

SHIFT BUYING GUIDE
VOLKSWAGEN BEETLE

INFOGRAPHIC: SHAER REAZ | ILLUSTRATION: E.R. RONNY

What is it?

The original people's car, commissioned by Adolf Hitler and the Nazis before World War II and produced in huge numbers all over the world. Became a symbol of love and anti-war sentiment in the 1960s. Now a verifiable classic and an easy entry into classic car ownership.

Aircooled

What's so cool about it?

Not a lot of options when it comes to buying a classic in Bangladesh. Beetles are instantly recognisable, and there are more than enough units for you to consider splurging on one. It'll even draw admiring looks from the cops, not to mention the multitude of women who'll fall in love with you. Or not.

Will it die?

Beetles are so hard to kill, they might outlast the few brilliant mechanics who CAN fix them. After that, we're not sure.



PRICE?
TK 8,00,000

Good luck trying to pry one away from a dedicated collector.

Expect to pay premiums for mint, original units.

There's no baseline for the prices of these cars, so it might vary.

What should you know about maintenance?

The air-cooled Beetle was made from 1950 all the way through to the early 80s; in some places they were made till the late 90s. With a huge range of engines, trims and high production count, the car has tremendous spare parts availability and, more importantly, parts inter-changeability. Quite a few brands make new parts for Beetles as well, so you're covered.

Price of a spare carburetor:	TK 22,000
“ of new leaf springs:	TK 8,000
“ of a replacement clutch:	TK 4,500
“ of a set of drum brakes:	TK 15,000
“ of a pair of headlights:	TK 15,000
“ of a set of original hubcaps:	TK 8,000
“ of a replacent windshield:	TK 12,000

PROS?

- ~ Fairly easily maintained classic
- ~ If maintained, it can be daily driven
- ~ Not very difficult to make it look good
- ~ Surprisingly fast and decent handling
- ~ Fantastic street presence
- ~ Almost always appreciates in value

CONS?

- ~ If it's going wrong and you can't fix it, you're in for a world of pain
- ~ Sourcing parts isn't exactly easy. Or cheap
- ~ Mint, original ones are pricey to buy
- ~ Ownership takes quite a bit of effort

PEOPLE'S CARS
Bangladesh edition

In this time of elections and democracy and people's choice, we got to thinking—what cars best represent the interest of the Bangladeshi car owner? What used cars can you buy with your hard earned cash that you can keep driving for years, without any major faults, while enjoying the comfort and practicality of much more expensive (and newer) cars? Here's our roundup of the best local people's cars—even if some aren't meant to be cheap or practical.

The past favourite:
TOYOTA COROLLA
EE90

The EE90 used to be a staple car on Dhaka's streets. Like most Corolla generations, they flooded the streets and came to be a gold standard of reliability, efficiency and ease of use. Parts cost a bit more than before, but they're readily available and all mechanics know how to work on these. They're affordable daily drivers for the budget conscious and you can pick one up for less than 3 lakhs.



ILLUSTRATION: E.R. RONNY

The cheapo luxury from the 90s:
TOYOTA ED/EXIV/VISTA/CAMRY

90s luxury cars from Toyota are the best. They depreciate so fast you can afford them without taking out significant loans, plus they're fairly rock solid mechanically so they'll keep chugging on if you are able to ignore the loss in performance and functionality from years of disrepair.

They take abuse really well and offer a lot of space and comfort for the price you pay. Good ones can be had for under 3-4 lakhs.



The government pool reject:
NISSAN
SUNNYN16



Almost all ex-government pool cars are great people's cars. Thousands of Nissan Sunnys were brought in and used to ferry around government officials from ministry to ministry, and while a few are showing signs of age, the N16 isn't all that old so they're fairly easy to fix. Parts are readily available and you get a new-ish car from the early 2000s for a pretty small budget. A decent one will cost you around 5 lakhs.

The full-size luxury sedan for the middle-class:
TOYOTA
MARK II X110



The logic might be a bit convoluted, but hear us out. It's no secret that the Toyota Premio is as aspirational a car as it gets for the Bengali middle class. But all the comfort, space and functionality of the Premio and more can be had for much cheaper with this, the X110 Mark II. With the 2.0 litre BEAMS motor, you have a nearly bullet-proof motor that'll run even if you ignore it. All that makes for a great mix for an upscale daily, yours for around 11 lakhs.

The left-field misunderstood choice:
HONDA
CIVIC ES



People are under the impression Hondas are expensive to maintain. They are, but only if you get something obscure from the early 90s. Mid-2000s Civics are far more common and have varying degrees of OEM parts available, which makes it easier to maintain. This particular generation of the Civic has great driving dynamics (considering it's an economy car), has great leg-room at the back thanks to a flat floor, a big boot—and will set you back around 6 lakhs.

The fun city runabout:
SUZUKI
SWIFT



It's a shame the Suzuki Swift never caught on properly in the local market—they're fantastic little cars with driving dynamics from sports cars that are twice as expensive. They're frugal, cheap to fix and have just the right amount of space for you to consider as a family car. Don't let the manual gearbox deter you—the gearshift action is on hot hatch levels. Turn every grocery run into a rally stage. Yours for around 5 lakhs.

The people's car for 5 years later:
MITSUBISHI LANCER EX



Like the N16 Sunny, the Lancer EX was brought in by the boatload for government use. Unlike the Sunny, it actually looks good. Plus, with a ton of aftermarket support, you can turn it into a head-turner that'll also daily drive really well. Official dealer support is also a plus. It's not the best car to drive—CVT and underpowered motor makes things difficult—but it's fairly smooth. It'll be cheap in a few years. You can get a 2009/10 model for around 11-12 lakhs now.