

L-R: Mr Muhammad Reza Behbehani and Mr Murad Yousef Behbehani sit in the first Porsche 356 imported to the Middle East

The 70 year history of Porsche in Kuwait

18/05/2026 How a Kuwaiti entrepreneur imported a Porsche 356 to the Middle East in 1956, beginning seven decades of partnership with the famous German marque.

Ferdinand 'Ferry' Porsche, the founder of the eponymous sports car brand, is one of the most famous entrepreneurs of all time. One of his earliest importer partners - his first in the Middle East - was an equally driven individual.

The early 20th century was a period of modernisation and growth for Kuwait. Its location at the top of the Persian Gulf and near both the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers saw it grow as a regional trade hub, with development further boosted by the discovery of oil in 1938.

A key figure behind this progress was Morad Yousuf Behbehani. Born on 18 June 1918 and raised in a merchant family, Mr Behbehani was business-minded from a young age. From introducing Omega timepieces to Kuwait in 1935 at the age of 18, and establishing the country's first private radio station

in 1948, to importing the first Carrier air conditioning units in 1949, he was a pioneer of his time.

This wouldn't have been possible had it not been for an open-minded upbringing, studying English from an early age and learning from his father, Yousuf Behbehani. This cosmopolitan approach would see the young Morad as the first Kuwaiti to travel to Switzerland, visits to the United States and, most importantly, for the sake of this history, touring the Porsche factory in Stuttgart.

The first cars arrive

Following that first visit, a letter confirming Behbehani as the General Representative for Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche AG for Kuwait and Bahrain was dated 12 April 1954.

The first Porsche 356 was then imported to the Middle East in 1956. It was not only Mr Behbehani's personal vehicle, but the only Cabriolet example to be sold in Kuwait.

Six more 356s were sold in the same year; the final example being a Pre-A Speedster, while the rest were coupés.

Expanding across the region

In 1956, the Behbehani Motors Company was formed in order to facilitate an automotive expansion and cement the brand's presence in the region. As such, the ninth Porsche sale and technical service centre in the world was established in Kuwait. Volkswagen was also added to Mr Behbehani's portfolio, and exclusive rights were granted in the process.

The year of 1965 would mark a shift in the Porsche brand worldwide, with the introduction of the now-venerable 911, while Turbo fever gripped the nation in the 1970s with the introduction of the type 930. Transaxle cars were just as popular as their rear-engine counterparts, seen as more luxurious modes of transport, rather than out-and-out sports cars.

Morad Behbehani's influence across the region was strong, and not only with the establishment of Behbehani Motors in Bahrain. As the first importer in the region, prior to the establishment of a regional office and other country-specific franchises, Porsche Kuwait was the distribution hub for Iraq, as well as other Gulf nations.

Unfortunately, the arrival of the 1990s brought with them a dark moment in Kuwait's history. The Iraqi invasion led to the looting and damage of not just Behbehani Porsche but various other brands in the family's highly successful automotive enterprise.

As the war ended and Kuwait recovered, Porsche entered a period of growth with the introduction of new model lines such as the Boxster, and then Cayenne. The latter, a performance SUV, was well-suited

to owners in the Gulf who love off-road, particularly desert, driving.

Another shift for Porsche in the region came in 1999, when the Porsche Middle East and Africa regional office was established in 1999 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. With its Porsche importership growing, Behbehani Motors heightened its Kuwaiti presence with a new location in 2003.

A vibrant community is born

2003 also brought with it an empowerment of the Porsche community, thanks to the establishment of the Porsche Club Kuwait. Membership flourished as the club grew in scope, organizing activities such as the Porsche Club Festival, including Concours d'Elegance events. Circuit events have also been possible since the opening of the FIA-grade Kuwait Motor Town race track in 2019.

Led by club President Eng. Zakaria Yahya Dashti, Vice President Abdulla Essa and a dedicated team of enthusiasts and organisers, Porsche Club Kuwait is one of the most vibrant, passionate and active Porsche clubs in the world. Not only are gatherings and events regularly held in Kuwait, its members are regularly sited at Porsche events all around the globe.

Zakaria's devotion to the marque extends beyond his role as Porsche Club President, as a guardian of historical Porsche knowledge in Kuwait - including the license plate of Morad Behbehani's first 356, which resides, framed, in his collection of artifacts.

2009 would mark a new milestone. Porsche Kuwait gained 'Porsche Exclusive Flagship Partner' status, followed by a dealership expansion in 2010. In 2024, Porsche Kuwait was also recognised as the third Porsche Classic partner in the Gulf region.

World-class home for Porsche in Kuwait

But the largest development in recent times came in 2024 with the opening of a state-of-the-art new Porsche centre.

Now 5,900 square metres in size, the impressive Shuwaikh facility is far removed from Porsche Kuwait's humble beginnings. The crown jewel and centrepiece of the country's Porsche experience is complete with a showroom, reception area, service centre and a dedicated Porsche Lifestyle store.

Porsche Centre Kuwait (opened in 2024)

A specific section for classic service and restoration ensures owners of Stuttgart's air-cooled and historic models can look forward to many more years of driving.

Multiple function and hospitality areas are within the facility, ensuring regular connection with the Kuwaiti Porsche community and car club members.

To celebrate seven decades of collaboration, the Porsche 911 Turbo S Sadu Edition was unveiled on 18 May 2026, limited to 20 units exclusively for Kuwait. Click here for the full story on this special model.

The family car collection, the world-class Porsche Centre Kuwait, and the 911 Turbo S Sadu Edition are all reminders of Mr Morad Behbehani's enthusiasm for the brand, one that has been carried on by his surviving family, carrying the Porsche flag for generations to come.

Words by Mario Christou.

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Image Sublines

Path: The 70 year history of Porsche in Kuwait/Images/img_1.jpg
Title: History of Porsche in Kuwait, 2026, Porsche Middle East
Subline: Mr. Morad Behbehani inspects engine building during his 1954 visit to the Volkswagen factory in Wolfsburg.

Path: The 70 year history of Porsche in Kuwait/Images/img_2.jpg
Title: Porsche 356 Cabriolet, Kuwait, 1956, Porsche Middle East
Subline: Mr. Morad Behebani behind the wheel of his Pre-A Porsche 356 Convertible. Behind the car his brother, Mohammed Riza Behbehani (left) and a friend, Mr. Al-Sherazi (right).

Path: The 70 year history of Porsche in Kuwait/Images/img_3.jpg
Title: History of Porsche in Kuwait, 2026, Porsche Middle East
Subline: Morad Behbehani and Ferry Porsche at the Volkswagen factory in Wolfsburg, Germany, 1954.

Path: The 70 year history of Porsche in Kuwait/Images/img_4.jpg
Title: History of Porsche in Kuwait, 2026, Porsche Middle East
Subline: Mr. Morad Behbehani & Mr. Nabeel Al-Sadani, former GM of Porsche Kuwait, alongside the Guards Red 1993 Porsche 911 (964) Turbo S 3.3. This car is still with Porsche Centre Kuwait, on display at the Shuwaikh Centre museum.

Path: The 70 year history of Porsche in Kuwait/Images/img_5.jpg
Title: History of Porsche in Kuwait, 2026, Porsche Middle East
Subline: Kuwaiti reveal of the 1994 Porsche 911 (964) Turbo S Flachbau in Speed Yellow.

Path: The 70 year history of Porsche in Kuwait/Images/img_6.jpg
Title: Porsche ambassador Mark Webber at Icons of Porsche 2024 in Dubai
Subline: Porsche ambassador Mark Webber with members of the Porsche Club Kuwait, including Club President Zakaria Dashti (far left) and Vice President Abdulla Essa (right) at the 2024 Icons of Porsche festival in Dubai.

Link Collection

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