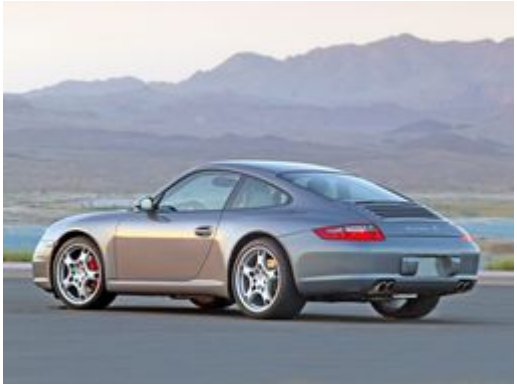
THE HISTORY OF PORSCHE CARS

Porsche Forum



Porsche (Dr. Ing. h. c. F. Porsche AG), properly pronounced as a two syllable word (porsh-eh), is a German manufacturer of sports cars, founded in 1931 by Ferdinand Porsche, the engineer who created the first Volkswagen. The company is located in Zuffenhausen, a city district of Stuttgart.

Porsche has a reputation for producing high-end sports vehicles that, despite their high performance, are reliable and tractable enough to be used for daily driving, and of high manufacturing quality and durability. The current Porsche lineup includes everything from an entry-level roadster (Boxster) to a Supercar (Carrera GT). Future plans include a high performance luxury sedan, the Panamera.

As a company, Porsche is known for weathering changing market conditions with great financial stability, while retaining most production in Germany during an age when most other German car manufacturers have moved at least partly to Eastern Europe or overseas. The headquarters and main factory are still at Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen, but for the Cayenne and Carrera GT there is a new plant at Leipzig, in the east of Germany. Some Boxster and Cayman production is outsourced to Valmet Automotive in Finland. The company has been highly successful in recent times, and indeed claims to be the most profitable car company in the world (in terms of profit margin per unit sold, its absolute profits would be dwarfed by Toyota).

Porsche has for many years offered consultancy services to various other car manufacturers. Studebaker, SEAT, Daewoo, Subaru and Yugo have consulted Porsche on engineering for their cars or engines. Porsche also helped Harley-Davidson design their new engine in their newer V-Rod motorcycle.

Porsche's main competition is arguably from Italian specialty automaker Ferrari, though traditionally their vehicles appeal to quite different personalities, if similar demographics. Other rivals include coupes from Jaguar, BMW, Lamborghini, Maserati, Aston Martin and arguably Mercedes-Benz.

PORSCHE HISTORY

The first Porsche, was the 64 from 1938, used many components from the Volkswagen Beetle. The second Porsche model and first production car, the Porsche 356 sports car of 1948, was initially built in Gmünd, Austria, where the company was evacuated to during war times, but after building 49 cars the company relocated back to Zuffenhausen. Many people regard the 356 as the first Porsche simply because it was the first model sold by the fledgling company. Ferdinand Porsche worked with his son Ferry Porsche in designing the 356 but died soon after the first prototype was built. Again, the car used components from the Beetle including its engine, gearbox and suspension. However, the 356 had several evolutions while in production and many VW parts were replaced by Porsche-made parts. The last 356s were powered by 100% Porsche designed engines. The sleek bodywork was designed by Erwin Komenda who had also designed the body of the Beetle.
In 1963, after some success in motor-racing (namely with the Porsche 550 Spyder), the company launched the Porsche 911, another air-cooled, rear-engine sports car, this time with a 6-cylinder "boxer" engine. The team to lay out the body-shell design was led by Ferry Porsche's eldest son Ferdinand Alexander Porsche (F.A.). The design phase for the 911 caused internal problems with Erwin Komenda who led the body design department until then. F.A. Porsche complained Komenda made changes to the design not being approved by him. Company leader Ferry Porsche took his son's drawings to neighboring body-shell manufacturer Reuter bringing the design to the 1963 state. Reuter's workshop was later acquired by Porsche (so-called Werk II). Afterwards Reuter became a seat manufacturer, today known as Keiper-Recaro. The 911 has become Porsche's most well-known model, successful on the race-track, in rallies, and in terms of sales. Far more than any other model, the Porsche brand is defined by the 911. It remains in production; however, after several generations of revision, current-model 911s share only the basic mechanical concept of a rear-engine, six-cylinder coupe, and basic styling cues with the original car. A cost-reduced model with the same body but 356-derived running gear (including its four-cylinder engine) was sold as the 912.

The company has always had a close relationship with Volkswagen, and as already mentioned, the first Porsche cars used many Volkswagen components. The two companies collaborated in 1969 to make the VW-Porsche 914 and 914-6, in 1976 with the Porsche 912E (USA only) and the Porsche 924, which used many Audi components and was built at an Audi Neckarsulm factory. Most 944 were also done there even though they used many fewer VW components. The Porsche Cayenne, introduced in 2002, shares the entire chassis with VW Touareg, which are built at the Škoda factory in Bratislava. Both Audi and Škoda are wholly-owned subsidiaries of VW. In late 2005, Porsche took an 18.65% stake in VW, further cementing their relationship and preventing a takeover of VW, which was rumored at the time. Speculated suitors included DaimlerChrysler, BMW and Renault.

In 1972 the company's legal form was changed from limited partnership to private limited company (German AG), because Ferry Porsche and his sister Louise Piëch felt their succeeding generation did not team up well. This led to the foundation of an executive board out of managers not being family members and a supervisory board consisting mostly of family members. This way no one out of the family was in operational charge of the company anymore. F.A. Porsche founded his own design company, Porsche Design, which is renowned for exclusive sunglasses, watches, furniture and many other luxury articles. Ferdinand Piëch who was responsible for mechanical development of Porsche's serial and racing cars before founded his own engineering bureau and developed a 5-cylinder-inline Diesel engine for Mercedes-Benz. Short time later he changed to Audi and made his career through the whole company including the Volkswagen Group boards.

First CEO of Porsche AG was Dr. Ernst Fuhrmann who had been working at Porsche's engine development before. Fuhrmann (being responsible for the so-called Fuhrmann-engine used in the 356 Carrera models and the 550 Spyder having four ohc-camshafts instead of a central camshaft in the Volkswagen-derived serial engines) planned to cease the 911 during the 70s and replace it with the V8-front engine grand sports wagon 928. As we know today the 911 outlived the 928 by far. Fuhrmann was replaced in the early 80s by Peter W. Schutz a american manager who was declared 911 aficionado. He was replaced in 1988 by former German computer-company Nixdorf manager Arno Bohn who made some expensive misdecisions leading to his soon dismissal along with development director Dr. Ulrich Bez, formely responsible for BMW's Z1 model and today

Aston Martin ceo. Interim ceo was longtime Porsche employee Heinz Branitzki before Dr. Wendelin Wiedeking became ceo in 1992. Wiedeking took over the board's chair at a point in time when Porsche seemed to be prone to be taken over by a bigger company. During these 14 years so far Wiedeking made Porsche a very efficient and profitable company.

In 1990, Porsche had a memorandum of understanding with Toyota to learn and benefit from lean Japanese production methods, and currently, Toyota is assisting Porsche with Hybrid technology, rumored to find its way into a Hybrid Cayenne SUV.

Ferdinand Porsche's grandson, Ferdinand Piëch, was chairman and CEO of the Volkswagen Group from 1993 to 2002. Today he is chairman of the supervisory board. With 12,8 per cent of the Porsche voting shares, he also remains the second largest individual shareholder of Porsche AG after his cousin F.A. Porsche (13,6 per cent).

Porsche's 2002 introduction of the Cayenne also marked the unveiling of a new production facility in Leipzig, Saxony, which today accounts for nearly half of Porsche's annual output.

In 2004, production of the Porsche Carrera GT commenced in Leipzig, and at EUR 450,000.00 it is the most expensive production model Porsche ever built.

As of 2005, the extended Porsche and Piech families controlled all of Porsche AG's voting shares. In early October 2005 the company announced acquisition of an 18.53% stake in Volkswagen AG and disclosed intentions to acquire additional VW shares in the future.

MOTOR-RACING

The 1978 Monte Carlo Rally with a private 911 SC. The Paris Dakar Rally was won twice, too using the 911 derived Porsche 959 Group B supercar.
Porsche has also participated in Formula One racing, with mixed results; its first foray (as a constructor) from 1961 to 1962 produced just one win in a championship race, claimed by Dan Gurney at the 1962 French Grand Prix. One week later, he repeated the success in front of Porsche's home crowd on Stuttgart's Solitude in a non-championship race. At the end of the season, Porsche retired from F1 due to the high costs. Privateers continued to enter out-dated Porsche 718 in F1 until 1964.

Porsche returned in 1983 after nearly two decades away, supplying engines badged as TAG units for the McLaren Team. Porsche-powered cars took two constructor championships in 1984 and 1985 and three driver crowns in 1984, 1985 and 1986. Porsche returned to F1 again in 1991 as an engine supplier, however this time with disastrous results: Porsche-powered Footwork cars failed to score a single point, and failed to even qualify for over half the races that year; Porsche has not participated in Formula One since.

Stock and lightly-modified Porsches are raced in many competitions around the world; some of these are primarily amateur classes for enthusiasts, but the Porsche Michelin Supercup is a wholly professional category raced as a support category for European Formula One rounds.

Porsche dropped its factory motorsports programs during the turn of the century (preferring to support privateers) for financial reasons and has only recently made a comeback with the new RS Spyder prototype. Based on LMP2 homologaton regulations, the RS Spyder made its debut at Laguna Seca during the final race of the 2005 ALMS season and immediately garnering a class win in the LMP2 class and finishing 5th overall.

Major Victories and Championships

- 14 Makes and Team World Championship (1964, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1994)
- 8 Long Distance World Championship
- 3 IMSA Supercar-Series (1991, 1992, 1993)
- 6 German Racing Championship (1977, 1979, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985)
- 20 European Hill Climbing Championship
- 3 Formula 1 Driver World Championship (1984, 1985, 1986)
- 2 Formula 1 Constructor World Championship (1984, 1985)
- 26 Formula 1 victories (1962, 1 win; 1984, 12 wins; 1985, 6 wins; 1986, 4 wins; 1987, 3 wins)
- 20 Daytona 24 Hour (1968, 1970, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1989, 1991, 1995, 2003)
- 15 IMSA Supercar-Race (USA)
- 16 Le Mans 24 Hour (1970, 1971, 1976, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1994, 1996, 1997, 1998)
- 17 Sebring 12 Hour (1960, 1968, 1971, 1973, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988)
- 11 Targa Florio (1956, 1959, 1960, 1963, 1964, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1973)
- 4 Rallye Monte Carlo (1968, 1969, 1970, 1978)
- 2 Paris-Dakar Rallye (1984, 1986)

MODELS

Consumer Models

- Porsche 356
- Porsche 550 Spyder
- Porsche 911
- Porsche 930 (1975-1989 911 Turbo)
- Porsche 964 (1989-1994)
- Porsche 965 (964 Turbo)
- Porsche 993 (1994 - 1998)
- Porsche 996 (1998 - 2005)
- Porsche 997 (From 2005)
- Porsche 912 (1.6-liter 911)
- Porsche 914 and 914-6
- Porsche 912E (1976 USA model only)
- Porsche 924
- Porsche 931 (924 Turbo)
- Porsche 928
- Porsche 944
- Porsche 951 (944 Turbo)
- Porsche 968
- Porsche Boxster (986 and 987)
- Porsche Cayenne
- Porsche 959 (911 based Group B supercar)
- Porsche Carrera GT
- Porsche Cayman
- Porsche Panamera

Racing Models

- Porsche 64
- Porsche 360 (Cisitalia)
- Porsche 550
- Porsche 718 RSK
- Porsche 718 F2
- Porsche 804 F1
- Porsche W-RS (Spyder)
- Porsche 904
- Porsche 906 (Carrera 6)
- Porsche 907
- Porsche 908
- Porsche 909 (Bergspyder)
- Porsche 910
- Porsche 914/6
- Porsche 916
- Porsche 917
- Porsche 934
- Porsche 935
- Porsche 936
- Porsche 924 (Racing versions)
- Porsche 954
- Porsche 956/962C
- Porsche 944 (Racing versions)
- Porsche 959
- Porsche 961
- Porsche Indy March (89P and 90P)
- Porsche 966
- TWR-Porsche of Joest Racing
- Porsche RS Spyder
- Porsche 911
- Porsche 911 GT1
- Porsche 911 GT2
- 911 GT3

Prototypes and concept cars

- Porsche 114
- Porsche 356/1
- Porsche 695 (911 prototype)
- Porsche 901 (911 prototype)
- Porsche 916 (flat-6 914)
- Porsche 959 Prototype
- Porsche 942
- Porsche 969
- Porsche Panamericana
- Porsche 989
- Porsche Varrera
- Porsche Boxster Concept
- Porsche Carrera GT Concept
- Porsche E2

Tractors

- Porsche Type 110
- Porsche AP Series
- Porsche Junior (14 hp)
- Porsche Standard (25 hp)
- Porsche Super (38 hp)
- Porsche Master (50 hp)
- Porsche 312
- Porsche 108F
- Porsche R22
- Porsche AP16

PRONUNCIATION OF "PORSCHE"

In German "Porsche" is pronounced porsh-eh (IPA /pɔɹʃə/). In English, the German form is often heard from official Porsche sources and from some Porsche owners and enthusiasts. There is a habit in American English towards over-compensating the e, which then results into pronouncing it as Pors-scha (IPA /pɔɹʃa/). Outside of these groups however, the pronunciation porsh (IPA /pɔɹʃ/) is common but usually frowned upon.

- The correct pronunciation of 'Porsche'