

the tiny car club

Issue 1



Micro Marvels

Micro cars come to the 2026 Canadian International Autoshow

Long Live the Bug

A love letter to the most iconic small car

Small Car Odyssey

Taking a Smart on a road trip across Europe

CLASS OF 2026

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a letter from the editor



WELCOME TO THE TINY CAR CLUB.

The car world can sometimes take itself very seriously. Horsepower numbers, lap times, endless debates about what counts as a “real” enthusiast car. But here at Tiny Car Club, we believe something much simpler: cars are supposed to be fun. And fun doesn’t have a minimum engine size.

Tiny cars have a special kind of magic. They don’t try to dominate the road — they just happily buzz along it. They fit into parking spots that feel like minor miracles. They turn everyday errands into little adventures. Most importantly, they make people smile. Sometimes the driver, sometimes the pedestrians, often both.

And here’s the secret: there’s no strict definition of a tiny car. Some are microcars. Some are kei cars. Some are classic city runabouts or modern electric pods. But the real test is much easier. If you look at a car and instinctively think “ooh! cute,” congratulations — it qualifies.

This magazine exists to celebrate that joy and to prove that there’s no single right way to be a “car person.” Whether you restore vintage oddities, drive a faithful little hatchback, or just appreciate a vehicle that doesn’t take up half the street, you’re part of the club.

In this inaugural issue, we dive straight into the tiny car world: a look at the charming new Fiat Topolino, a tale about a slightly impractical decision to road trip in a Smart, a practical guide to choosing between gas and electric power for small cars, and a love letter to one of the greatest tiny icons ever built — the Volkswagen Beetle.

Small cars. Big personality. And just the beginning. Issue one is yours now.

*Editor-in-chief, caught in the wild.
Tiny car required.*

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SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Jessica Wellman
Nicoletta Aiudi
Zhanna Postupaylo
Marina Maksimova
— and all the friends who
endured my car talk to years.
This is for you.

Any
ANYA PARKHOMENKO
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

6 LONG LIVE THE BUG



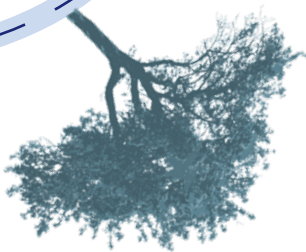
24 MEET THE TOPOLINO



18 POWERING THE LITTLE THINGS



14 MICRO MARVELS



26 SMALL CAR ODYSSEY



IN
THIS
ISSUE

LONG LIVE



T H E

B U G

TINY STARS

The Ultimate Tiny Car

Round, cheerful, and impossible not to love. The Beetle spent decades proving that a tiny car could conquer the world—and look adorable doing it.

By Anya Parkhomenko

There are cars that change the industry, cars that define decades, and then there is the Volkswagen Beetle — a machine so simple, so stubbornly charming, and so globally beloved that it transcended transportation entirely and became something closer to a cultural companion.

To call the Beetle merely a “small car” feels inadequate, because what it really represents is the idea that smallness can carry weight — emotional weight, historical weight, and a kind of mechanical honesty that bigger, flashier vehicles rarely achieve. From its rounded fenders to its friendly face, the Beetle never tried to intimidate anyone. It didn’t roar onto the scene promising dominance. It hummed. It pattered. It invited you in. And in doing so, it became the ultimate tiny car not because it was the smallest vehicle on the road, but because it proved that a car could be modest and still matter.

The origins of the Beetle are complicated and impossible to separate from the political climate of the 1930s Europe. This tiny car has dark history behind it. Commissioned under the regime of Nazi Germany as part of an initiative to create an affordable “people’s car,” the project was handed to engineer Ferdinand Porsche, who was tasked with designing a simple, durable vehicle that ordinary families could afford. We will not mention how exactly these families made money at the time.

“It became the ultimate tiny car not because it was the smallest vehicle on the road, but because it proved that a car could be modest and still matter.”

The concept of the car was revolutionary for its time: rear-mounted air-cooled engine, minimal frills, efficient use of materials and a shape dictated by aerodynamics and by manufacturing practicality. The irony, of course, is that a car born from such dark political circumstances would go on to become one of the most universally loved and peace-symbol-adjacent vehicles in automotive history.

After World War II, production resumed under British supervision, and the car’s identity gradually separated itself from its origins. Over time, it shed its political baggage and was embraced globally as something entirely different: friendly, accessible, and unpretentious.

Mechanically, the Beetle was an exercise in clever restraint. The air-cooled flat-four engine meant no radiator, fewer parts to fail, and easier maintenance in extreme climates. The rear-engine layout improved traction and freed up surprising interior space for such a compact footprint. Its body sat atop a simple platform chassis, making repairs straightforward and accessible.

Nothing about the Beetle was extravagant. It did not chase performance statistics or luxury appointments. Instead, it focused on durability and ease of ownership. That focus paid off in a way few could have predicted. Owners discovered that these cars were remarkably resilient. They could survive harsh winters, dusty rural roads, neglectful teenagers, and cross-country adventures. When something broke, it was usually fixable with basic tools and determination. In a world that increasingly equates complexity with progress, the Beetle’s mechanical simplicity feels almost radical. But the Beetle’s true genius wasn’t just in its engineering; it was in its personality. Most cars are designed to look powerful or sleek or prestigious. The Beetle looked... happy. Its rounded headlights resembled eyes. Its curved hood suggested a nose. The arched roofline made it appear perpetually hunched forward, as if eager to roll into its next errand. The face looked like it was smiling, spreading cheer and joy all around.

This accidental anthropomorphism gave the Beetle an emotional accessibility that few vehicles achieve. Children waved at them. Owners named them. Passers-by stopped in their tracks to smile at them. Entire communities formed around their care and modification. When you drove a Beetle, you didn’t feel like you were piloting a machine designed to dominate the road. You felt like you were partnering with something cheerful and willing. Like a friend to keep you company in your day-to-day tasks.



CLEVER ADVERTISING CEMENTING THE ICON STATUS

That emotional connection exploded in the 1960s, when clever advertising reframed the Beetle for North American audiences. At a time when Detroit was producing ever-larger, chrome-laden behemoths, the Beetle arrived like a minimalist manifesto on wheels. Its small size became a virtue rather than a liability. Campaigns leaned into self-deprecating humor, inviting buyers to “Think Small” and celebrating the car’s quirks instead of hiding them. It was a masterclass in brand positioning and marketing.

The Beetle wasn’t trying to compete in the horsepower wars. It was offering something else: economy, individuality, and quiet rebellion against excess. College students, young families, and counterculture icons embraced it. In an era defined by social upheaval and questioning of norms, the Beetle’s modesty felt subversive. The genius of these campaigns was their honesty. Rather than pretending the Beetle could outmuscle American V8s, the ads admitted its differences and turned them into strengths. Small? Yes. Slow? Sometimes. But also efficient, dependable, and refreshingly unpretentious. The humor felt genuine, and audiences responded. In a marketplace full of bombastic claims and glossy bravado, the Beetle’s advertising felt like a wink shared between friends.

Pop culture cemented its status. When Disney introduced the lovable sentient Beetle in Herbie: The Love Bug, the car’s inherent personality was amplified for a global audience. Herbie wasn’t just a prop; he was a character with agency, stubbornness, and heart. The fact that audiences could so easily accept a Beetle as a protagonist speaks volumes about the design’s inherent charm. No one would cast a hulking luxury sedan as an underdog hero. The Beetle, however, was perfectly believable as the plucky competitor defying expectations. The narrative wrote itself because the car already embodied those qualities.

Globally, the impact of the Beetle is almost unmatched. Produced by Volkswagen for decades, it became one of the longest-running and most-produced single car designs in history. Assembly lines stretched across continents, from Germany to Brazil to Mexico. In many countries, the Beetle was not a novelty; it was a daily reality. It served as taxis, family cars, delivery vehicles, and student commuters. Its ubiquity meant that it embedded itself in collective memory. Generations learned to drive in them. Couples went on first dates in them. Families squeezed into them for long vacations that, in retrospect, must have required impressive packing discipline. Even today, the Beetle’s global footprint remains astonishing. Whether buzzing through European streets, navigating Latin American hills, or parked outside suburban homes, the Beetle quietly stitched itself into everyday life around the world.



IDENTITY, CHARACTER, AND EVER-GROWING AFFECTION

The Beetle wasn’t aspirational in the traditional luxury sense. It was attainable. And in being attainable, it became intimate. There is something deeply honest about a tiny car that never pretends to be anything else. The Beetle did not evolve into an arms race participant. While it received incremental updates over the decades, its core silhouette remained recognizable. That continuity is astonishing in an industry obsessed with annual redesigns, feature escalation, and power.

The Beetle trusted its own identity. It did not need to grow dramatically larger to stay relevant. It did not need aggressive styling cues to command respect. Its proportions were its signature. Even as safety regulations and consumer expectations shifted, the Beetle retained its rounded DNA. Seeing one on the road felt like spotting an old friend rather than encountering a relic. Unlike many cars that reinvent themselves every few years, the Beetle’s visual consistency allowed it to become part of the cultural background. Children recognized it instantly. Artists drew it with a few simple curves. Even people who knew nothing about cars could identify a Beetle from a distance. It had achieved something few industrial designs ever manage: universal recognizability.

Of course, no car is perfect, and the Beetle had its limitations. Its modest engine meant highway merging required planning. Its rear weight bias could make handling quirky in inexperienced hands. Rust was an ever-present adversary in damp climates. Heating systems in early models were, generously speaking, optimistic. Cooling systems were, not-so-generously speaking, non-existent. Yet these flaws rarely diminished affection. If anything, they contributed to the narrative.

That mechanical simplicity created a sense of partnership between driver and machine. Weekend tinkering was common, and repairs were often shared experiences among friends, family members, and neighbors. The Beetle wasn’t just transportation—it was a small mechanical companion that rewarded curiosity and patience. When production of the classic design finally ceased in the twenty-first century, it marked more than the end of a model line. It marked the close of an era in which mechanical straightforwardness and visual warmth could coexist without irony. And yet, Beetles remain on roads around the world, lovingly maintained, modified, and passed down. They appear at car shows not as museum pieces but as living artifacts. They buzz along back roads, their air-cooled engines producing that unmistakable hum. They remind us that cars can have souls not because they are sentient, but because we project our stories onto them. Because we treat them as friends rather than tools.



THE CASE FOR A COMEBACK

And this is precisely why the case for a comeback feels not only sentimental, but rational. In a market saturated with oversized crossovers and increasingly anonymous design, there is a conspicuous absence of vehicles that feel intentionally small. Urban density is increasing. Parking is shrinking. Yet the industry response has largely been to electrify size rather than reconsider it. A modern Beetle revival — thoughtfully engineered, genuinely compact, and character-driven — could answer a question few manufacturers seem brave enough to ask: what if small is the future again?

Imagine a contemporary interpretation that honors the original silhouette without parody, that embraces electric propulsion without excess weight, that prioritizes affordability and simplicity over feature bloat. Not a nostalgia exercise, not a fashion accessory, but a sincere people's car for the twenty-first century. The emotional equity already exists. The cultural memory is intact. What is missing is the corporate courage to believe that charm and compactness can compete in a marketplace addicted to bulk.

This plea for revival is not about clinging to the past. It is about reclaiming a philosophy. The original Beetle succeeded because it met people where they were. It was practical transportation wrapped in warmth. A revived Beetle could do the same for a new generation navigating crowded cities, rising costs, and climate anxiety.

It could prove that sustainability does not require sterility, that efficiency does not demand aesthetic sacrifice. It could reintroduce joy into the entry-level segment, a space too often treated as an afterthought. And perhaps most importantly, it could remind the industry that not every success story needs to tower over traffic. Some of the most enduring icons fit comfortably within a single parking space.

THE ULTIMATE TINY CAR

Finally, calling the Beetle the ultimate tiny car is not about measurements. There were smaller microcars. There were lighter city cars. There were less powerful engines. There were more radical experiments in minimalism.

What sets the Beetle apart is its balance. It was small enough to be approachable yet substantial enough to feel secure. Simple enough to maintain yet robust enough to endure. Distinctive enough to stand out yet common enough to belong everywhere. It achieved a harmony that many vehicles chase but rarely find. It did not intimidate. It did not exclude. It invited. It suggested that design should serve people, not ego. The Beetle carried millions of drivers across decades of change, quietly proving that a tiny car could hold enormous meaning. And if the industry is willing to listen, that meaning is still waiting — round, patient, and ready — for its next chapter.

The new electrical Beetle concept



IMAGE CREDITS: Tahiro Achoub, Oli Woodman, mahyar mirghasemi, Bogdan Ivanyshyn, Sidharth Sabu, Deepthi Clicks, Katka Pavlickova, Adam Baney, Zoshua Colah, @djedj, Luigi Comba, Antony Hyson Seltran, Parsoa Khorsand, Ahmed Almakhanji, Martin Katler, ebay.com, Carol Tamie, @ur_em, @gothrills, Aarn Giri, Marissa Daeger, Rafia Razzaq, Eugene Golovesov, Tom Arrowsmith, Maksim Shiriagin, Google AI Studio

tiny verdict

The Volkswagen Beetle isn't just the best tiny car ever made — it's proof that cars can have souls. In a world that keeps getting louder, bigger, and more aggressive, the Beetle remains a quiet reminder that small, kind, and joyful design still matters.



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MICRO MARVELS

TINY NEWS
By Anya Parkhomenko

Every February, we make the pilgrimage downtown to the Canadian International AutoShow at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Usually, we go for the concepts, the exotics, the improbably shiny SUVs with mood lighting in 47 colours. But in 2026? We're going for the small stuff.

This year, the AutoShow is doing something that makes our tiny-loving hearts beat faster: it's featuring a dedicated collection of micro cars. Yes. Micro. As in "we could probably parallel park that sideways." As in "why is it so cute we might cry." And honestly? It's about time. The micro car display isn't a novelty sideshow. It's a curated look at the smallest, cleverest, most space-efficient vehicles ever built — many of them icons of post-war ingenuity and urban survival.

These cars weren't about excess. They were about mobility. About rebuilding. About squeezing joy out of very little metal. And now they're centre stage in Toronto. These cars typically have: tiny engines (usually under 700cc), ultra-compact dimensions, lightweight construction, and quirky design choices, like front-entry doors or three-wheel layouts. They were — in their heyday — practical. Not glamorous or powerful, sure, but darn effective in cities where gas was pricey, roads were cramped, and parking space was a luxury. But in North America? Most of these micro wonders faded into obscurity as larger cars and muscle culture took over. That's what makes this feature at the AutoShow so special: for many attendees, it will be the first time ever seeing these legendary mini machines in person.

The micro car exhibit at the 2026 AutoShow features eight exceptionally rare vehicles from the private collection of Kenn and Donna Poore of Sarnia, Ontario. These aren't replicas. These aren't dusty projects. These are living pieces of history — meticulously preserved, significant, and genuinely fascinating. What makes this collection especially compelling is that it doesn't just showcase rarity

for rarity's sake — it showcases intention. Each vehicle represents a specific moment in time when engineers were asked to do more with less. Less steel. Less fuel. Less space. The result wasn't compromise. It was creativity.

Standing in front of a micro car has a strange physical effect. Your sense of proportion shifts. Doors seem toy-like. Rooflines sit at shoulder height. Tires look almost delicate. And yet, when you look closer, you realize these machines were built with real-world durability in mind. They carried families. They navigated cities. They endured winters and backroads and daily commutes. Their smallness wasn't novelty — it was practicality.

The Poore collection also highlights how international the micro car movement truly was. Post-war Germany, Britain, Italy, France, and Japan each interpreted the "people's car" concept differently, reflecting local needs, industrial capabilities, and cultural tastes. What ties them together is a shared belief that mobility should be accessible. These cars weren't about prestige.

In the context of a modern auto show filled with towering SUVs and six-figure supercars, the micro cars create a powerful visual contrast. They don't shout for attention. They don't rely on screens or light displays. Instead, they draw people in quietly. Visitors lean closer. They crouch to peer inside. They smile. And that reaction is something no spec sheet can manufacture.

Ultimately, this collection isn't just about nostalgia. It's about rediscovery. It reminds us that innovation doesn't always mean bigger batteries, more horsepower, or larger footprints. Sometimes innovation is shaving inches, simplifying systems, and designing with empathy for crowded streets and limited budgets. And that spirit — practical, inventive, delightfully small — is exactly what makes the upcoming display so special.

HERE'S A TASTE OF WHAT'S ON DISPLAY:



1962 NSU Sport Prinz
A compact German coupe designed by Franco Scaglione, this sporty little machine packs an engine capable of nearly 160 km/h — remarkable performance for its size.



1960 Berkeley B105
Built in England, this lightweight fibre-glass micro with a motorcycle engine was built for speed — and rarity (only about 78 originally made).



1958 BMW Isetta
The poster child of micro cars. Famous for its front-entry single door and bubble-car profile, the Isetta is arguably the most recognisable micro ever built.



1958 Vespa 400
Yes — Vespa made cars. This two-seat micro with a roll-top roof and suicide doors looks like someone shrunk a car down to doll size.



1962 Goggomobil TS300 Coupe
A rare coupe with a tiny air-cooled engine and rear-engine layout — one of the few surviving examples left in North America.



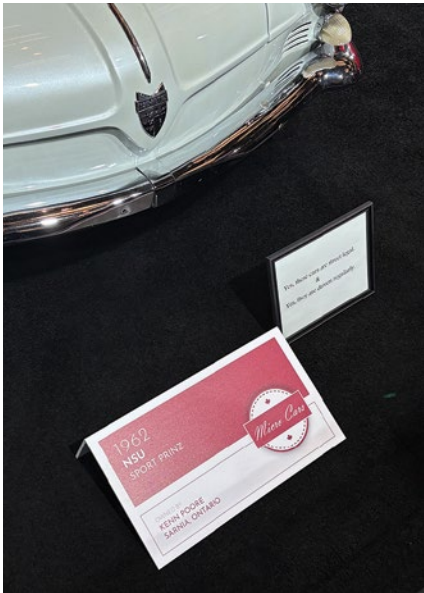
1957 Messerschmitt KR200
From an aircraft company to a three-wheel micro with tandem seating — this car is aviation meets silly tiny car and is instantly recognisable to aficionados.



1969 Subaru 360 "Sambar" Van
A compact micro van that once graced North American streets thanks to early imports — now incredibly rare and utterly charming.



1956 New Map Solyto Break Camping
This three-wheel micro doubles as a mini camper, complete with pop-out seats and sleeping space — truly functional and delightfully weird.



WHY THIS MATTERS?

At first glance, micro cars might seem like mere curiosities. But their inclusion at Canada's largest auto show sends a message: tiny cars matter — historically, culturally, and delightfully. Amongst the uber-expensive, fast wonders with loud engines and sleek silhouettes, tiny cars still stand out as little marvels of engineering ingenuity. As little figures of cuteness among the riches, luxury, and horsepower.

Ultimately, micro cars tell a story about constraints — economic, political, spatial — and how engineers responded with imagination instead of excess. But beyond the history lesson, their presence at a major modern auto show signals something bigger. At a time when vehicles continue to grow in size, weight, and price, revisiting the micro car philosophy feels unexpectedly relevant. Cities are denser. Parking is tighter. Environmental conversations are louder. The idea that transportation can be efficient, joyful, and modestly scaled doesn't feel nostalgic — it feels forward-thinking.

By giving micro cars a platform at Canada's largest auto show, the organizers are acknowledging that automotive progress isn't just about horsepower and range figures; it's also about rethinking proportion and purpose. These tiny machines quietly challenge the assumption that bigger automatically means better. They invite us to reconsider what we truly need from a car — and whether clever design might matter more than sheer size. For enthusiasts, historians, and everyday drivers alike, that question resonates far beyond the show floor. Even for North Americans with their unbeatable passion for oversized pick-up trucks.

IMAGE CREDITS: autoshow.ca, Anya Parkhomenko, Bring a Trailer, Forza Forums, The Globe and Mail.

MORE THAN JUST CARS ON DISPLAY

The micro car exhibit is part of a broader tapestry of experiences at the AutoShow — from exotic debuts and performance showcases to interactive EV test tracks and immersive brand displays. Yet there's something uniquely grounding about this collection. While other exhibits may dazzle with futuristic screens and dramatic lighting, the micro cars captivate through character and craftsmanship. They encourage lingering. Visitors don't just glance and move on; they pause, smile, point out details to one another. Parents explain carburetors to curious kids. Grandparents share stories of a cousin who once owned something similar. The exhibit becomes less about spectacle and more about connection — between generations, between past and present, between mechanical simplicity and modern complexity. In the midst of an auto show built on innovation and aspiration, the micro cars offer something quieter but just as powerful: perspective. They remind us that the automotive story isn't only about where we're going next — it's also about the inventive, resourceful paths that brought us here.

tiny verdict

The 2026 Canadian International AutoShow is shaping up to be a celebration of automotive diversity — from supercars to bite-sized micro marvels. But for us? The inclusion of micro cars is a reminder of the delightful ways small vehicles have shaped automotive culture.

GAS



EVS

Cheerful buzz or silent zoom?

Tiny cars are choosing sides. Welcome to the friendliest showdown in motoring: EV vs gas, but make it miniature.



POWERING THE LITTLE THINGS

By Anya Parkhomenko

In the tiny car world, power has never been about dominance. It has never been about 0–100 times that rearrange your internal organs or exhaust notes that summon neighborhood complaints. Power, in our corner of the automotive universe, is about sufficiency. It is about moving forward — sometimes slowly, sometimes cheerfully — but always with intention. And right now, tiny cars are facing a deliciously dramatic question: in a world that is steadily electrifying, what happens to the little engines that have powered our beloved small machines for decades? Do we plug in? Or do we keep puttering along with pistons and petrol? Welcome to the friendliest showdown in motoring: EV vs gas, but make it miniature.

Let’s start with gasoline, because frankly, it has seniority. The internal combustion engine in tiny cars has always been a marvel of modest ambition. Small displacement, simple construction, barely-there horsepower numbers that somehow still feel like enough. There is something deeply charming about turning a key and hearing a tiny engine clear its throat. It doesn’t roar. It coughs politely, settling into a buzz that sounds like mechanical optimism.

Historically, small gas engines have powered everything from post-war micro cars to city-friendly tiny hatchbacks, offering mobility to millions at a cost that didn’t require selling a kidney. They were easy to upkeep, maintain, relatively inexpensive to build, and mechanically understandable in a way that invited owners to get involved. You could open the hood — or the rear hatch, depending on the layout — and actually see the beating heart of your car. You could learn it. Tinker with it. Forgive it when it refused to start on a particularly cold morning.

Gas-powered cars also carry a certain sensory romance. There’s the faint smell of fuel on engine startup, the gentle vibration through the steering wheel, the subtle dance of the gearshift that makes you feel like you’re acting rather than merely commuting. Driving a small gas car often feels like collaboration. You anticipate hills. You plan overtakes carefully. You celebrate momentum like it’s a personal achievement. In a world of automated everything, that

involvement feels refreshing. It’s not about speed; it’s about connection. And for many enthusiasts, that connection is non-negotiable.

But let’s not pretend gasoline is flawless. Even the tiniest engines burn fuel and emit exhaust. They require oil changes, spark plugs, filters, belts, and a general willingness to accept that mechanical things sometimes leak. Fuel prices fluctuate like weather. Regulations tighten. Cities experiment with low-emission zones. Suddenly, the humble little combustion engine begins to look like it’s attending a party where it might not be welcome forever. That’s where electricity rolls in — silently, confidently, and with a charging cable.

Electric tiny cars are, in many ways, perfectly logical. If any segment benefits from electric propulsion, it’s the small one. Tiny cars are typically used for short urban trips: grocery runs, school drop-offs, commuting across town rather than across provinces. Electric motors thrive in that environment. Instant torque makes even a tiny EV feel zippy off the line, like it’s had an espresso shot before leaving the driveway. There’s no gear shifting. No waiting for revs to build. You press the pedal, and it goes — smoothly, quietly, mischievously. Suddenly, “slow car” jokes lose their punch.

There’s also the simplicity factor. Electric motors have fewer moving parts than combustion engines. No oil changes. No exhaust systems. No spark plugs staging a quiet rebellion at inconvenient times. For drivers who want the charm of a small car without the maintenance ritual, EVs offer a compelling proposition. Plug in at home overnight, wake up to a full “tank,” and glide through the city with confidence. It’s tidy. It’s efficient. It feels, dare we say, futuristic.

Of course, batteries complicate the fairy tale. They are heavy, and weight is the natural enemy of tiny cars. Engineers must balance range with mass, cost with capacity. Add too large a battery, and you risk turning a featherweight city run-about into a slightly overachieving brick. Keep it small, and range anxiety peeks over your shoulder the moment you consider an impromptu road trip. Charging infrastructure,

TINY ADVICE

EVs

	Gas Tiny Car	EV Tiny Car
Sound	Cheerful Buzz	Gentle Whoosh
Repairs	Tinker Friendly	Plug Friendly
City Driving	Planning Required	Zippy Delight
Road Trips	Yes, Please	Chargers?

GAS

Serene whoosh > loud growl?

Cheerful buzz = personality.

Manual shifting = tiny hero energy.

Plug in. Walk away.

Silence is a flex.

You feel the engine working.

Instant torque. No warm-up.

Smells like nostalgia.

Small car. Small footprint.

City driving = effortless.

Built for people who like tinkering.

Fuel stop: 5 minutes. Done.



"The most whimsical possibility is co-existence. A world where smaller EVs dominate city cores while gas-powered classics and modern micro-combustion cars continue to charm on backroads."

while expanding, is not universal. Apartment dwellers may find home charging more complicated than it sounds in marketing brochures. And while maintenance may be simpler, replacement batteries are not exactly pocket change. The electric dream is real, but it isn't frictionless.

In dense urban environments, the argument for electric tiny cars becomes stronger. Stop-and-go traffic rewards regenerative braking. Short commutes minimize range concerns. Quiet operation reduces city noise pollution in a way that feels genuinely beneficial rather than abstractly virtuous. Imagine entire neighborhoods filled with compact electric cars slipping through streets like well-behaved whispers. It's not hard to see the appeal. For cities trying to reduce emissions and congestion simultaneously, small EVs could be the sweet spot — not oversized electric SUVs pretending to be eco-friendly tanks, but genuinely right-sized machines designed for urban life.

And yet, there is a case to be made for keeping small gasoline engines alive — at least for now. In rural areas, charging infrastructure can lag behind. Long distances between towns demand range and refueling speed that gasoline still handles with casual efficiency. For enthusiasts who enjoy the tactile engagement of manual transmissions and engine notes (even tiny, polite ones), the combustion engine offers an experience that electricity does not replicate. There is room in the world for both, especially during a transitional era where technology and infrastructure are still catching up with ambition.

What's fascinating is that tiny cars may ultimately redefine the EV vs gas debate rather than simply participate in it. Because when vehicles are small and light, the trade-offs shift. Smaller batteries can provide adequate range. Smaller motors can deliver satisfying performance. Smaller footprints mean fewer materials overall. The environmental conversation becomes more nuanced. It's not just about what powers the car — it's about how much car there is in the first place. A modest gasoline-powered microcar might, in some scenarios, have a comparable lifecycle footprint to a

much larger electric vehicle. Context matters. Scale matters. Tiny cars force us to think in specifics rather than slogans.

There's also the joy factor, which we refuse to ignore. Electric tiny cars feel like gadgets in the best sense — playful, immediate, slightly sci-fi. Gas-powered tiny cars feel like loyal pets — warm, noisy, full of character. Choosing between them can feel less like a spreadsheet decision and more like choosing a personality. Do you want serene whoosh or cheerful buzz? Seamless glide or mechanical chatter? Both deliver smiles, just in different dialects.

Perhaps the most whimsical possibility is coexistence. A world where small EVs dominate city cores while gas-powered classics and modern micro-combustion cars continue to charm on backroads and in communities where electricity hasn't fully taken over. A world where innovation doesn't erase history but builds alongside it. Tiny cars, after all, have always adapted. They survived economic downturns, oil crises, regulatory shifts, and changing fashion trends. They can survive a powertrain evolution too.

In the end, "small power" has never meant small impact. Whether driven by carefully combusted fuel or quietly discharged electrons, tiny cars punch above their weight in cultural and practical significance. They remind us that transportation doesn't have to be oversized to be meaningful. They ask us to consider proportion — of resources, of space, of ambition. EV vs gas is not a battle to the death in this realm; it's a conversation about fit. About context. About what makes sense for the journey ahead.

And maybe that's the real big choice. Not simply what powers our tiny cars, but what philosophy powers us. Do we chase excess, or do we refine efficiency? Do we equate size with success, or do we embrace cleverness over bulk? Tiny cars, whether humming or silently gliding, continue to advocate for the latter. Small power. Big choice. And whichever side you plug into — or fill up — the future of tiny motoring looks anything but insignificant.

tiny verdict

If you live in the city, electric makes beautifully practical sense. If you crave mechanical charm and the cheerful buzz, gasoline still has a pulse worth preserving. The smartest move? Keep it small, whatever fuels it. Because in the tiny car world, right-sizing the vehicle matters just as much as what's powering it.

IMAGE CREDITS: Bring a Trailer, Yevhenii Dubrovskiy, Google AI Studio, Josephine Barham.



FIAT TOPOLINO

SMALL CAR, BIG PERSONALITY
COMING TO US IN 2026

MEET THE TOPOLINO | TINY NEWS

TINY NEWS

MEET THE TOPOLINO

By Anya Parkhomenko

Right after that gorgeous full-page ad you just admired, let's address the obvious: yes, it's small. Yes, it's adorable. And yes, the Fiat Topolino might be the most charming thing to happen to city streets in decades. But here's the twist — it's not just cute. It's clever. The new Topolino isn't pretending to be a traditional car. It doesn't need to. Built by Fiat for short urban trips, tight parking spots, and daily life that rarely requires crossing provincial borders, it understands its mission perfectly. Compact footprint? Check. Electric powertrain? Check. Personality dial turned confidently past "subtle"? Absolutely. This is mobility distilled to its essentials — minus the bulk, minus the drama, and thankfully, minus the gas station visits.

Let's talk about presence, because somehow this tiny machine has it in abundance. The soft curves, open-air details, and playful proportions feel less like a commuter appliance and more like a design object you happen to drive. It doesn't loom in traffic. It doesn't glare at pedestrians. It rolls through the city like it's enjoying itself — which, frankly, feels contagious. In an era where many vehicles look like they're prepared for a tactical mission, the Topolino shows up ready for espresso.

And then there's the electric factor. In a vehicle this small, electric propulsion just makes sense. Instant torque gives it a zippy, responsive feel at city speeds. Quiet operation means you glide rather than rumble. Charging overnight instead of refueling weekly changes the rhythm of ownership in subtle but meaningful ways. It's not about bragging rights — it's about right-sizing the experience. Short commutes. Quick errands. Beach detours. The Topolino lives in that sweet spot. What makes it special, though, isn't just practicality. It's attitude.

The Topolino embraces the idea that mobility can be joyful. That transportation doesn't have to be oversized to feel complete. That efficiency and personality can share the same parking space. It invites you to rethink what you actually need in a vehicle — and whether "more" has quietly become too much. Is it for cross-country road trips? Probably not. Is it for navigating narrow streets, slipping into parking spaces that SUVs can only dream about, and turning routine drives into tiny adventures? Absolutely. In a world obsessed with bigger batteries, taller ride heights, and louder design language, the Topolino whispers a different philosophy: small is enough.

IMAGE CREDITS: FIAT US, Zain Creations on Unsplash.
ARTICLE WRITTEN IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FIAT US.

tiny verdict

The Fiat Topolino isn't here to replace your daily driver or conquer highways. It's here to remind us that cars can be small, charming, and thoughtfully limited — and that sometimes, that's exactly enough.

TINY TALES

SMALL CAR ODYSSEY

The tale of a very questionable
but wonderful decision to road trip
across Europe in a Smart.

By Emma Charles



Some road trips begin with careful planning. Others begin with a map, a dream, and a vehicle that is clearly not designed for the task at hand. This story belongs firmly in the second category. It started, as many questionable ideas do, with a casual comment over coffee. “What if we drove across Europe this summer?” someone suggested. This seemed like a normal and exciting proposal until the question of transportation came up. Flights were dismissed. Trains were considered briefly. A sensible car was suggested and immediately ignored.

Instead, we found ourselves staring at a tiny two-seater: the charming, compact, and slightly suspiciously small Smart Fortwo. Built for navigating crowded city streets and squeezing into parking spots the size of a shoebox, the Smart Fortwo did not exactly scream “continental adventure.” Which, of course, made it perfect.

To understand the scale of this decision, you must understand the Smart Fortwo. It is small. Not “small compared to a truck” small, but “small compared to most furniture” small. When parked next to normal cars, it looks less like a vehicle and more like an accessory. Its trunk space is roughly equivalent to the storage capacity of a moderately ambitious backpack. Its wheelbase suggests it might feel more comfortable riding inside another car than being driven independently across an entire continent. And yet, despite all of this—or perhaps because of it—the little car had an undeniable charm. It looked eager. Optimistic. Almost unaware of what we were about to ask it to do.

Packing for the journey quickly revealed the first challenge. Road trips usually involve luggage, snacks, emergency supplies, and at least one mysterious bag that no one remembers packing. Unfortunately, the Smart Fortwo operates under a much stricter philosophy: you may bring exactly three items, and one of them is the driver. After a lengthy negotiation with physics and basic geometry, we managed to fit two backpacks, a camera bag, a small cooler, and an alarming number of snacks into the car. The result resembled a carefully arranged game of automotive Tetris. Once everything was loaded, there was just enough space left for two humans and a shared sense of determination.

The first day on the road was exhilarating. The Smart zipped along highways with surprising enthusiasm, humming cheerfully as if delighted to be part of the adventure. It turned out that the car had one immediate and undeniable advantage: everyone noticed it. At gas stations, parking lots, and roadside cafés, people walked over to inspect

the tiny vehicle that had somehow found its way into the middle of a long-distance road trip. Conversations followed a familiar pattern. Someone would look at the car, then look at us, then look back at the car again with a mixture of confusion and admiration. “You’re going where in that?” they would ask. We would smile and give the name of our next destination, which inevitably triggered a moment of silent calculation as they tried to determine whether this plan was brave or deeply misguided.

As the miles passed, the Smart began to reveal unexpected strengths. Its small size, which initially seemed like a liability, quickly became one of its greatest advantages. Parking, for example, was no longer a challenge. In crowded towns and historic neighborhoods where normal cars struggled to squeeze into narrow spaces, the Smart Fortwo glided confidently into gaps that appeared barely wider than a bicycle lane. In one particularly tight street, we managed to park in a spot that looked less like a parking space and more like an architectural oversight. While larger vehicles circled the block searching for room, our tiny car sat comfortably in place like a smug little puzzle piece that had finally found its perfect fit.

“Instead, we found ourselves staring at a tiny two-seater: the charming, compact, blue and slightly suspiciously small Smart Fortwo.”

The Smart Fortwo approached each incline with determination, steadily working its way upward while larger cars rushed past with effortless confidence. At times the engine sounded less like a high-performance machine and more like a determined kitchen appliance, but it never gave up. Slowly but surely, the tiny car climbed its way through winding mountain roads, offering a steady reminder that speed is overrated when the scenery is this good.

There were, of course, moments when the road trip bordered on the absurd. One afternoon we found ourselves parked between two enormous SUVs at a highway rest stop. The Smart looked so small in comparison that it seemed possible someone might accidentally place it in their trunk and drive away. On another occasion we pulled up next to a delivery truck at a traffic light, only to realize that the truck’s front tire was roughly the same height as our entire hood. The experience gave us a new appreciation for perspective and a strong desire to remain very visible.



"Each inconvenience added another layer of absurdity to the journey, making the experience feel less like a conventional road trip and more like a cheerful experiment in what a tiny car could accomplish."

Despite these moments of scale-related humility, the journey continued to unfold beautifully. The little car carried us through countryside roads, charming villages, and coastal highways where the air smelled faintly of salt and summer. At one point we reached the sunlit curves of the Italian Riviera, where the Smart Fortwo seemed perfectly at home among colorful buildings and narrow streets. Here, the car's size was no longer unusual—it was practically ideal. Scooters buzzed past, compact cars lined the streets, and our tiny road trip companion blended seamlessly into the relaxed rhythm of coastal life.

Another unexpected side effect of traveling in such a small vehicle was the sheer number of smiles it generated. There is something inherently cheerful about a vehicle that doesn't try to dominate the road. Instead, the Smart Fortwo simply pattered along, minding its own business and quietly spreading joy wherever it went. By the middle of the trip, we had begun to suspect that the car itself was the real star of the adventure.

Of course, not everything went smoothly. Long highway stretches occasionally reminded us that the Smart Fortwo had been designed primarily for urban environments rather than cross-continental exploration. Strong winds made the car feel like a determined paperweight. Passing trucks created dramatic gusts that required careful steering. And the limited cargo space meant that every new souvenir forced

us to reconsider the delicate packing arrangement that kept the trunk functional. Still, these challenges became part of the story rather than obstacles to it. Each inconvenience added another layer of absurdity to the journey, making the experience feel less like a conventional road trip and more like a cheerful experiment in what a tiny car could accomplish.

By the time we finally turned toward home, the little Smart Fortwo had carried us across mountains, coastlines, and countless kilometers of open road. It had navigated tight city streets, climbed winding alpine passes, and patiently endured our questionable packing strategies. More importantly, it had transformed the entire trip into something far more memorable than a standard drive. Traveling in such a small car slowed us down just enough to notice the world around us: the villages tucked into hillsides, the cafés hidden along quiet roads, and the small moments of curiosity from strangers who couldn't quite believe the journey we were taking.

In the end, the question everyone asked us—"Why would you drive across Europe in a Smart?"—turned out to have a surprisingly simple answer. Because it made the adventure better. The car forced us to embrace the ridiculousness of the plan, to laugh at the impractical parts, and to celebrate the joy of doing something slightly absurd. It reminded us that road trips are not really about efficiency or speed. They're about the stories you collect along the way.

Was the Smart Fortwo the logical choice for a journey across an entire continent? Absolutely not. But sometimes the best adventures begin with a car that looks just a little too small for the job and a group of travelers willing to see where it can take them.

IMAGE CREDITS: Bring a Trailer, Tomas Oldenburger, Ilse @iml on Unsplash, La So @larasophie996 on Unsplash, Jorge Saavedra, Google AI Studio.



tiny verdict

Driving across Europe in a Smart Fortwo is not the most practical plan. But what the Smart lacks in size, it makes up for in charm. It parks anywhere, attracts smiles everywhere, and somehow turns a simple journey into an adventure. Would we recommend it? Absolutely. Just pack light—and bring a good sense of humor.

NEXT ISSUE'S TINY STARS

Recognize this smile?

The little roadster that proved driving fun doesn't need horsepower—just sunshine and curves.



ALSO FEATURING:

- A deep dive into Italian microcar culture
- The unexpected rise of Chinese mini EVs
- Why the world is obsessed with kei trucks

ISSUE 2 ARRIVING SOON — SAME TINY CARS, BIGGER ADVENTURES.

Tiny Car Club started with a simple idea: cars don't have to be big, fast, expensive, or serious to be worth loving. Sometimes the most memorable vehicles are the ones that make people smile in parking lots, start conversations at gas stations, or make you say "awww" when you see them drive by.

If this issue proved anything, it's that tiny cars can lead to big adventures — from rare microcars at auto shows to cross-continent road trips in vehicles that barely hold two suitcases. Thanks for joining the club. Until next issue: drive small, wave often, and keep celebrating the wonderfully tiny side of car culture. See you next issue — the parking spots will still be tiny.

GOT A TINY ADVENTURE?

Did you road trip in a ridiculously small car? Parallel park somewhere you definitely shouldn't have? Own a car that makes strangers say "awww"?

Submit the story of your adventure and photos to: tinycarclub.com/tales



