

Mercedes-Benz Museum: Worth the Ride

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Museum - it's often a word that fills children with dread. I'm sure some of us can remember being dragged along to a worthy museum when we were young and, instead of being engaged, being bored. Of course, things have changed a lot over the years and museums are now, generally, far more fascinating and interesting places than they were in the past, but sometimes it's the subject matter that can help as well. Youngsters have certain loves and one of those is, without a doubt, cars. It's also a love affair that many of us never grow out of. Just think how great it feels whenever you get a new car and you just want to drive.

That's why Mercedes-Benz had to be onto a winner, when they came up with the concept for a museum. It's located to the east of Stuttgart in Germany and can easily be reached by public transport from the city's main train station.

As we were on a road trip when we visited it, we drove there and, unsurprisingly, the closer we got to the complex, which also includes a massive Mercedes-Benz complex complete with its own test track, all we could see parked were Mercedes-Benz cars of all shapes and sizes. Parking is simple enough (regardless of your car's manufacture), with a car park right next door to the museum. We did wonder where the signs were taking us at first; even in the car park are various classic cars in their own glass cases, which is a very surreal sight.

We headed inside and, like any good tourist attraction, the first thing you encounter are the restaurants and shops, where you can buy just about anything with the famous Mercedes-Benz logo on it. We browsed the shop on the way out and concluded that you need a lot of money for a lot of the merchandise in here! Fortunately, it wasn't the same story for the nearby restaurant, where we got a very reasonably priced, and pleasant, lunch on our way out.

It says something that we were ready for lunch when we finally left, having arrived not long after 9:00 am. I'm not a car person by any means, so I wasn't sure how interested I'd be in the place or how long I'd want to spend there. How little I knew!

The first surprise is how you enter the museum. You're guided through an entrance, where you pick up an audio guide so you can learn all about what you're seeing in your own language. Once you've picked that up, it's into an elevator unlike any elevator you've seen before. They're

designed to look like futuristic cars climbing up the sides of the walls and there's even a film that's displayed from the elevator to the wall opposite. I was fascinated by the design of these and I'm sure I'm not the only visitor to say that.

The elevator is programmed to take you up to the top of the building and then you work your way back down to the bottom. As you do, you follow the Mercedes-Benz story, from the very first designs for motorised vehicles--on the ground, in the air and in the water. Then you learn how forces were combined to dazzle the European market at various industrial exhibitions and fairs.

Between World Wars I and II, the company thrived and it really was a glittering and golden era, both in terms of the volume of vehicles they produced and the designs, which still to this day look superb. My heart was stolen by one particular red sports car. I could easily see myself in it, hair flying behind me, negotiating some of the winding roads we'd encountered earlier in our trip in Switzerland. Of course, following the Second World War, things hit rock bottom for the company, as the country slowly revitalised following its defeat. The beauty about this museum is that you're not just learning about cars as you go round. Each floor is devoted to a different period in history, from the late 19th century up to the present day. As well as explaining developments in the company the displays also highlight what was happening in the world outside and I learned a lot from that, more than I thought I would.

As you gradually come up to date and see all the vehicles produced over the years, there are also special exhibitions you can visit off to one side of each floor. These included the vehicles produced by Mercedes-Benz for the emergency services, for companies to use, such as vans and lorries and even celebrity cars. This section was particularly interesting, featuring the famous Pope-mobile, used to carry the Pontiff around his various engagements around the world, as well one previously owned by Diana, Princess of Wales and one owned by Ringo Starr from the Beatles.

As with all good attractions, the best is left until last and this was the section that immediately drew the many school parties in there that day. This tells the story of the company's involvement in motor racing and particularly the Formula One Grand Prix. We were particularly intrigued to see the car that British driver Lewis Hamilton won the driver's championship with a couple of years ago. You can even get into a racing car, and I think my husband, Mark, would agree that it wasn't a comfortable fit!

This museum is about so much more than just cars. There are plenty of

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places to sit down and either learn more through your audio-guide or take in the unique architecture, which allows you to gradually descend through the building, completely with the use of slopes, or the beautiful selection of classic cars around you. I had suspected, before visiting, that I might be bored, but not a bit of it. This is one museum everyone in the family will love.

The Mercedes-Benz Museum is open six days a week, from Tuesdays to Sundays and on public holidays (with the exception of Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Day), although it's closed on a Monday. It's open from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm and costs €8 for adults, €4 for juveniles aged 15-17 and is free for anyone under the age of 15. To learn more about the museum, you can visit their [web site](#).

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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