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Image: vwexport1300

http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:VW_K%C3%A4fer_Baujahr_1966.jpg

A Volkswagen Beetle. Production year: 1966. One of the 21.529.464 produced between 1938 and 2003. Much loved throughout the world as a dependable and affordable vehicle, although its beginnings are linked to Adolf Hitler who commissioned Ferdinand Porsche to design a 'People's Car' that could carry two

adults and three children and was low in price and running costs. Porsche's 'KdF-Wagen', ('Kraft durch Freude', meaning strength through joy, part of Nazi ideology) was a great success with buyers. Legend has it that it was in the New York Times that the name 'Beetle' was first used in 1938 and only after that was this name taken back into German as 'Käfer.' But because of the start of the war production never got going. The original model had a 'Brezelfenster', an oval shaped rear window, vertically divided into two parts which gave it the appearance of a pretzel. When production resumed in earnest after Word War II it was the 'Brezelkäfer' that became immensely popular and very soon a symbol of the 'Wirtschaftswunder', the economic miracle in post-war Germany. 'Er läuft und läuft und läuft' (it runs and runs and runs) – so the advertising slogan (also running and running). And it did, right into the new millennium. The last Beetle was produced in Mexico in 2003, but between 1938 and 2003 the car's characteristic shape was never substantially changed. Only the shape of the rear window evolved, which for those interested in such things was an indicator of the production year of each subsequent model. After the 'Brezelfenster' came a simple oval rear window and then a bigger rectangular shaped one. Inside, from the sixties models onwards, the steering wheel had the crest of the city of Wolfsburg on its central disk, home of the 'Volkswagen AG', the biggest car plant in the world. The early models had indicators which flipped out sideways from the middle of the side frame. The Beetle never had four doors (unthinkable), so getting in and out of the back seats was forever tricky. It didn't offer luxuries, but it worked and its iconic status was unshaken throughout its long life. It could have only been a Beetle that was driven into the river Elbe in a famous scene in a German Road Movie of the 70s: 'Kings of the Road' (Wim Wenders, 1976) when one lost traveller meets another: he climbs out of the sun-roof of the slowly sinking car. An iconic scene, an iconic car.