

Is the four-door sedan headed for extinction?

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TEST DRIVE

First Drive: 2018 Volkswagen Tiguan

DAN LYONS | text
Special to the Times Union

Compacts are by far the largest part of the SUV market here in the states, and one of the most hotly contested segments overall. Volkswagen joined the fray in the 2009 model year, with a new model called Tiguan. The curiously named compact elbowed its way into the field, campaigning under the banner “The GTI of SUVs.”



In the years that followed, Tiguan was left largely unchanged. Uniquely sporty at the outset, its position slipped over time, as newer, bigger, better updates emerged from competitive makes. The recently introduced 2018s mark this VW's first full redesign, since the original 2009 models.

Tiguan is offered in S, SE, SEL and SEL Premium models (an R-Line trim level will join the lineup, later

2018 Volkswagen Tiguan

MSRP: \$25,345 - \$37,550

in the model year). Prices start at \$25,345 (for a front-wheel-drive S) and range to \$37,550 (for an AWD SEL Premium). All-wheel-drive is a \$1,300 option any trim level.

With the turbo diesel on an indefinite hiatus from the VW lineup, Tiguan 2.0 begins as the first generation did, with one engine offering. The 2.0L turbo four is the same displacement as the original, but it's new. The B-cycle motor is designed to optimize fuel economy, and



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER

THE 2017 VOLKSWAGEN TIGUAN enjoys its first full redesign since the model's introduction in 2009. The compact SUV is powered by a 2.0L turbocharged four-cylinder engine, and comes with an all-wheel-drive option.

it's paired to an eight-speed automatic transmission. The 2.0 makes 184 horsepower and 221 lb.-ft. of torque. That's -16 and +14, respectively, vs. the outgoing engine. Compared to some perennially popular compact utes, Tiguan has less horsepower than CR-V, more than RAV4 and Rogue. The VW's torque numbers exceed all three competitors listed, however, so too does its curb weight.

At 3,858 lb. in AWD trim, Tiguan is 212 lb. heavier than its former self, and +346, 228 and 231 lb. respectively, compared to CR-V, RAV4 and Rogue.

The 2.0T equipped Tiguan has sufficient power for all normal driving needs, it's just not as peppy as its predecessor. Fuel economy is up slightly over last year. Tiguan's EPA estimates of 20/24/21 for 2017 (AWD) compared with 21/27/23 this year (I logged 25.5, with

a 70/30 mix of highway/city driving). Tiguan's combined mileage number trails CR-V, RAV4 and Rogue. Automatic start/stop technology — part of the mileage boosting efforts — is standard, and can be abrupt on the restart. An off switch is on the center console but it resets to on, every time you restart the engine. Compact SUVs as a class aren't thought of as towing vehicles. However, the option of light towing capability is a plus, and the 2018 Tiguan's rating of 1,500 lb. matches exactly the trio of classmates we've been comparing. All trail last year's Tiguan in this regard (2,200 lb.).

This generation of Tiguan is wider (1.2 inches) and much longer (10.6 inches) as well as heavier than previously. Built on VW's Modular Transverse Matrix platform, the suspension is tuned towards ride comfort

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Tiguan's option of light towing capability (1,500 lb.) is a plus.

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