

The Porsche Museum

A pantheon to performance in Stuttgart Germany

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL MILNE

What holds as much steel as the Eiffel Tower and corrals the power of more than 20,000 horses? That would be the gleaming Porsche Museum in Stuttgart, Germany. The surplus of steel is due to the dramatic sharply cantilevered shape of the building while the horses, naturally, are due to the 80+ vehicles contained within its sprawling interior.

From humble beginnings, which included designing the original Volkswagen that we know as the Beetle, Ferdinand Porsche created an automotive empire whose success still reverberates today. The dynamic building is reflective of that legacy.

Outside the front entrance, a 78-foot-tall sculpture featuring three Porsche 911s soars up into the sky, representing three generations of the company's iconic vehicle. The sculpture provides a hint of the excitement to come: cars are rotated from

a collection of more than 550 Porsches, so each visit yields new surprises. Each car also runs — they are periodically taken out as a “museum on wheels” and shown at events around the world. Near the ground-floor entrance, a window looks into a workshop, offering a glimpse of mechanics preparing the vehicles for classic-car races.

Visitors begin at the top of the structure and wind their way down to the ground floor, strolling along a spiraled walkway as they admire the cars that are displayed like the motoring equivalent of works-of-art. Unlike many auto museums, the cars are not set off behind barriers — you can walk all around them and even peer inside. Although, as our guide stated, “Be careful, if you touch it, you buy it.” He was joking, I think.

Porsches today have a sleek reputation, but it wasn't always that way. The first vehicle you'll run into is an 1898 Egger-

Lohner-Elektromobil Modell C.2 Phaeton; the old-fashioned buggy looks like it was purloined from the set of *Gunsmoke*, minus its horse. But this revolutionary vehicle is considered to be the first one constructed by Ferdinand Porsche. He attached an electric motor to the chassis and used it as a test vehicle to try out his early theories of automotive design.

Another homage to the early days of the inventor is a 1912 Austro-Daimler Motorspritze. It's fire-engine red because, well, it is a fire engine. It reflects Porsche's fascination with the unique technical requirements for fighting fires. His pioneering breakthrough allowed a full crew, water pump, and hose to be carried on a motorized vehicle for the first time.

But enough of this lap around memory lane; you're here for the speedmobiles and the Porsche Museum has those aplenty. The white car festooned with red spades that looks like it was pulled from a pack of playing cards is a 1922 Austro-Daimler ADS R Sascha. It represents the beginning of Porsche's racing tradition, winning at the Targa Florio roadrace in Sicily. In the two-passenger vehicle, the mechanic's seat is staggered slightly behind the driver; it took so much power — with elbows flying — to steer the car that this configuration helped the driver avoid whacking the mechanic in the head.

The shiny aluminum 1939 Type 64 looks like a precursor to the Space Age. Even now, its streamlined shape emerges like something from the future, and it can be considered the father of all Porsches.

In 1946, Porsche's son Ferdinand “Ferry” Porsche took over the company. He stated, “In the beginning, I looked around but couldn't find the car I dreamt of, so I decided to build it myself.”



The Inspiration 911 sculpture stands tall in front of Porsche headquarters and the adjacent Porsche Museum in Stuttgart.



This 1898 Egger-Lohner C.2 Phaeton electric-powered buggy was designed and built by Ferdinand Porsche at age 22.

The 1948 Porsche Type 356 Nr. 1 roadster was the first production sports car built with the Porsche name on it. It's basically a souped-up Volkswagen with an engine tuned to a dizzying 35 horsepower. The ignition key is on the left to save precious seconds, allowing drivers to start it with the left hand while shifting into gear with the right, when charging out of the starting line at Le Mans. A 1964 Porsche 911 2.0 coupe was one of the first 911s. Originally it was supposed to be called a 901, but Peugeot owned the rights to that name and wouldn't let Porsche use it. Elsewhere, Porsches are lined up by the dozens in exhibits honoring particular models such as the 924, 928, and more.

Of course, this being the Porsche Museum, supercars are not left out. The 2014 Porsche 918 Spyder cost close to a million dollars: for that you get an 887-horsepower hybrid engine and bragging rights. Nearby, a more sedate Porsche's top speed is only 12 miles per hour — that's because it's a tractor: The 1959 Porsche Schlepper (gotta love that name) represents the company's brief foray into farming equipment.

For serious students of the marque,



Ferdinand Porsche developed this 1912 Austro-Daimler fire truck while working as chief engineer at Austro-Daimler. It was used around the plant in Austria for 20 years until being turned over to a local fire department.

Ferdinand Porsche's original automotive drawings are archived at the museum and are available with a prior appointment. Before you leave, you can pick up an affordable Porsche in the gift shop, where realistic scale models are for sale.

For more information about visiting the museum, go to www.Porsche.com/museum. And, while you're in Stuttgart, you can also visit the Mercedes-Benz Museum, which is a short six-mile drive away. For more on that, go to www.mercedes-benz.com/en/mercedes-benz/classic/museum. The two museums offer a combined discount admission ticket. 🚗

Michael Milne is the author of the *Roadster Guide to America's Classic Car Museums & Attractions*. Contact him at roadsterguide@gmail.com



The 1939 Porsche Type 64 was built for long-distance rallying but was never raced.



The 1922 Astro-Daimler Sascha was designed by Ferdinand Porsche and raced successfully in the Targa Florio.



The 2014 Porsche 918 Spyder Hybrid used a mid-mounted 4.6-litre V-8 and twin electric motors to hit 60 mph in less than three seconds, and run the quarter-mile in 9.8 seconds. It stickered for about \$850,000.



The 1948 Porsche Type 356 Nr. 1 prototype leads a lineup that also includes the 1947 Porsche Type 360 Cisitalia Grand Prix racer and a 1950 Volkswagen Type 1.

