

null Jul 16, 2019

Porsche Historical Background: 1948-2023

In an age when most of its competitors have been absorbed into larger manufacturers, Porsche remains a staunchly — and profitably — independent maker of high-performance sportscars.



The Porsche name has become synonymous with sports cars and racecars because that is what company founders Ferdinand Porsche and his son Ferdinand ("Ferry") set out to build when they first set up shop with 200 workers in 1948.

The senior Porsche, whose engineering experience included Daimler-Benz, established an independent design and engineering firm in 1931 and designed the Volkswagen Beetle. He brought a half-century of experience with innovation, from a turn-of-the-century four-wheel drive gasoline/electric hybrid vehicle to the virtually unbeatable Auto Union Grand Prix cars of the 1930s.

The younger Porsche helped grow the new company and was instrumental in designing the first Porsche sportscar, the 356. Though sporting just 40 horsepower from a rear-mounted, slightly souped-up Beetle engine, the first Porsche quickly made its mark with agile handling, as well as attributes almost unknown among sportscars of the day — comfort and reliability.

Porsche introduced its own engines in the mid-1950s, along with more powerful versions of the 356. After the 356 came a true legend among modern automobiles, the Porsche 911. Ahead of its time when introduced in 1964, the rear-engine 911 evolved over three decades when Porsche introduced a completely new 911 Carrera for 1999. The lineage includes 911 S (1967), the 911 Turbo (1974 [1976 in the U.S.]), the first 911 Cabriolet (1983) and the first all-wheel drive 911 Carrera 4 (1990).

Porsche introduced a series of front-engine models in the 1970s, starting with the four-cylinder 924 (1976) and the unrelated 928 powered by the company's first V-8 engine (1978). From the 924 sprang the more powerful and sophisticated 944 and 944 Turbo, and finally the 968 in the early '90s. Porsche retired both the 968 and 928 in 1995 to focus on development of the rear-engine 911 and mid-engine Boxster.

Porsche is also synonymous with racing, and Porsche cars began competing almost immediately. To date, Porsche cars have won an estimated 24,000 auto races around the world, including more than 50 class wins at Le Mans.

1948

Porsche introduces the aerodynamic "356," named for its design project number. Through 1949, the company hand-builds the first 52 cars in a small garage in Gmund, Austria.

1950

Porsche leases space in the Reutter body factory in Zuffenhausen, a Stuttgart suburb. Reutter builds bodies for the 356 and production reaches 369 for the year. Sportscar enthusiasts take notice of the lightweight, quick-handling 356. In New York, importer Max Hoffman places the first North American order for Porsches.

1951

Ferdinand Porsche dies. Horsepower for the 356 jumps to 60.

1953

550 Spyder road/race model proves a "giant killer" among larger, more powerful cars from Ferrari, Jaguar, Maserati and Aston-Martin.

1954

Speedster model introduced as low-priced, "stripped-down" version of 356. Today the 1954-1957 Speedsters are among the most sought-after Porsches by collectors.

1956

10,000th Porsche built. Top performance road car is 100-hp Carrera.

1958

10,000th 356 built. Porsche outsources body production as demand grows.

1962

Porsche establishes independent distribution network in Europe.

1963

Successor to the 356 first shown — the 911 powered by an all-new 2.0-liter, 130-hp six-cylinder engine. Porsche takes over its former body subcontractor, Reuter and establishes its own distribution network in the United States. Worldwide annual production surpasses 11,000.

1964

911 production begins and the new model is an instant hit. US price: \$5,500

1965

10,000th 356 production ends after 17 years and 77,361 built. Porsche quickly responds to demand for new entry model with the 912 — the 911 body with the former 356 four-cylinder engine. US price: \$4,000.

1966-1970

Porsche expands the 911 range quickly, adding an innovative Targa with removable roof panel (1966), Sportomatic semi-automatic transmission (1967), the high-performance 911 S (1967), a lower-priced 911 T (1968), fuel injection (1969) and larger engines (1970).

1969

Production passes the 14,000 mark. Porsche enlarges the Zuffenhausen factory with a new multistory assembly operation.

1970

Porsche replaces the 912 with the 914, a lower-priced, mid-engine sportscar. The 914 offers either a Volkswagen four-cylinder engine or a Porsche six-cylinder engine (914/6).

1972

Porsche opens its Research and Development Center in Weissach, Germany. Ferry Porsche becomes chairman of the supervisory board of Porsche AG.

1975

Porsche introduces 911 Turbo supercar in North America as a 1976 model. The 911 Turbo combines exotic car performance with luxury and everyday usability.

1976

Porsche replaces the 914 with the 924, a front-engine sports coupe. The car is powered by an Audi engine and built by Audi and features a rear transaxle for optimal weight distribution. Porsche becomes the first carmaker in the world to heat-galvanize steel car bodies, and Porsche cars come with a six-year guarantee against rust.

1977

Total Porsche production to date passes 300,000.

1978

Porsche introduces the 928. It is radically different from the 911 and features a front-mounted, liquid-cooled 240-horsepower V-8 engine. The 911 becomes the 911 SC, featuring a 3.0-liter engine and a host of enhancements.

1981

924 model joined by 924 Turbo. The 924 is Porsche's most popular model and also a successful racecar.

1982

New 944 model based on 924 but with modified body and a Porsche-built four-cylinder engine.

1983

First 911 Cabriolet introduced. In the US, the Cabriolet outsells the Targa and quickly accounts for about one-third of 911 sales.

1984

Porsche Cars North America established with its headquarters in Reno, Nevada. Porsche AG goes public, with the Porsche and Piech families holding 875,000 shares of stock and 875,000 preferred shares listed for investors. 911 now known as the Carrera, featuring greater performance from a 3.2-liter engine.

1986

Porsche 944 is first car sold in US with both driver's side and passenger airbags as standard equipment.

1987

250,000th 911 built.

1989

Body production ends at the former Reuter plant. Production shifts to a new factory across the street. Porsche contract-builds the 500E high-performance sedan for Mercedes-Benz. The company will build more than 11,000 of these cars through 1995.

1990

Porsche introduces the all-wheel drive 911 Carrera 4 and the rear-wheel drive 911 Carrera 2. The cars share just 15 percent of their parts with the previous 911. New Tiptronic automatic transmission available for the Carrera 2 provides choice between fully automatic shifting and clutchless manual shifting.

1993

Dr. Wendelin Wiedekin, head of production and materials management, becomes chairman of Porsche AG. Refocused on 911 development, Porsche introduces the final version of the air-cooled classic. The same year, Porsche unveils a concept for a mid-engine sports car called "Boxster." Overwhelming positive response persuades Porsche to develop the car, which will appear in 1997.

1995

Porsche discontinues its front-engine models, the 968 (the final evolution of the 944), and the 928.

1996

One-millionth Porsche built in July. The 911 Turbo features the all-wheel drive system from the 911 Carrera 4, dual turbochargers and intercoolers and 400 horsepower.

1997

Boxster introduced with mid-mounted 201-horsepower, 2.5-liter engine. Porsche quickly responds to worldwide demand by establishing a second Boxster assembly site in Finland.

1998

Ferry Porsche dies at age 88. Porsche introduces the first 100-percent all-new 911 model since the first one in 1964. The new car breaks with 911 tradition by using a liquid-cooled engine — though it's still a horizontally opposed six. The all-wheel drive Carrera 4 introduces the Porsche Stability Management system.

1999

Porsche confirms that it will build its new sport-utility vehicle in Leipzig, Germany. The vehicle, designed and developed by Porsche and shared with Volkswagen, is scheduled to debut in 2002.

2000

Boxster features larger 2.7-liter engine. Boxster S introduced with 3.2-liter, 250-horsepower engine. All-new 2001 911 Turbo introduced with an engine based on that of the GT1 racecar that won LeMans in 1998. Tiptronic S five-speed automatic transmission introduced as an option.

Porsche unveils the Carrera GT during the Paris Auto Show. Has a mid-engine, open-cockpit super car concept featuring a 5.5-liter, normally aspirated V-10 powerplant with speed in excess of 200 mph.

2001

The Porsche 911 GT2 debuts with top track speed of 195 mph. Carrera engines increased to 320 horsepower. Adopt the 911 Turbo headlight design and receive a newly shaped front end, widened rear end panel, and redesigned oval exhaust tailpipes.

2002

Porsche announces plans to produce the Carrera GT with a six-liter V10 engine. An all new 911 Targa and 911 Carrera 4S are introduced based on Porsche's current 911 models.

2003

Porsche introduces Cayenne Sport Utility Vehicle as the Cayenne Turbo and Cayenne S. Boxster and Boxster S get power boosts from Porsche's patented VarioCam(r) engine technology.

2004

Carrera GTSupercar and Porsche 911 GT3 arrive in U.S. Full line-up includes 911 Coupe, Cabriolet and Targa models, Boxster and Boxster S roadsters and Cayenne S and Cayenne Turbo sport utility vehicles. Special 40th Anniversary 911 and new V-6 Cayenne introduced.

2005

The all-new 911 Carrera and Carrera S debut with a familiar silhouette, but with more power and options. 911 Turbo S, available as a coupe or cabriolet, comes standard with 444 horsepower and Porsche Ceramic Composite Brakes. New Cayenne standard features, including Homelink, an electronically latching rear tailgate and a six-speed manual gearbox on the Cayenne with a V6 engine.

2006

At the Geneva Motor Show, Porsche shows the first series-production car with spark-ignition engine to feature a turbocharger with variable blade geometry (VTG) - the 2007 Porsche 911 Turbo. At Geneva, Porsche also introduced the new Porsche 911 GT3. The new 911 GT3 was equipped with a 3.6 liter naturally aspirated engine develops 415 hp, also shown at this time. At about the same time the Porsche Cayenne Turbo S is launched.

In an historic race at the third American Le Mans Series (ALMS), the Porsche RS-Spyder racing cars entered by the American Penske team took the first and second overall spots, marking the first time—but not the last—that a sport prototype race car in the LMP2 class beat all competitors. That year Porsche dominated the LMP2 class with seven series wins.

In August of 2006, Porsche introduces an updated and more powerful version of its famous Boxster and Boxster S roadsters. At about the same time, Porsche brings the standard version of the Cayman to market at a price of \$49,400.

2007

The new 2008 Porsche Cayenne is unveiled to the public for the first time at the North American International Auto Show, the introduction marks the world debut of the more powerful and stylish generation of Porsche's sport utility vehicle. Porsche also plans the launch in Frankfurt, Germany, of its top-of-the-line 911 Turbo Cabriolet, which offers an exhilarating 480 horsepower (60 horsepower more than its predecessor), Variable Turbine Geometry (VTG), and all-wheel drive. The market launch is September 8, 2007.

2008

On February 4 in the 200,000th Porsche Cayenne rolled proudly off the assembly line in Leipzig, Germany. The model was a Cayenne GTS, which was unveiled that month at the Chicago Auto Show and launched that spring. That same month, Porsche Cars Canada, which had previously been a part of PCNA, becomes a separate subsidiary called Porsche Cars Canada.

In March, PCNA celebrates 10 years of being in Atlanta. On June 8th, Porsche celebrates its 60th anniversary of a sports car carrying the Porsche name plate.

On the racing front in the U.S. the big news is that Porsche, with Penske Racing, takes the ALMS LMP2 Championship and Porsche wins the GT class in ALMS as well.

In October, Porsche launches the new 911 Carrera and Carrera S and their Cabriolet siblings that offer new breakthrough technologies, including direct injection and the highly advanced PDK transmission.

On November 19th, Porsche unveils the new, second generation and more powerful Cayman and Boxster models at the Los Angeles Auto Show. Sadly, on December 18th, PCNA mourned the passing of longtime public relations manager, Bob Carlson.

2009

On January 5th, Porsche releases the first photos of its first four-door sports sedan, the Panamera; the company also announces that the car will be unveiled for the first time at the Shanghai Auto Show that spring.

On January 31, the new Porsche Museum opens its doors to the public in Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen. Representing one of the most spectacular buildings ever built by the company, the Porsche Museum serves to present the fascinating thrill and diversity of the Porsche brand to visitors from all over the world.

In February 20th, Porsche releases further details on its forthcoming Cayenne S Hybrid that will come with a sophisticated parallel hybrid system. The company also announces that the same system will come in the Panamera several year's after its launch.

On April 9th, Porsche unveils the new 911 GT3 for the first time in North America.

On April 20th in Shanghai, Porsche officially unveiled the Panamera—the German carmaker's first all-new, built-from-the-ground up vehicle in seven years. By June, final assembly of the Panamera is at full capacity at Porsche's Leipzig facility.

In September, Porsche debuts the GT3 RS, GT3 Cup Car, and 911 Turbo and 911 Turbo Cabriolet and 911 Sport Classic (not available in the U.S.) at the Frankfurt Auto Show.

On October 17th, the Panamera is launched to the U.S. market. At the L.A. Auto Show, Porsche reveals the exciting new Boxster Spyder.

2010

In February, Porsche begins selling the new Boxster Spyder. On March 1st, Porsche reveals the spectacular 918 Spyder concept at the Geneva Auto Show. In March Porsche begins selling the new 911 Turbo and the GT3. On June 5th, the V-6 powered 2011 Panamera and Panamera 4 went on sale in the U.S.. In June, Porsche begins selling its all-new Cayenne S and Cayenne Turbo.

On July 28, Porsche announces that it will build the 918 Spyder. One year after its international market launch, on September 10th, the Porsche Panamera reaches a production milestone of 22,518. Matthias Müller becomes the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Porsche AG, officially, on September 29th. In October, Porsche Cars North America begins selling the V6-powered 2011 Cayenne.

As part of its 60th anniversary celebration of selling cars in the U.S., Porsche Cars North America conducts a My Porsche Classic Search and locates what it believes is one of the oldest Porsche's sold in the U.S. – a lovingly restored 1952 Strawberry Red 356 Cabriolet. The My Porsche Classic Search also yielded the discovery of another distinguished and even rarer Porsche – a blue 1950 356 Cabriolet.

This car is one of the very first series production 356s built in Stuttgart.

On November 1st, Porsche Cars North America begins selling its first hybrid production vehicle ever – the 2011 Cayenne S Hybrid.

2011

Porsche announces the Panamera S Hybrid and the Panamera GTS models. Porsche hosts Rennsport Reunion IV at Laguna Seca in California

2012

The new generation of the Boxster is announced. The second-generation Porsche Cayenne GTS and Turbo S are announced.

2013

Porsche celebrated 50 years of the Porsche 911 with a special anniversary model. The new generation of the Cayman is announced. The Porsche Macan S and Macan Turbo have their world premiere at the Los Angeles Auto Show.

2014

The Porsche 911 Targa debuts at the North American International Auto Show. For the first time, the Porsche Boxster and Porsche Cayman are offered as GTS models, which premiered at Auto China in Beijing.

The new generation of the Cayenne will be launched in four versions in the United States: Cayenne Diesel, Cayenne S, Cayenne Turbo, and the world premiere of the Cayenne S E-Hybrid, which is the first plug-in hybrid in the premium SUV segment. This model, together with the Panamera S E-Hybrid and the 918 Spyder, makes Porsche the world's only car manufacturer to offer three plug-in hybrid models.

Porsche celebrated three world premieres at the Los Angeles Auto Show 2014. The 911 Carrera GTS, the Cayenne GTS, and the Panamera Turbo S Executive Exclusive Series, a special edition limited to 100 units worldwide.

Porsche Cars North America has a record sales year with 47,007 units.

2015

The new 911 Targa 4 GTS and Cayenne Turbo S are revealed at the North American International Auto Show.

Porsche opens the \$100 million Porsche Experience Center and headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia.

The new generation Boxster Spyder is revealed at the New York Auto Show.

The Cayman GT4 and 911 GT3 RS models are announced.

The Porsche 918 Spyder production is completed.

Porsche takes the overall victory at Le Mans and holds Rennsport Reunion V at Laguna Seca in California.

2016

Porsche announces the 718 boxster and 718 Boxster S models.

The 911 R and 718 Boxster models debut at Geneva Motor Show.

Porsche announces the 718 Cayman and 718 Cayman S models.

Porsche founds the Digitization Competence Center.

Porsche launches a Digital lab in Berlin, Germany.

The 911 GT3 Cup Race Car and the Panamera 4 E-Hybrid debut in Paris.

Porsche opens a Motorsport headquarters and a second Experience Center in Carson, California.

The 911 RSR makes its debut at Los Angeles Auto Show.

2017

The One Millionth 911 rolls off the production line.

Porsche announces the Panamera Sport Turismo models.

Porsche debuts the third generation Cayenne in Zuffenhausen

2018

Porsche announces the official name of the first purely electric Porsche, the Taycan.

Porsche holds Rennsport Reunion VI at Laguna Seca in California.

Porsche debuts the eighth-generation Porsche 911 in Los Angeles, California

2019

Porsche debuts first fully electric vehicle, the Taycan
Porsche joins Formula E
PCNA expands monthly vehicle subscription plan, 'Passport' , following successful pilot program in Atlanta
PCNA achieves 10th consecutive year of annual sales growth
The 718 Cayman GT4 and 718 Spyder are revealed
The 911 GT3 celebrates its 20th anniversary

2020

Porsche returns to the Super Bowl with a commercial called "The Heist" focusing on the new Taycan
The new 911 Turbo and Turbo S models celebrate their world premiere
The new 911 Targa models are introduced
Sporting a 4.0 liter naturally aspirated boxer engine, the 718 GTS 4.0 models expand Boxster and Cayman capabilities

2021

Marking the 25th anniversary of the Boxster, a special 25 Years model is introduced based on the 718 Boxster GTS 4.0
The Taycan model line is expanded with the introduction of the rear-drive sedan, Cross Turismo and Sport Turismo models
Porsche achieves new Guinness World Records™ Title for Indoor Land Speed Record with a Taycan Turbo S
The Porsche Macan line-up receives significant updates for the 2022 model year
The new Cayenne Turbo GT sets a production-car lap record for SUVs on the Nuerbuergring Nordschleife
Available in Coupe, Cabriolet and Targa form, the GTS models complement the expanding 911 range
The new 911 GT3, also available with a Touring Package, celebrates its world premiere
Porsche Cars North America sets a new sales record with 70,025 cars sold in the United States

2022

A Taycan Cross Turismo enters the Guinness World Records™ book after setting a new benchmark for the greatest altitude change achieved by an electric car
Spending less than 2.5 hours charging on a trip crossing the United States, the Taycan breaks breaks the Guinness World Records™ title for coast-to-coast charging
Porsche adds to the Macan lineup with the unveiling of the Macan T
The 718 Cayman GT4 RS and the 911 GT3 RS debut
The 911 Dakar celebrates its world premiere at the Los Angeles Auto Show
The 911 Carrera T returns for the 992 generation
The limited-production 911 Sport Classic celebrates the return of the ducktail
Representing a special model for the U.S. market, the 911 Carrera GTS America Edition is announced
A Tribute to Carrera RS Package – exclusive to the U.S. market – is announced for the new 911 GT3 RS
The 911 Sally Special is auctioned for a record-setting \$3.6 million at RM Sotheby's Monterey auction, with every dollar of the sale price supporting children and families
PCNA surpasses 2021 sales with 70,065 vehicles delivered in 2022

2023

The new Porsche 963 enters its first endurance race at the 24 Hours of Daytona
Inspired by the 356, the Porsche Vision 357 design study takes a conceptual look into the future, kicking off the 75th anniversary celebrations for Porsche as a sports car marque.
Rennsport Reunion 7 returns to Weathertech Raceway Laguna Seca in California from September 28 to October 1



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