

DOCTOR ON THE ROAD: VW TAIGO



# The SUV's next step of development

Peppy performance and frugal on fuel, this entry-level coupé provides everything a busy medic would want, says our motoring correspondent **Dr Tony Rimmer** (right)



SOMETIMES THE simpler things in life have the greatest appeal. When choosing a car to buy, we can be easily seduced by models loaded with high-tech driving aids, high performance and features that are only luxuries and not essential for the true functioning of the vehicle. Simpler can be better. Lower-specified cars are better value for money and are not exactly spartan. This is particularly true nowadays, as the most basic model variants usually come with electric windows, air-conditioning and central locking among other things – as standard. These thoughts all came to mind while assessing Volkswagen's latest offering: its small crossover, the Taigo.

I drove several versions with different trim levels and concluded that the model with greatest appeal, to me at least, was the basic entry model. **Crowded area** So where does the new Taigo fit in the increasingly crowded area of Polo- and Golf-sized small SUVs that VW already has on offer? Well, if you think of the T-Roc as being an SUV based on the Golf and the T-Cross as a smaller SUV based on the Polo, then the Taigo is essentially a coupé version of the T-Cross. It is supposed to add some style to the rather boxy shape of the T-Cross, but I do wonder whether VW could have gone a bit further with the styling changes – although

that would have interfered with the internal dimensions and passenger-carrying capabilities. Prices range from £23,385 to £27,845. There are two main engine options: a 1.0litre three-cylinder petrol TSi unit with 95bhp or 108bhp outputs and a 1.5litre TSi unit with 148bhp. Trim options are simple too – the Life, Style and R-line. The Style adds integrated sat-nav, 17-inch alloy wheels and sports seats and the top-of-the-range R-Line has VW's digital cockpit. 1.0-litre cars come with a five-speed manual gearbox as standard with direct-shift gearbox (DSG) automatic option on the 108bhp version.



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The 1.5litre 148bhp car comes only with the DSG fitted. Interior space is on par with a Polo. That means ample room for four adults and their luggage. There is room for a fifth passenger, but it would be a squeeze in the back. Headroom is good and knee room just about adequate. **Clear controls** The driver's controls are all clear and well laid out in typical VW fashion and although the quality of the interior trim is improved over the T-Roc, there are still some scratchy plastics around the base of the doors. It is out on the road that the Taigo is a bit of a surprise. The body dimensions are just right for our crowded urban highways and visibility is good too. The steering is sharp and sporty

in feel and the ride well controlled if a bit on the firm side. Handling is lively and quite fun on winding minor roads and this is helped by the car's weight – 1,200kg which is about half that of a similarly sized electric vehicle. I tried all engine variants and the 1.0litre units are peppy and the most suited to the car. The manual gearbox also suits the car well. If you really want an automatic, the DSG is a good box, but felt a little snatchy in the Taigo I tried. As I alluded to earlier, I think that a base 1.0litre 95bhp Life model would do everything that any busy medic would demand. It has enough room for child seats and associated paraphernalia and there is enough power for the cut and thrust of urban driving, although, if you want a little more

power, an extra £800 would get you the 110bhp version. A frugal real-world fuel economy of 45 to 50mpg is not to be ignored. It looks smart and has enough of VW's solid build quality to justify the respected badge on the front grille.

In this base guise, it is pretty good value too. If you are in the market for a similarly priced Ford Puma or Kia Xceed, then do not overlook the Taigo. **Dr Tony Rimmer is a former NHS GP practising in Guildford, Surrey**

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| VW TAIGO LIFE 1.0 LITRE TSI |                                        |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Body:                       | Five-seat hatchback, front-wheel drive |
| Engine:                     | 1.0litre three-cylinder petrol         |
| Power:                      | 95bhp                                  |
| Torque:                     | 175Nm                                  |
| Top speed:                  | 114mph                                 |
| Acceleration:               | 0-62mph in 11.1 seconds                |
| Claimed economy:            | Combined 51.5mpg                       |
| CO <sub>2</sub> emissions:  | 124g/km                                |
| On-the-road price:          | £23,285                                |