

Simplicity BY JOE SAGE

It might seem we always get the fanciest, most luxurious, most powerful, most off-road-worthy version of whatever we're sampling. And that is often the case, but not always. Case in point: of seven versions—four trim levels and, in three out of four of those, a choice of front- or all-wheel drive—this is the bottom, or entry, version.

The 2025 Volkswagen Taos has been refreshed this year inside and out. All have the same 174-hp 1.5L turbo-four. All are quite affordable, starting in the mid-20s and hitting the very finest in mid-30s. Thus value is a theme throughout—which brings us back to perhaps why we received the base unit, to make sure none of us miss that key point.

Value, by definition, is available at any price point, when quality, price, features and service are in line. Nonetheless, details that are merely expected at the top end are more likely to be delights at the more affordable end.

Power-to-weight is quite sufficient in this small but comfortable unit. Its 8-speed automatic is well mapped, though it may present a minor delay in

aggressive maneuvers. It does have a supremely convenient manumatic mode—the traditional approach, distinct from drive modes—though we noted that we did not go for it often. It's a pretty sweet automatic, as is. Ours was a front-driver (we would hope to pay \$1700 for AWD, by habit), but even when maximally challenged, entering a busy boulevard with sudden acceleration and a 90-degree twist, torque steer was blessedly absent.

We often marvel at how VW does, in fact, keep their relative pricing down (notably within the overall VW Group family), as various tech elements and features have become expected at all price points, industrywide. Some is done with materials and finishes, of course. But simplifying features for price positioning sometimes seems challenging enough, you wish they'd just included them.

A base trim may be satisfying as is, for some, or motivational for others who will someday move up the ladder. Either way, our \$25k Taos evoked the simple pleasures of simpler times, even reminding us of the joys of many people's first car, the eminently capable VW bug. Great value can be found in simplicity. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Ciudad Pueblo, Mexico
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD	Mexico / US
PARTS CONTENT	Mexico 39% / US/Canada 15%
ENGINE	1.5L inline-4, turbo/intercooled, 16v, DOHC, TSI, alum/alum, cast iron crank
HP/TORQUE	174 hp / 184 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	11.5:1
TRANSMISSION	8-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN	FWD
SUSPENSION	F: strut-type w lower control arms, coils, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar; R: multilink w coils, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar
STEERING	rack & pinion, elec pwr assist
BRAKES	F: 12.3 x1.0 vented; R: 10.7 x0.4 solid
WHEELS / TIRES	7Jx17 alum alloy / 215/55 R17 a/s
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	175.9 / 105.5 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	7.6 in
APPR / DEPART / BRKOVER	17.5 / 25.0 / 18.2°
TURNING CIRCLE	34.8 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	40.7 / 39.8 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	40.1 / 37.9 in
CARGO CAPACITY	24.9 / 99.5 cu.ft
WEIGHT	3441 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	reg unl / (FWD) 13.2 gal
MPG	(FWD) 28/36/31 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$24,995
DESTINATION CHARGE	1425
TOTAL	\$26,420

2025 VW TAOS LINEUP	FWD	AWD
S	▼ \$24,995	\$26,695
SE	27,895	29,595
SE Black	30,145	31,845
SEL		34,695

