

Porsche fans flock to Luftgekühlt 11 in North Carolina

07/10/2025 A celebration of air-cooled icons, 30 years of the 993 in the US, and East Coast racing royalty: with an expertly curated selection of cars, exhibits and special guests, the annual Luftgekühlt gathering once again gave a masterclass in automotive storytelling.

Returning for its 11th US instalment, and bathed in Californian sunshine, Luftgekühlt welcomed about 200 cars and 9,000 attendees to the historic American Tobacco Campus in Durham, North Carolina for an exciting day among a carefully curated selection of legendary cars. “It’s a really special venue, and one that we’ve been in discussions with for seven years,” says Luftgekühlt co-founder and former Porsche factory racing driver Patrick Long. “One thing that’s new for us is being set up right in the centre of a small town. It’s like a weekend takeover – there are just Porsches as far as the eye can see.”

For Long, the idea for the now world-famous annual meet-up started out as something of a quest to bring the story of ‘air-cooled’ to a wider audience – filling a gap in the experiential side of classic Porsche car culture and making it accessible to those with a casual interest, as well as dedicated car fans.

After fairly modest beginnings in southern California, the event rapidly grew in both size and popularity – with recent shows attracting visitors from as many as 48 of the 50 US states and 22 countries further afield. This growth has also led to events in Europe and the establishment of a second, sister event, Air|Water.

Special guests and racing legends Bobby Rahal and Tommy Kendall joined the 11th Luft, mingling with attendees, signing autographs and recounting anecdotes from their times on the track. Fans even had the opportunity to see some of the pair's iconic racing machines up close. The 993-generation 911 GT2 that Kendall drove for Konrad Motorsport on his 24 Hours of Le Mans debut in 2000 was proudly on display, as was Rahal's own 1964 Porsche 904 Carrera GTS, which was restored by Gunnar Racing. Owner of Gunnar Racing Kevin Jeannette also brought several cars along, including a 914 rally car and the 'Gunnar Porsche 966', which was built in 1990 based on a Porsche 962. Kendall, in his role as event host and MC, was on hand to guide guests through several key activations at Luft 11, highlighting a number of hero cars at the show as well as picking out his personal favourites.

One of the event's key themes was the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the arrival of the 993-generation 911 in North America. As the last air-cooled model officially produced by the Stuttgart-based sports car manufacturer, the 993-generation 911 bookends the spectrum of Porsche models revered by Luftgekühlt and its followers, along with the early Pre-A 356 models. The celebration involved examples of some of the finest road and racing machines from the 993 era, including racing cars from AJR Restorations (formerly Alex Job Racing) and the 911 Supercup racing car that was driven to three race victories in the 1995 championship by French racing driver and Le Mans legend Emmanuel Collard – and which now belongs to father and son, McGrath and Leh Keen. These motor racing icons were complemented by a diverse array of road-going versions, from Carrera to Turbo and virtually everything in between.

To mark the show's first appearance on the US East Coast, the team also assembled a mix of Porsche racing cars with a connection to the eastern seaboard. Two legendary cars from Brumos Racing were present: the 1975 911 Carrera RSR that Peter Gregg and Hurley Haywood drove to victory at the 1977 24 Hours of Daytona, and the 1985 Porsche 962 raced by Haywood alongside AJ Foyt. This particular 962 is one originally prepared by another famous eastern-state racing outfit, Holbert Racing – yet another renowned team represented at Luft 11, with a stunning 1976 Porsche 934. One of just 34 examples produced by Porsche, this car was raced by Al Holbert himself, as well as Doc Bundy.

Taking place alongside Luftgekühlt 11, just a short distance away on the plaza outside the Durham Convention Center, was the national final of the Porsche Classic Restoration Challenge. A record 73 vehicles were entered in this year's competition, which showcased the astonishing work and attention to detail of expert technicians from Porsche Centers across the US.

One of the many aspects that differentiates Luftgekühlt from the average car show is the focus on storytelling – with stunning visuals helping to carry these fascinating automotive stories, both for attendees on the day and the online audience following the content from afar. "There are two elements, really. The visual side and the editorial," says Jeff Zwart, Luftgekühlt's creative director. "The visual

standpoint is the most important for me, and Pat [Long] is such a great storyteller and understands the brand so well, and we kind of meld these two focuses together. It's as if the venue is our canvas and the cars are the paint brushes, and hopefully we make some art out of it. I get a car to position, and I've got to make it look the best I can within this special setting. The payoff is seeing that photo opportunity I envisioned spread across the internet – that's a great moment."

As well as the famous road and racing icons in the spotlight at Luftgekühlt, enthusiast-owned cars are also given the opportunity to have their story told. "There are the storylines of our hero cars, but a big part of the fabric of our layout is telling enthusiast stories – like the kid who found a 912 with a rusted-out floor and just got it on the road," explains Long. "It's about celebrating top to bottom all the different stories. If you have an authentic passion for air-cooled Porsches, it doesn't matter how much your car costs or how rare it is"

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