

A Familiar Groove

Latest Taos SUV is a Small Volkswagen With Big Intent

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

There is nothing flashy or disruptive about the 2026 Volkswagen Taos, and that is largely the point.

This is a compact SUV aimed squarely at people who already like the way Volkswagens drive and don't feel the need to relearn their car every time they replace it. After a week behind the wheel, the Taos feels less like a trend-chaser and more like a familiar tool that has simply been updated for modern tastes.

This is a compact SUV that still drives like a Volkswagen. The steering is firm and direct. The suspension tuning leans toward control rather than cushion, and the whole thing feels happier being hustled through traffic than merely floating along.

It is not fast, but it is responsive enough to feel awake, which counts for a lot in daily driving.

Power comes from a turbocharged 1.5-liter four-cylinder making 174 horsepower. On paper, those numbers look fine, but on the road the Taos delivers only so-so acceleration. It will not surprise you at a stoplight, yet it is smooth and predictable once up to speed.

The real win here is the eight-speed automatic transmission, which shifts cleanly and avoids the



The 2026 Volkswagen Taos features clean lines and a confident, understated stance.

droning misery of a CVT. That alone makes the Taos more pleasant than many rivals.

Ride quality matches the Taos' sporty character. It is on the firm side, especially over broken pavement, but never harsh. The payoff is confident handling and a planted feel on winding roads.

The SE trim brings a generous list of features for the money, including a digital gauge cluster, wireless smartphone

integration and dual-zone climate control. Nothing feels flashy, but it doesn't feel bare-boned, either.

Cargo space is another pleasant surprise. For a vehicle this size, the Taos swallows more gear than expected, making it a legitimate option for small families or weekend trips. The rear seat is usable for adults, and the wide-opening hatch makes loading easy.

Design is another strong point. The Taos looks

handsome without trying too hard. It is clearly a Volkswagen, with clean lines and just enough detail to keep it from fading into the background. It avoids the polarizing shapes that plague some competitors, which should help it age well.

The biggest challenge for the Taos comes from within its own showroom. The larger Tiguan often sits close in price, and buyers may be tempted by the extra space. Still, the Taos counters with

better maneuverability, a more playful driving feel and a price that undercuts the Tiguan when comparably equipped.

Fuel economy is solid, with EPA ratings that make it easy to live with as a daily driver.

In the end, the Taos makes sense for buyers already inclined toward the VW brand.

Think of it as a spiritual successor to the Golf, reimagined for an SUV-loving world.

AT A GLANCE

WHAT WAS TESTED?

2026 Volkswagen Taos SE 1.5 TSI (\$29,820). Options: Premium paint (\$455). Price as tested (including \$1,425 destination charge): \$30,275

BY THE NUMBERS

Wheelbase: 105.5 in.
Length: 175.9 in.
Width: 72.5 in.
Height: 65.1 in.
Engine: Turbocharged 1.5-liter four cylinder (174 hp, 184 ft. lbs.)
Transmission: Eight-speed automatic
MPG: 28 city, 36 highway

RATINGS

Style: 8
Performance: 5
Price: 7
Handling: 8
Ride: 7
Comfort: 6
Quality: 6
Overall: 7

WHY BUY IT?

The Taos delivers classic Volkswagen driving feel, strong value and everyday usability in a compact, modern SUV package.



The 2026 Volkswagen Taos features clean lines and a confident, understated stance.

A Familiar Groove

Latest Taos SUV is a Small Volkswagen With Big Intent

By Derek Price
CARGAZING.COM

There is nothing flashy or disruptive about the 2026 Volkswagen Taos, and that is largely the point.

This is a compact SUV aimed squarely at people who already like the way Volkswagens drive and don't feel the need to relearn their car every time they replace it. After a week behind the wheel, the Taos feels less like a trend-chaser and more like a familiar tool that has simply been updated for modern tastes.

This is a compact SUV that still drives like a Volkswagen. The steering is firm and direct. The suspension tuning leans toward control rather than cushion, and the whole thing feels happier being hustled through traffic than merely floating along.

It is not fast, but it is responsive enough to feel awake, which counts for a lot in daily driving.

Power comes from a turbocharged 1.5-liter four-cylinder making 174 horsepower. On paper, those numbers look fine, but on the road the Taos delivers only so-so acceleration. It will not surprise you at a stoplight, yet it is smooth and predictable once up to speed.

The real win here is the eight-speed automatic transmission, which shifts cleanly



Inside, the Taos offers a modern cabin with intuitive controls and surprising space.

and avoids the droning misery of a CVT. That alone makes the Taos more pleasant than many rivals.

Ride quality matches the Taos' sporty character. It is on the firm side, especially over broken pavement, but never harsh.

The payoff is confident handling and a planted feel on winding roads.

The SE trim brings a generous list of features for the money, including a digital gauge cluster, wireless smartphone integration and dual-zone climate control. Nothing

feels flashy, but it doesn't feel bare-boned, either.

Cargo space is another pleasant surprise. For a vehicle this size, the Taos swallows more gear than expected, making it a legitimate option for small families or weekend trips. The rear seat is usable for adults, and the wide-opening hatch makes loading easy.

Design is another strong point. The Taos looks handsome without trying too hard. It is clearly a Volkswagen, with clean lines and just enough detail to keep it from fading into the background. It avoids the polarizing shapes that plague some competitors, which should help it age well.

The biggest challenge for the Taos comes from within its own showroom. The larger Tiguan often sits close in price, and buyers may be tempted by the extra space. Still, the Taos counters with better maneuverability, a more playful driving feel and a price that undercuts the Tiguan when comparably equipped.

Fuel economy is solid, with EPA ratings that make it easy to live with as a daily driver.

In the end, the Taos makes sense for buyers already inclined toward the VW brand. Think of it as a spiritual successor to the Golf, reimagined for an SUV-loving world.

A CLOSER LOOK



AT A GLANCE

FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

WHAT WAS TESTED? 2026 Volkswagen Taos SE 1.5 TSI (\$29,820). Options: Premium paint (\$455). Price as tested (including \$1,425 destination charge): \$30,275	BY THE NUMBERS Wheelbase: 105.5 in. Length: 175.9 in. Width: 72.5 in. Height: 65.1 in. Engine: Turbocharged 1.5-liter four cylinder (174 hp, 184 ft. lbs.) Transmission: Eight-speed automatic MPG: 28 city, 36 highway	RATINGS Style: 8 Performance: 5 Price: 7 Handling: 8 Ride: 7 Comfort: 6 Quality: 6 Overall: 7	WHY BUY IT? The Taos delivers classic Volkswagen driving feel, strong value and everyday usability in a compact, modern SUV package.
--	---	--	--