

A Family Affair: Hadi Al Hussaini's Sonderwunsch 911 Dakar

23/09/2025 How the Porsche Sonderwunsch program turned Hadi Al Hussaini's childhood memories of exploring the UAE deserts with his father into a bespoke 911 Dakar that now inspires his own son.

Childhood memories can be powerful. For Hadi Al Hussaini, among the strongest for him was spending time with his father, off-roading through the desert dunes of the United Arab Emirates. That, and his fascination with the Dakar Rally.

“My father, God bless him, always took us off roading in the desert and this is where I discovered my passion for cars," said Al Hussaini.

"Driving in the desert is akin to learning a new language. Reading the terrain is a skill and you never know what's beyond the dune.

“When I was six, my father also used to take us out after Friday prayers to visit new car showrooms to see all the new models and it was always the sports cars that attracted me the most."

During the 1980's Porsche not only enjoyed motorsport success on-track at Le Mans but also off-track in desert rallying. It was this form of motorsport that inspired a generation of fans across the Middle East like Hadi.

The familiar team colours of blue, gold, red and white adorned the Porsche 911 SC RS in 1984 before the all-conquering Porsche 959 arrived on the scene to take on the legendary Dakar and Egypt's Pharoahs Rally.

Victory in the 1985 Pharoahs Rally made news across the Middle East with Saeed Al-Hajri behind the wheel and John Spiller in the 959's co-driver's seat and together with the Dakar, Hadi dreamt to one-day recreate this iconic car.

In 2022 his dream took a leap from fantasy to reality with the reveal of the new 911 Dakar at Dubai's Icons of Porsche festival.

Along with expert consultation from the team at Porsche AG's individualisation department, Hadi's childhood dreams had suddenly become a possibility, and would eventually become a reality.

However, the idea to create a bespoke 911 Dakar wasn't just about recreating a homage to the competition car. It was to create a car that represented the desert sands, his memories with his father, and to inspire his son Abdulla, who was an integral part of the commissioning process.

“Owning a Porsche has been a lifelong aspiration, as well as designing it collaboratively with my loved ones. So now my son Abdulla and I are dedicated followers of the Dakar Rally, which to us is more than just a race.

“With Sonderwunsch, we're now bringing our vision of the Dakar to life.”

Meaning ‘special request' in German, Sonderwunsch allows customers to express their personality through Porsche. They can tailor dream Porsche to a bespoke configuration using nearly 200 Paint-to-Sample colours along with near endless possibilities inside and out.

“When choosing the interior colour, I wanted something that reminds me of the desert and I came across a dark leather that reminded me of the colour of the sand specifically after it rains,” said Al Hussaini.

“I chose wood to add some warmth to the interior, which also complements an image of the desert I wanted to achieve. It should be an elegant car that looks stunning both in the desert and in a modern city environment, striking a perfect balance between a sports car and an elegant vehicle.”

Noting that the sand has many shades of brown and beige, the team from Sonderwunsch set about to incorporate this into the interior and after much searching, settled on Cohiba Brown together with a newly developed tricoloured Tartan fabric in Truffle.

This was capped by the seat centres and door panels being trimmed in a Brown-Cognac-Aurum combination that offers an ageless elegance.

“The desert is more than just sand dunes. Within it lies beautiful memories I've lived, as well as numerous layers of experiences waiting to be discovered,” said Al Hussaini.

For the exterior colour, Hadi wanted it to be blue but not an identical blue to the rally cars, rather something that evoked emotion, history and class. The final decision was to use Aetna blue (Y31) from Paint-to-Sample.

“The Porsche 356 was offered in Aetna blue so that became my inspiration for this exterior colour, which has the same hue that reflects in petrol, capturing a timeless aesthetic.

“Sonderwunsch is a very special programme which allows an owner like me to get as creative as I want with the individualization and where there are truly no limits.”

Travelling to Zuffenhausen with this family, Hadi made sure that his son helped him create the car, which he says was even more important than the car itself.

“Driving the 911 is a unique experience. From the very first drive, it becomes an extension of you thanks to its sharp responses and instinctive feedback,” said Al Hussaini.

“Details are the final five percent of any project and this five percent is what makes the difference between a successful project and an exceptional one.”

Now as one of the organisers of the modern day Dakar Rally that runs through Saudi Arabia each January, Hadi can see his childhood vision go full circle as his son Abdulla, now inspired by his Sonderwunsch 911 Dakar, takes an even bigger interest in the iconic desert race.

“The Dakar has always been a big event for me and organizing the rally in Saudi Arabia gives not only me a great a sense of pride, but to all Arabs, so it's been a dream come true.

“It would also be a dream to me, that hopefully one day I will be able to participate in the Rally Dakar with my son in my 911 Dakar. He will be the driver and I'll be his co-driver.”

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