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Volkswagen Group launches autonomous vehicle testing with its Gen.Urban in Wolfsburg

- Self-driving research vehicle Gen.Urban to operate on Wolfsburg's streets
- Urban test route in Wolfsburg city area replicates real-world traffic scenarios, from intersections to roundabouts
- Research project aims to explore how passengers experience rides in a self-driving vehicle

Wolfsburg, Germany, December 12, 2025 – The Volkswagen Group is starting the next testing phase in Wolfsburg with its self-driving research vehicle Gen.Urban¹. After intensive trials, the Gen.Urban can now drive autonomously in real urban traffic. The research project aims to explore how passengers experience riding in a self-driving vehicle without a traditional steering wheel or pedals – and what requirements this creates for future vehicle concepts.

An interdisciplinary team from Volkswagen Group Innovation, including designers, human factors specialists, software engineers, and materials experts, is gathering comprehensive data on user behavior and interaction with the Gen.Urban. These findings will contribute to the development of future interior and user experience (UX) concepts across the Group's brands.



The autonomous research vehicle Gen.Urban.

Key questions driving the research include: How do people spend their time in a self-driving vehicle? Which digital features best support work, entertainment, or relaxation? How should interaction between the vehicle and passengers be designed, particularly for older people or children? Simply put: Do people feel comfortable?

Gen.Urban delivers a personalized driving experience even before the journey begins

Even before departure, passengers can customize their preferences – via app or directly in the vehicle – from cabin temperature to ambient lighting. Upon entering, the Gen.Urban greets the passenger, and the seat automatically adjusts to the desired position. In addition, the vehicle's digital interior can be tailored to individual preferences using artificial intelligence (AI). The wide front display with its information, light, and sound is then adapted to an individual theme.

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Gen.Urban is designed without a traditional steering wheel or pedals. The test participant sits in the driver's seat, while a trained safety driver monitors the vehicle from the passenger seat. If necessary, the safety driver can intervene at any time using a specially developed control panel with a joystick.

The current test phase initially involves Volkswagen Group employees. The test phase is planned for a period of several weeks.

Dr. Nikolai Ardey, Head of Volkswagen Group Innovation, explains: "The technology for autonomous driving is making rapid progress. With our Gen.Urban research vehicle, we want to understand exactly how passengers experience autonomous driving. Because: The key to a positive customer experience is to build trust – through meaningful interaction, a relaxed atmosphere, and intelligent assistance systems that respond precisely to the needs of passengers. Ultimately, technology should fit people, not the other way around. We will benefit from these insights across the entire Group in the long term."



The urban test route in Wolfsburg has been designed to reflect the typical challenges of city traffic.

Test route in Wolfsburg city area with typical traffic scenarios

The starting point of the test route is the visitor parking lot at the HQ building. From there, the nearly ten-kilometer loop runs through Wolfsburg's city area, passing the Sandkamp factory gate, Saar and Lessing streets, Brandenburger Platz, Breslauer Street, Grauhorststraße, and finally returning via Heinrich-Nordhoff-Street. Traffic light intersections, roundabouts, current construction sites, residential areas,

industrial sections, and possibly congested traffic: the route is chosen to correspond to typical challenges of urban traffic. Each test drive lasts approximately 20 minutes.

¹⁾ *Research vehicle – This vehicle is not offered for sale*

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About the Volkswagen Group:

The Volkswagen Group is one of the world's leading car makers, headquartered in Wolfsburg, Germany. It operates globally, with 115 production facilities in 17 European countries and 10 countries in the Americas, Asia and Africa. With around 680,000 employees worldwide. The Group's vehicles are sold in over 150 countries.

With a comprehensive portfolio of strong global brands, leading technologies at scale, innovative ideas to tap into future profit pools and an entrepreneurial leadership team, the Volkswagen Group is committed to shaping the future of mobility through investments in electric and autonomous driving vehicles, digitalization and sustainability. The goal: As a "Global Automotive Tech Driver", to make the best automotive technologies accessible to customers worldwide - from entry-level mobility to the luxury segment.

In 2024, the total number of vehicles delivered to customers by the Group globally was 9.0 million (2023: 9.2 million). Group sales revenue in 2024 totaled EUR 324.7 billion (2023: EUR 322.3 billion). The operating result in 2024 amounted to EUR 19.1 billion (2023: EUR 22.5 billion).

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