

History 04/04/2019

The Volkswagen that was a Porsche

Only 14 vehicles of the "VW 39" Volkswagen prototype built by Porsche left the plant in Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen at the time. One still exists. The model with the chassis number 1-00003 is now in a museum in Hamburg.



This Volkswagen is a genuine Porsche – and an important part of German automotive history. Ferdinand Porsche designed the car as a pre-series model and prototype in 1939. What was special about this model was the fact that there was a Type 64 engine at the rear of the car in contrast to the other VW prototypes built in Zuffenhausen. This unit was designed for use in the Berlin-Rome car. This sports car was intended to drive to victory in the first long-distance race from Berlin to Rome in 1939. The engine power had been increased to 32 PS for this purpose.

With this engine under the bonnet, Ferdinand Porsche and his son frequently drove the VW 39 to and fro between the production location in Zuffenhausen, the Volkswagen plant in Wolfsburg, which was still under construction, and the capital Berlin. With this more powerful engine, the vehicle achieved the outstanding top speed for the time of 145 km/h.



Ferdinand Porsche designed the car as a pre-series model and prototype

However, the engine was not the only remarkable thing about this Volkswagen, which was referred to the Pretzel Beetle due to the resemblance of the split rear window to the popular baked bread product. When preparing for the planned series production, machine tools were used for the first time to produce the Model 39: components such as the wings or arched bonnet were manufactured in a body press – a production method that would later be further developed and permanently used. On the VW 39, however, the distinctive vertical fold on the rear can still be seen as a relic of this.



The Volkswagen 39 was also called Pretzel Beetle

The 9:11 Magazine

Porsche publishes a wealth of entertaining and informative contributions from the world of Porsche at its website, 911-magazin.porsche.de. Whether it's presenting new models or highlighting milestones in the company's history, the online TV series complements the Porsche customer magazine "[Christophorus](#)" and is published at the same intervals five times a year, in both German and English. Additional footage material and photos are freely available for journalistic purposes.

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