

Porsche Experience Centers prove immersive retail works

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03/09/2018 250,000 visitors pick real-world fun over digital at Atlanta and LA attractions.

In a digital age, physical experiences are rare and valuable. Consumers can have a hard time getting the touch and feel of a product when everything is online or automated. Porsche is bucking those trends with a large-scale commitment to consumer immersion at its two Porsche Experience Centers (PECs), where anybody can touch rubber to the track instead of just touching a screen. And it's working. Less than three years after the biggest investment by Porsche outside of Germany, the two U.S. Experience Centers have now topped a combined 250,000 visitors who come to drive, shop and dine in a Porsche environment.

The model works as a way to connect with new audiences, a goal for every premium automaker. About 60 percent of PEC visitors do not currently own a Porsche, but after driving the centers' tracks, 30

percent of non-owners say they are very likely to buy one. For others, Porsche becomes more memorable and aspirational once they've driven one. The average visitor is seven years younger than the average Porsche customer. And about one-quarter of visitors are under age 35.

"A quarter of a million guests so far is a testament to the power of experience and to the fascination of Porsche sports cars," said Klaus Zellmer, President and CEO of Porsche Cars North America, Inc. "Porsche stands for superb design and engineering, but also for a superb experience. Getting people behind the wheel in a place where they can really test the performance is the best way to connect them with the Porsche brand."

Porsche's commitment to its Experience Centers comes as the retail landscape is being redefined by younger consumers. A recent Harris Group poll revealed that 72 percent of Millennials would rather invest in experiences than things. Since 1987, spending on experiences and events relative to total U.S. consumer spending increased 70 percent, according to the same study.

What is a Porsche Experience Center?

What is a Porsche Experience Center? The destinations serve as track-based brand embassies where visitors can indulge in everything Porsche. They are different than drive experiences offered by other carmakers because they were purpose-designed and built to be immersive retail experiences for the public. Experience Centers do not sell cars, but they work closely with the 190 independent U.S. Porsche dealers, for example hosting customer groups sent by dealers.

Visitors book, at minimum, a 90-minute driving experience on road or off-road, coached by professional drivers who show them how to get the most out of a Porsche. Available cars cover all major models, from the iconic 911 to the all-wheel-drive Cayenne. Non-drivers can still get experience in a simulator lab. The centers also feature fine dining, Porsche retail stores, classic sports cars on display, and striking architecture.

Since opening, the two U.S. locations in Atlanta and Los Angeles have also become attractions for filming TV shows and movies, including "Spiderman: Homecoming" and "Captain America: Civil War," as well as a site for marriage proposals, corporate outings, and birthday parties. The spaces can also be scaled for corporate events and other large meetings.

Atlanta opened in 2015 and LA in 2016. The U.S. locations have combined to become the most-visited of Porsche's six Experience Centers around the world. Outside the U.S., the others are in Leipzig, Germany; Le Mans, France; Silverstone, England; and Shanghai, China.

The Atlanta Experience Center is a 10-minute drive from the world's busiest airport and offers guests a module-based, 1.6-mile driver development track, racing simulator lab, Heritage Gallery, Porsche retail store, Porsche Exclusive Manufaktur Studio, Business Center and Restaurant 356. LA's Experience

Center is accessible from three major LA-area airports and features a 4-mile driver development track, events and meeting room space, simulator lab, retail store, Porsche Exclusive Manufaktur Studio, New Vehicle Delivery lounge, Speedster café and Restaurant 917.

For more information about visiting the PEC Atlanta or LA, visit porschedriving.com.

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