



Volkswagen Up!

Kartoffeln with pizza

Review | Kartoffeln (potatoes) with pizza, that sounds like an unusual combination. Yet that's the combination with which Volkswagen wants to definitely conquer the market for small cars. Traditionally the Italians are masters at building small, desirable cars. Germans build large, solid cars. The Up! now combines the two: the compact size and eagerness of an Italian with German know-how and build quality.

Volkswagen introduces the "Up!" (always written with an exclamation mark) not in Frankfurt or Berlin, but in the Mecca of small cars: Rome. In this fantastic chaos a large car is highly unpractical. Because parking space is at a premium, every centimetre counts. So the Up! feels right at home in Rome.

Italian design

Even better: the Up! fits right in between the many Italian designer cars, because the smallest Volkswagen has been designed by an Italian (Walter de'Silva). The Up! is characterised by pure, simple lines with no thrills. Thanks to well balanced proportions the car looks and feels just right. The boot lid is always executed in black, no matter what the colour of the car. Do notice the angle in the rear side window, which makes for a playful silhouette (but makes it harder for small children to look outside from the rear seat).



The perky looks can also be found inside. Again it's the details that make the difference between a simple city car and a smart, compact car. The Up! can be personalised with colourful upholstery, a special gear lever or a dashboard in a contrasting colour.

The front seats are constructed out of one piece; one of the many ways Volkswagen managed to cut costs. The integrated headrests are still big enough to make

the Up! safe for tall drivers as well. Because the seats offer some side support, the occupants feel like they are sitting in the car rather than on top of it (as is the case with several other small cars).

Headroom in the front is above average, legroom is decent. Space in the back strongly depends on the willingness of the driver and front passenger to move the seats forward. The boot floor can be adjusted in height. The boot isn't wide or long, but with the floor in the lowest position it is very deep. In the end the Up! offers a bit more space than usual.

Italian handling

The wheels are placed on the far corners. This not only helps with the boot space but makes the Up! very stable as well. In city traffic braking is optional. The Up! corners like it is on rails and feels like it wants to speed. ESP comes as standard, but roadholding is so good that this electronic stability programme only comes in handy in slippery conditions.



Visibility is excellent, making it even easier to manoeuvre the Up! through heavy traffic. The direct steering adds a certain fun factor. Because overhang in the front and rear is minimal, the Up! isn't afraid of a curb or speed bump either. The turning circle measures a modest 9.8 metres, which is small but not as tiny as champions like the Smart ForTwo and Toyota iQ.

The punchy 1.0 litre engine instantly reacts to the throttle, making driving the Up! even more of a joy. Up

to about 100 km/h (60 mph) performance is good. The three-cylinder engine is audible, but thanks to a certain refinement the sound isn't disturbing at all. On the contrary: because the engine can be heard, the car seems faster.



To encourage the driver to save fuel, the shift indicator is standard. A stop/start system isn't available yet and that is a serious shortcoming for a car like this. A day of city traffic cost 10 litres per 100 km and that could have been much less if stop/start were available.



German know-how

So far the Up! has been seen from an Italian point of view. A German has a completely different look on cars. A German car should be built well, no matter what it looks like. Don't expect any miracles from a car in this price range, but for a vehicle like this the Up! is constructed very well. Trim levels can be summarised as simple, yet thoughtful.

At surprisingly low prices the Up! can be fitted with high-tech options. The most interesting of which is "City Emergency Braking": a system that brakes automatically for obstacles at speeds of 30 km/h or lower. This effectively avoids typical head-to-tail collisions. A test (with an inflatable Up!) proves the system works perfectly and is certainly worth the price.



In cooperation with Navigon, Volkswagen has developed a tailor-made satnav for the Up! The unit is portable, so the Up! can be parked anywhere without risk of theft. The extra value above other portable

units is that this one is integrated with the trip computer and the audio system. It also works as an MP3 player and Bluetooth carkit.

Regrettably the system is confusing to operate the instructions from the satnav are shown painfully slowly. Another disadvantage: the mounting point replaces an air vent, so only two vents in the corners remain to blow fresh air into the cabin.



Autobahn

While an Italian car spends most of the time in the city, the Autobahn is the domain of the German car. Thanks to its long wheelbase (2.42 metres) and wide track the Up! is more stable than usual. At high speeds wind is clearly audible, while the engine and tyres hardly make any extra noise.

Depending on the chosen version, the engine develops either 60 or 75 PS. In the city the difference between the two is hardly noticeable. On the freeway the 75 PS unit offers a bit more torque, but the difference is slim. In both cases a sprint from 100 to 120 km/h has to be measured with a calendar rather than a stopwatch. It's only when the engine is allowed to rev (shift down) that the Up! also performs adequately on the open road.



In all cases the 75 PS engine performs slightly better, but the 60 PS already does well enough. Because the 75 PS engine is more expensive both to buy and run, the basic model is to be preferred. On country lanes this engine is very frugal. A test drive outside the city cost just 4.4 litres per 100 km (64.2 mpg) according to the trip computer!

Conclusion

Kartoffeln (potatoes) with pizza may not sound like a tasteful combination. German ingenuity in combination with Italian charm may sound a lot more attractive. And that's exactly what the Volkswagen Up! has to offer. Volkswagen's new base model has been designed by an Italian and feels right at home in the big city.

Thanks to German know-how the Up! has an exceptional high build quality, while safety and fuel economy haven't been forgotten either. While Volkswagen is highly successful in all segments of the market, it never managed to break through in the lowest segment (with the Lupo and Fox). The Up! has everything to bring Volkswagen the success it never had with its predecessors. ■



Specifications

Volkswagen Up! move up!

Size and weight



Length x width x height	354 x 164 x 149 cm
Wheelbase	242 cm
Kerb weight	829 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Fuel capacity	35 l
Luggage space	251/951 l
Tyre size	165/70R14

Engine and performance



Capacity	999 cc
Cylinders / valves	3/4
Max power	60 PS @ 5000 rpm
Max torque	95 Nm @ 3000 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	14.4 secs
Top speed	160 km/h
Average mileage	4.5 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	5.6 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	3.9 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	105 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 8,970
Price base model	Â£ 7,995