

A guide to finding out
the paint colour of your

BEETLE



by Stephen Paul Hardy

The Beetles covered by this Guide are those manufactured in Europe up until 1979 in the Volkswagen GmbH/AG factories at Wolfsburg, Emden, and Hannover as well as to Beetles manufactured by D'leteren in Brussels, Wilhelm Karmann GmbH in Osnabrück and those assembled elsewhere in Europe - for example in the Republic of Ireland and Portugal.



It can also be used for Beetles manufactured in Puebla for export to Europe 1979 -1985 (Mexiko-Käfer) and to some degree to Mexican Vocho until cessation of production in July 2003.

This Guide will not be much help though if you own a Brazilian Fusca or a South African Kever (although the Glasurit website does have a separate drop-down menu for Volkswagen RSA paint colours).

Neither will this Guide be much help if you own one of the multitude of locally produced CKD Beetles assembled around the world at various times if it has been finished as a "local variation".

For owners of Australian manufactured Beetles there is a commendable amount of accurate information available at: <http://www.clubvw.org.au/vwpaint>

Several reference site can be found on the internet detailing Volkswagen paint colours. Many of them however only detail partial listings of the considerable number of paint colours used since 1945 in Beetle manufacture.

My own personal first stop reference sites on the subject are:

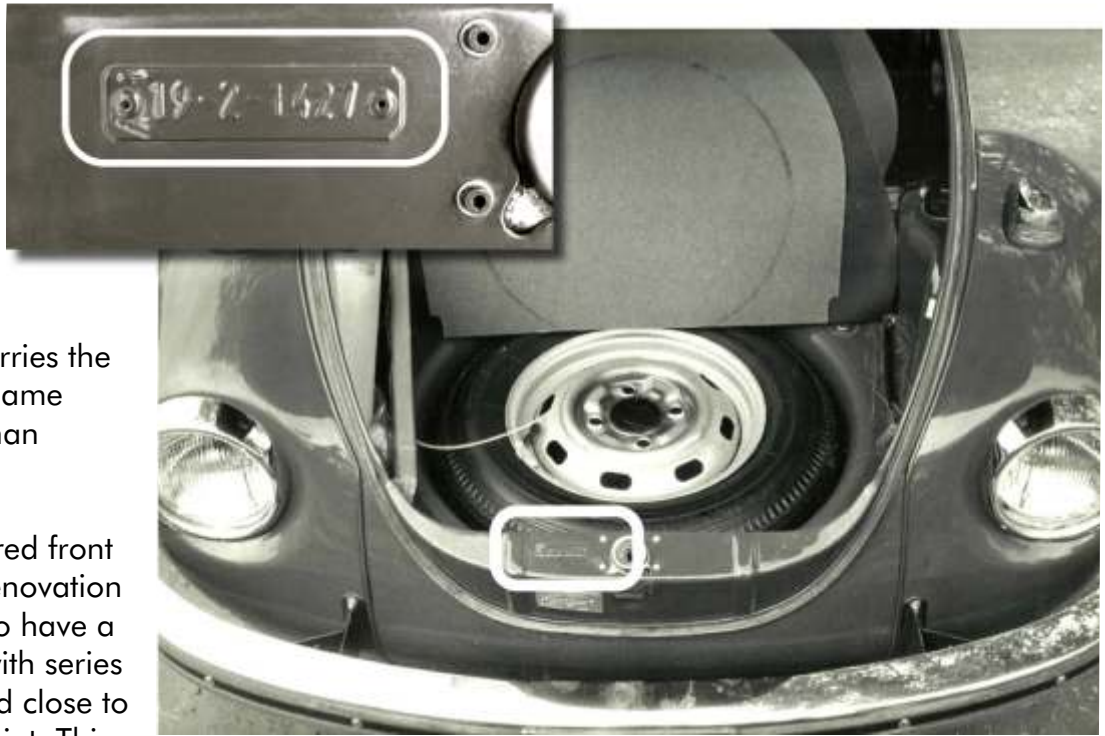
<http://www.thesamba.com/vw/>
<http://coloronline.glasurit.com/?language=8>

There are keys, or clues, into unlocking the information that these resources provide. So let us first take a look at what information you may already have to hand that can help.

If you know the model year (Baujahr or build year) of your Beetle - which may be different from the year of first registration - then an immediate reference is the sales brochure for that year's models.

You may have some original documentation about your Beetle which will should include, somewhere, a six digit series of numbers that was the factory production code. This specified the colour(s) and upholstery that your Beetle was manufactured with.

1. Your Beetle may also, if you are very lucky, still have a small sticker somewhere in it - generally on an inside body panel of the front end storage compartment - that carries the paint "Lack Nr." and name (generally in the German language form).



2/3. If it has not suffered front end repair or major renovation your Beetle should also have a small plate stamped with series of numbers pop riveted close to the bonnet latching point. This plate is generally called the "production plate".

②

The way each of these reference sources help us discover what the paint colour of your Beetle is given on the following pages.

"There are keys, or clues, into unlocking the information that these resources provide..."

In addition, illustrated, worked examples have also been included to help you.

③

L97A	(Z9,Z4)	Diamantsilber-metallic	in
------	---------	------------------------	----

L97A (Z9/Z4) Diamantsilber / Diamond Silver / -

The **Samba.com** website includes two sections that are particularly useful when researching Beetle paint colours.

4. Firstly an Archives section that contains a library of sales literature presented in chronological order.

5. Secondly a Technical section which includes a lot of information about paint and upholstery combinations.

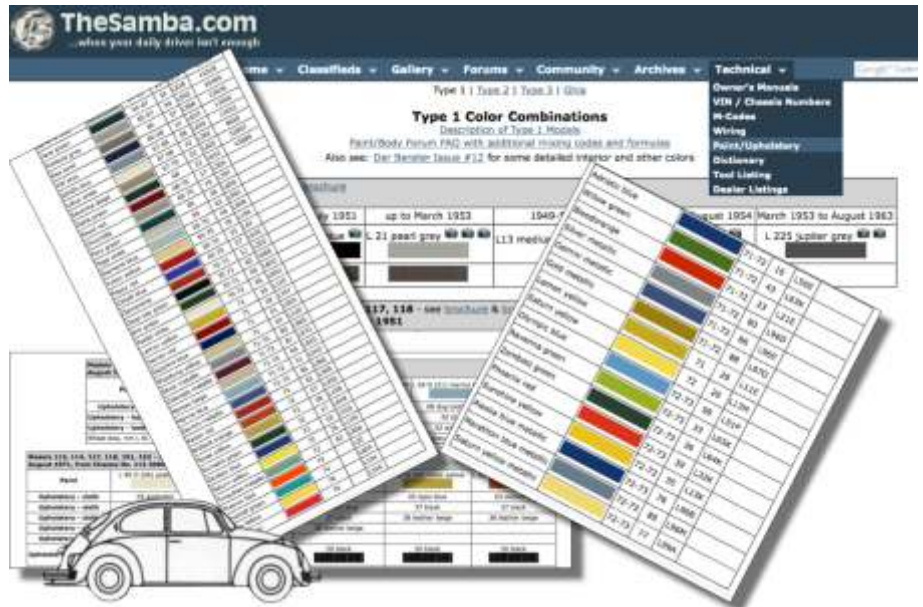
I have drawn on these resources in this Guide to show how useful they can be.



④

When making reference to resources it is helpful to understand if there are any limitations in the information given - or if it is complete. TheSamba' archives are really helpful especially if you cross reference between the paint lists and the literature sections.

However the lists have limitations: the Beetle paint colours go up to (generally) 1972 and predominately only list the standard model year colours.



⑤

Beyond 1972 things at Volkswagen got "busy" with Special (Sales Campaign) Editions and the Karmann produced models using different colours to those used for the saloon (sedan) models until cessation of European production in 1979.

Later still, chronologically, the paint colours for the Mexiko-Käfer imported into Europe 1979 - 85 are way beyond the records in TheSamba' archives.

I will cover alternative sources of information later in this Guide.

Before that though just one more word of caution when using TheSamba' resource.

This excellent website is based in the USA. Much of the literature and terminology is therefore in American English language and uses Volkswagen model descriptions and other

“Beyond 1972 things at Volkswagen got “busy” with Special (Sales Campaign) Editions...”

colloquial's common to North America. I will illustrate where these differences are pertinent to researching Beetle paint colours in the Worked Examples later in this Guide.

A useful background reference reading explaining the differences between European and North American terminology for Beetle owners on both sides of the Atlantic can be found at:

- <http://www.sebeetles.com/european-http://www.sebeetles.com/european-manufacture-inland-and-exportmarkets/manufacture-inland-and-exportmarkets/>
- <http://www.sebeetles.com/badges/>
- <http://www.sebeetles.com/types-and-codes/>

Up to the 1961 model year Volkswagen used the “Lack Nr.” reference universally - in parts lists and in sales literature. From the 1962 model year an additional coding system was introduced that remains in use today. This added a six digit series of numbers that was the factory production code.

The first pair of digits defined the main body paint colour, the second pair the roof colour and the third pair the upholstery colour.

It was usual Volkswagen practice to publish separate sales brochure literature for car and paint colours until the 1972 model year when paint and upholstery colours were integrated into the main brochure as the final pages within it.

The first pair of numbers in that six digit code referred to the main body paint colour.

The middle pair of numbers in that six figure code referred either to a contrasting paint colour for the roof (as used on the VW typ.3 and Karmann Ghia coupe model ranges) or the soft top colour (on the Beetle and Karmann Ghia cabriolets (convertibles)). On saloon (sedan) models, Beetles included, that had the same main body and roof paint colour the first and second pair of numbers were the same.

6. The first Worked Example uses Marina Blue which was a very well known Volkswagen paint colour used right across the Volkswagen Passenger Car range during the early 1970’s. The “Lack Nr.” was L54D defined in sales brochures, and factory production paperwork by the code 21 21 —. On the production plate it was recorded as 21.



L54D (21) Marinablau / Marina Blue / -
Lack Nr. brochure code the colour name
 (Paint number) also
 think of this as a factory production code
 VW part number

7. These references can easily be picked up out of both the literature and paint sections of TheSamba' website.

It is worth being aware of the fact that literature printed in North America did not include the coding system to define paint and upholstery colours - and used different paint names for some colours.



L54D (21) Marinablau / Marina Blue / -

These North American published brochures/charts can readily be identified by the use of the American English use of "color".

8. Another excellent resources is the Glasurit website.
<http://coloronline.glasurit.com/?language=8>

Being aware of the limitations of a reference source again it is worth just pointing out that the

"...literature printed in North America did not include the coding system to define paint..."

production/brochure code appears in the Aux Code column. For some paint colours there appears no record of the code in Glasurit's

database whilst for other colours which have multiple Volkswagen code numbers just one code appears on the Glasurit display.



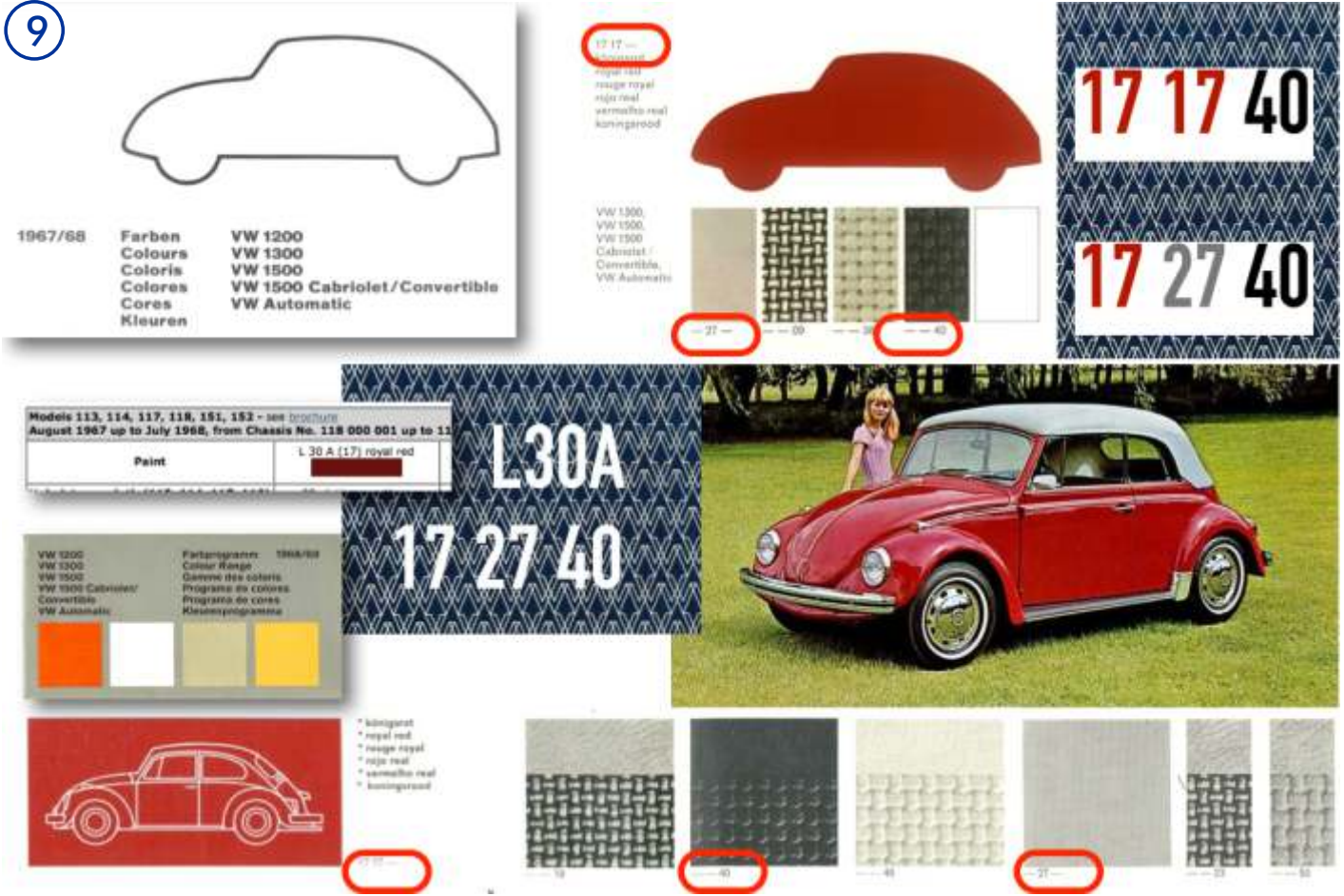
L54D (21) Marinablau / Marina Blue / -



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various reasons for this multiple coding which are explained later on in this Guide.

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9. The next Worked Example uses a 1500 Beetle cabrio - identifiable as a 1500 because it is a VWoA Press photo so the car is in completely original (stock) condition and has Eurobar bumpers and flat windscreen but the narrow pre-1302 bonnet. As such the build period of the model was of a very short timespan. By turning to the Volkswagen colour charts that span the production period we find that only one red paint colour was offered - Königsrot / Royal Red. From these references we can see that the car in the photo conforms to the choice options offered by the sales literature:

Königsrot bodywork paint 17 — —

Silver grey top — 27 —

Black leatherette upholstery — — 40

Giving a full production code of 17 27 40

If it was a contemporary saloon (sedan) the full production code would have been

Königsrot main bodywork paint 17 — —
 Königsrot roof bodywork paint — 17 —
 Black leatherette upholstery — — 40

Giving a full production code of 17 17 40.

By the start of the 1970's there was an increasing divergence in hue shades of the paint colours used by Volkswagen on the Karmann built model range as distinct from those used on the mainline Passenger Car model range (including the Beetle saloon).

10. The Karmann palette of colours became successively more vibrant and reached a high point the mid 1970's. This colour range was used not only on the Volkswagen Beetle cabrio and Karmann Ghias but also on the fabulous, joint venture, Volkswagen Porsche 914 series ... and even on some of the Porsche 911 models.



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Many of the colours were then also borrowed back, as it were, by Volkswagen's main factories when manufacturing limited run Special Edition (Sales Campaign) Beetles (SEBs).



11. The third Worked Example uses one of these "Karmann" colours: L20E (14) Signalorange/Signal Orange was one of the most charismatic and instantly recognisable colours used on Karmann Ghias, 914s and 911s in addition of course to Beetle Cabriolets (Convertibles). It was also used on only one, SEB. In North America it was renamed as Amber.

L20E (14) Signalorange / Signal Orange / Amber

Lack Nr.
(Paint number)
think of this as a
VW part number

brochure code
also
factory production code

the colour name
which was sometimes
given a different name in
USA and Canada

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12. Some of the other colours that were renamed for North America are listed in the table.

Given this then it is also necessary to dip into the Karmann Ghia literature and paint/upholstery sections on TheSamba' website when searching for Beetle paint colours.

Always bear in mind however that Karmann Ghia production ceased in 1974 outlived by 914 production until 1976 and Beetle cabriolet production until 1979.



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13. Finally there are those two groups of Beetle paint colours that are well outside of the scope of TheSamba' archives.

Firstly the paint colours that were either unique to just the Special Edition Series Beetles or colours used elsewhere within the Volkswagen-Audi group for other than for normal series Beetle production.

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“...Signal Orange was one of the most charismatic and instantly recognisable colours...”

Paint number and production plate/brochure code		German language	European English language	North American alternative
L13K	(35)	Sonnengelb	Sunflower Yellow 73 -74 Sunshine Yellow 75 -76	Sunshine Yellow 73 -76
L20A	(08/E6)	Marinogelb	Marino Yellow	Chrome Yellow
L20B	(07/E1)	Leuchtorange	Brilliant Orange / Light Orange	Bright Orange
L20C	(L6/E5)	Nepalorange	Nepal Orange	Fiesta Orange
L20E	(14)	Signalorange	Signal Orange	Amber
L21E	(23)	Blutorange	Blood Orange	Tangerine
L31M	(G6/H1/H3)	Ibizarot	Ibiza Red	Scarlet Red
L96N	(Y5)	Vipergrün	Viper Green	Lime Green
L98C	(W4)	Hellas	Hellas	Harvest Gold Light / Sun Gold Light

14. A perfect example of a rare Volkswagen paint colour is L16M (E9) Tunisgelb/Tunis yellow used on the Special Edition Jeans Beetle. Although, unusually for a SEB, there was a Jeans Beetle brochure it did not carry detail of the paint/upholstery code.

Secondly paint colours that were used on Mexiko-Käfer 1979 -1985 and late series Mexican Vocho.

These generally drew on contemporary Volkswagen-Audi Group colours which, in the case of the late series Mexican Vocho, meant using paint colours from the same palette as New Beetle production. A pertinent example

GLASURIT COLOR ONLINE

SEARCH RESULTS:

Manufacturer	Colour Name	Colour Code	Std. No.	Aux Code	Year	Colour Class
VOLKSWAGEN	TUNISGELB	L16M			1979-1985	Yellow

Paint Colours of the Special Edition Beetles manufactured in Volkswagen:

Year	Model	Colour Name	Colour Code	Std. No.	Aux Code
1980	Beetle	Tunisgelb	L16M		
1981	Beetle	Tunisgelb	L16M		
1982	Beetle	Tunisgelb	L16M		
1983	Beetle	Tunisgelb	L16M		
1984	Beetle	Tunisgelb	L16M		
1985	Beetle	Tunisgelb	L16M		

Colour Selection Grid:

Colour Name	Colour Code	Std. No.	Aux Code
AQUARIUS BLUE	LB5B	SK9556	T4

L16M (E9) Tunisgelb / Tunis Yellow / -

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“...a perfect example of a rare Volkswagen paint colour is L16M (E9) Tunisgelb/Tunis yellow...”

GLASURIT COLOR ONLINE

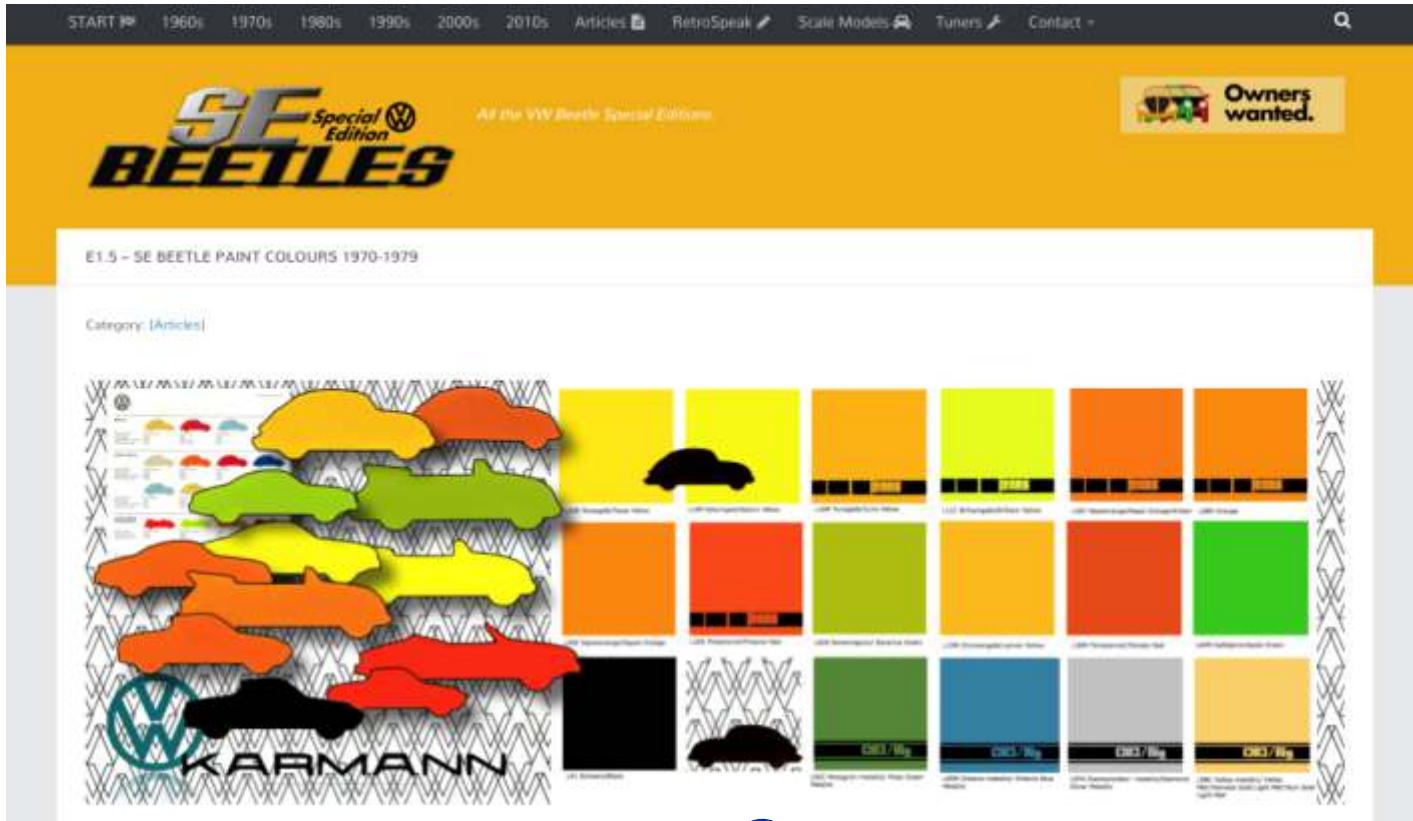
SEARCH RESULTS:

Colour Name	Colour Code	Std. No.	Aux Code
AQUARIUS BLUE	LB5B	SK9556	T4

Colour Selection Grid:

Colour Name	Colour Code	Std. No.	Aux Code
AQUARIUS BLUE	LB5B	SK9556	T4

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being in the two colours used for the very last Beetles , the Última Edicións - LB1M Harvestmoon Beige and LB5B Aquarius Blue.

15. Both being very distinctive early production New Beetle Cabriolet colours.

Research for both these groups therefore means delving into brochures of water-cooled Volkswagen models that are of contemporary age to your Beetle.

16. The definitive reference source for all the paint colours used on the European manufactured Special Edition Beetles 1970 - 79 and Mexican manufactured Special Edition Mexiko-Käfer 1981 -1985 can be found at:
<http://www.sebeetles.com/e1-5-paint-codes/>
 and
<http://www.sebeetles.com/me-1-1/>

Whilst the author has taken great care in the preparation of this Guidance no responsibility can be accepted for the accuracy of the information contained within it or for the repercussions of using it.



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