

Museum Tour

Insights

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Whoever enters the all-encompassing white of the Porsche Museum encounters motion. Inclined surfaces, streamlined tracks, and expansive exhibition spaces take visitors back into Porsche history, past fascinating vehicles, icons, and an array of smaller exhibit pieces. And those who do not wish to follow the path set before them are free to take their own unique journey through Porsche history.



On all levels: The full variety of Porsche from different perspectives



The Porsche Museum

The escalator that leads from the foyer up into the exhibition space seems endless. That has a little to do with its length of 105 feet, but really more with the unbridled curiosity one feels upon entering the new Porsche Museum. The most spectacular construction project that Porsche has ever commissioned has an enormous power of attraction even from outside. But its appeal is by no means limited to its exterior. The architecture and exhibition space also offer visitors much freedom in terms of interior content. Achim Stejskal, the museum's manager, notes that "the new museum is intended to embody openness." This is an easy promise to make, because Stejskal knows that he can keep it. Eighty-six vehicles and hundreds of smaller exhibits on more than 60,000 square feet of space attest to the fascination of Porsche history. But the Porsche Museum is not only rich in information. It also radiates vitality. In full accord with the company's emphasis on openness, the exhibits are not arranged on the basis of hierarchical principles. Openness also means that the entrance does not feature the obligatory turnstile.

Sweeping ascent: The escalator runs from the reception area right up to the exhibition space

The "experiential" quality of Porsche history is granted fitting dimensions. At the top of the escalator, a sports-car arena opens up onto two staggered levels. Despite the generosity of freedom, visitors never have a sense of losing their way, because there is a clearly defined sequence for orientation. The first decision they have to make is determined by a division within the "Porsche century." They can turn left to delve into Porsche history before 1948, or continue straight ahead into the company's activities after 1948. "The museum is Porsche's new calling card; it constantly links the brand's history with its future," says Stejskal. "Our aim is to display Porsche's core values. The principles and values that the company pursues are what give it its distinctive identity."

In addition to the product chronology that frames the two levels of the spacious, brightly lit exhibition hall, islands throughout the expansive space attract visitors to their respective thematic displays. By bringing together items from different periods, these thematic nodes direct attention to the most significant cars, the most memorable racing events, and Porsche's technical innovations, including the Targa Florio, automotive studies, Le Mans, the 917, engineering, racing, the evolution of the 911, and the "My Porsche" epilogue.

What a medley of images and ideas! In contrast to the layout strategies employed at other museums, the Porsche Museum is deliberately designed not to be an adventure park. For Porsche, ▶



The Porsche Museum



Inner workings: This open model (above) shows how a real 911 (below) is born



the vehicles themselves are the adventure, and the focus—in keeping with the classic nature of the museum itself—is on imparting knowledge.

One way of putting theoretical knowledge into practice is pursued by the “Museum on Wheels,” which sends famous Porsche sports and racing cars—nearly all of which are functional—all over the world as ambassadors of the brand and the museum. This practice is yet another indication of how Porsche’s approach to its heritage differs from that of other manufacturers. It also ensures that change is a constant feature of the museum’s exhibits. Repeat visitors are expressly desired. “To acquire a comprehensive idea of Porsche’s history,” remarks Stejskal, “a single visit is hardly enough.”

The historical timeline and the thematic island displays do not function as rivals. Instead, they are linked to each other via the very backbone of the exhibition, namely, the “Porsche idea.” As the third pillar of the museum’s content, this thematic element reflects the unique properties of the brand and delights visitors with a large number of small displays. The Porsche idea is composed in turn of several constituent ideas—“innovation,” “lightness,” “speed,” “strength,” “intensity,” and “consistency.”

For the museum’s manager, the thematic arrangements illustrate the spirit and passion of Porsche. The center of the building contains another free thematic complex on how a Porsche is made, which represents the very core of the company—the expertise and know-how at the heart of Porsche. “Thanks to this museum,” says Stejskal, “we now have a place that clearly shows the awareness of tradition at Porsche, but also the joy of innovation.” Once again, he promises “uncomplicated access to the brand”—for all the many visitors with their diverse interests and approaches, because the Porsche Museum is not designed for a single target group.

Each respective interplay between the thematic islands and the Porsche idea forms a triad with a reference item from the history of Porsche products. For example, the first glimpse of the 356 America Roadster brings together the idea of lightweight construction, the topic of the Targa Florio, and the chronology of Porsche sports cars. Each idea also spotlights its own icon as a leading display piece, such as the plastic body of the 908, the Fuhrmann engine, the underbody of the 956, a dismantled 917 assembly, or a collection of trophies.

All of this induces a level of perception with a conscious “Aha!” effect. The same is true for the view into the museum workshop in the foyer, or a visit—advance notification required—to the historical archive. This new museum stands for the communication of knowledge about everything to do with Porsche—whether technical, historical, or contemporary. “But we don’t just display sheet metal and engines,” says Stejskal. “What we really show is fascination.” This promise, too, will be kept. Guaranteed. ◀