sides—the ID. BUZZ is not considered a minivan, but rather a multipurpose vehicle. This is in line with another variable we'd be curious to see, a panel-van version, as in the classic microbus. (Of course, you could accomplish this yourself, various ways.)

Styling is well executed, tip to tail. Despite its very clean and streamlined look overall, the ID. BUZZ bears many a compelling detail, from lights to windows and more. Its echo of the classic microbus's V-shaped front trim works well and is in line with its build, which suggests a frunk (front trunk), but is simply minor service access. One neighbor particularly liked its wheels, which we agreed are a neat combination of the super-aerodynamic discs of the first EVs and the multispoke alloys of most current vehicles.

Most notably, perhaps, where the original bus had your feet and legs right up against the front wall of the vehicle, highly vulnerable in a crash, the new one of course has a full crash impact zone, and the driver is farther back than it seems. Yet the driver's seat position, high and fairly upright, gives you much the same commanding feel of the classic, just without that risk. (You would think this might also allow a thicker battery, and

(cont'd)

Bug, beetle, bus and microbus are all basically nicknames, although at times informally formalized. Capitalize them or not, at your whim. The bus has borne such official names as Transporter, Kombi, Bulli, Station Wagon or simply Type 2. "VW bus" or "VW microbus" are immediately recognizable. And "VW bus" sets the stage here, for "VW Buzz," or officially the "Volkswagen ID. BUZZ."



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY.....	Hannover, Lwr Saxony, Germany
ROWS / SEATS	3 / 6 (note: RWD is 7)
MOTOR / TRANS BUILD	Germany / Germany
PARTS CONTENT	Germany 25% / China 24% / US/Can 1%
MOTORS	(AWD) F: ASM asynchronous; R: PSM permanent magnet synchronous
BATTERY	Li-ion, 91/86 kWh (gross/net), 208 cells, 13 cell modules, 442 V
HP/TORQUE	335 hp / F: 99, R: 413 lb-ft
DRIVETRAIN	4MOTION® AWD
TRANSMISSION	2 single-sp, front & rear
TOP SPEED	99 mph
SUSPENSION	F: strut-type w lower control arms, coils, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar; R: multilink w coils, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar
STEERING	electric rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 15.0x1.2 vented disc; R: 13.0x2.0 drum brakes
WHEELS	F/R: 8Jx20 / 9.5Jx20 alum alloy
TIRES	F/R: 235/50 R20 / 265/45 R20 a/s
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	195.4 / 127.5 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	6.3 in
APPR / DEPART / BRKVR	17.5 / 19.5 / 13.6°
TURNING CIRCLE	AWD 42.7 ft (note: RWD is 37.4 ft)
HEADROOM (w/o glass roof):	
.....(F/2/3)	40.6 / 41.0 / 38.7 in
LEGROOM (F/2/3)	37.5 / 39.9 / 42.4 in
CARGO CAPACITY	18.6 / 75.5 / 145.5 cu.ft
WEIGHT	(AWD) 6197 lb
GVWR	7408 lb
TOW CAPACITY	(unbraked) 1650 lb; (braked) 3500 lb
CHARGING TIME:	
DC FAST CHARGE	10-80 percent: 26 min
ELEC CONSUMPT (COMB)	42 kWh/100 miles
RANGE	231 miles
MPGe	87/74/80 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$67,995
PAINT: Metro Silver Metallic	nc
INTERIOR: "Copper" leatherette	nc
BATTERY: 91 kWh	nc
DESTINATION CHARGE	1550
TOTAL	\$69,545

2025 VW ID.BUZZ LINEUP

	RWD	AWD
Pro S	\$59,995	—
Pro S Plus	63,495	▼ \$67,995
1st Edition	65,495	69,995

maybe it did, but we wondered if even another half-inch or inch of height could have added notable battery range. These are the tradeoff areas engineers work on the hardest.)

One surprise is that, despite the vehicle's generous length, front legroom is just 37.5 inches, far less than most front rows (typically 40-42 inches or more). Compounded by this is the distance from front door jamb—farther back than usual, to accommodate front wheels within such a short front nose—tight enough to snag your foot or pants leg on the seat track upon egress.

You will notice the updated cab format as you first step in—the A-pillars are sizable and far forward, seeming to block significant areas of your view, but you quickly get used to this especially in ever-changing motion, with any blind spots largely forgotten. Its deep instrument panel includes a large center bulge for forward-facing cameras or sensors, but despite being inside, this reads somewhat like a hood scoop from the driver's position, not objectionable, in fact kind of cool.

The floor is flat, which contributes to its spacious, open feel and vaguely seems to echo the classic, till we recall that those, despite being rear-transaxle and rear-engine, did have a hump for the shift cable. Be forewarned—if you put anything on the passenger side floor, whether a bag of groceries or a 40-pound package, it will likely slide straight over to your feet and pedals with force, at your first right turn. If we owned one, we'd be devising some sort of a block, and we wonder whether VW may do that themselves.

Driving is top notch for go-power—loads of power and torque, with smooth range through its 4MOTION combination of two single-speed transmissions, front and rear. Turns are precise and belie its significant wheelbase. The long wheelbase and extremely short overhangs make urban speed-bumps smooth and easy.

The one thing that disappointed us in the drive experience was its braking. We had noted that it has rear drum brakes, not very common, but not out of the question. Possible reasons could include cost-cutting, but that seems unlikely in a somewhat pricey and thoroughly outfitted vehicle. More likely, we might guess it has to do with factors of space, heat or both. But we were never fully comfortable with the brakes' response. We will follow up on this with engineers when we get a chance.

Many factors of the ID. BUZZ had us contemplating its best uses. Interior volume, generous in both seating and cargo space, is ideal for the proverbial soccer team. It also transmits a lust for a good long trip on the open road—partly as it evokes tales of the classic bus, partly from the Airstream or rail car feel. But that's when you realize its range is pretty limited, which adds up to a lot of

(At right, top to bottom) The classic Volkswagen microbus; the new ID. BUZZ (shown here in Mahi Green Metallic and Candy White); two wheelbases available now in Europe (Länger und Kürzer, or longer and shorter); and VW's smallest-yet new EV, the ID. EVERY1, just introduced.

long charging stops, even just traveling one state away in any direction, or even within Arizona.

One friend asked whether the AC is effective—up into summer-in-Phoenix levels—given its large interior volume, but we had no way to know that at this time of year.

It is guaranteed that every first drive includes mysteries in the interface (a topic in itself, as there are any number of situations where someone has to drive someone else's vehicle, perhaps urgently). Most, an owner will get used to, while some are forever—which may include the oddities of arriving, starting, shutting down and leaving. You can indeed start or stop via the usual button, but you don't really need to—the vehicle assumes when you've arrived and when you're done. In short, we felt downsides to the uncertainty in this. A power window setup using just two switches for four windows (plus a non-intuitive contextual touch panel in with the mirror controls to access the rear ones) is another area of intrigue, long story short.

The ID. BUZZ is a successful styling drill, head-turner and conversation-starter, no question of that. Its length makes for a bold presence, and we generally like it. A good handful of engineering details and human factor nitpicks in particular clearly did catch our attention, though most can be conquered via familiarity. As for brakes, we're curious about an upgrade in the future and would investigate our own potential upgrade if we bought now.

In addition to the shorter wheelbase or panel van possibilities, we would be curious to see gasoline versions of any or all. The full Volkswagen ID lineup's roadmap has been clear, but the crystal ball is currently a little muddier, industrywide.

As the classic VW bug and bus had their family-of-two synergies, anyone familiar with the popular ID. 4 EV, already here for several years, will find commonalities, as well. In fact, the ID family is more extensive, and the small end is headed even smaller, at least in Europe as of now, including an ID. 3, joined now by a just-this-minute-introduced ID. EVERY1, set to be the smallest, most affordable and most efficient in the family to date.

Although we generally spot any notable new vehicle quite promptly and in multiples around these parts, as of the moment we have only seen one of these in the wild, and a search of the online consumer site showed only one in stock at a dealer.

They may proliferate like mad, or not. But if this interests you, we suggest you get your name and deposit in early. First-year nitpicks aside, the VW ID. BUZZ is almost certain to sell like hotcakes. ■

