

The Porsche Speedster models

Since the 1950s, the Porsche Speedster models have combined the pleasure of open-top driving with particularly sporty driving dynamics.

The Porsche 356 was warmly received in the USA in the early 1950s. This exclusive German sports car did not come cheap, however, costing the same as a large Cadillac with a V8 engine. In 1952, Porsche responded to feedback from its US sales partners with the construction of the limited edition 356 1500 America Roadster model. This featured an engine that delivered 70 horsepower and marked the dawn of a new philosophy: with its slot-on windows, emergency folding top and light bucket seats, the America Roadster was the direct predecessor of the Speedster.

However, the America Roadster had a problem – the costs associated with the production of its aluminium body meant that only 21 units were ever made. Once again, it was US importer Max Hoffman who put the Zuffenhausen-based company on the right track. He wanted a more affordable Porsche that featured pared-down fittings and costed less than 3,000 dollars, and in autumn 1954 he got it. Featuring a steel body, a low-swept windscreen and a price tag of only 2,995 dollars, the new 356 1500 Speedster was an embodiment of the ‘less is more’ concept. Even though the car only included an emergency top and did not have a glove compartment, this was of no concern to those on the sun-kissed west coast. In fact, the rich and famous were thrilled by the prospect of such a pure driving experience. Hollywood icon James Dean bought a 356 Speedster and helped it successfully break through on the market. The high point came in 1957 with the 356 A 1500 GS Carrera GT Speedster, which boasted a 1.5-litre vertical shaft engine.

In the 1980s, Porsche returned to the Speedster philosophy and presented the 911 Speedster Clubsport study at the IAA. The production model followed in 1989 with the 911 Carrera Speedster Turbolook. An even more intriguing development was the export-only version with a narrow Carrera body and a production run of only 161 units. In the case of the successor model, the 911 Carrera 2 Speedster of the 964 generation, a total of 930 units were produced in 1992 and 1993. Only around 15 units featured the Turbolook design, making them particularly sought-after among collectors. In 1995, the Exclusive department built a single 911 Carrera Speedster of the 993 generation for Ferdinand Alexander Porsche. The 996 generation did not feature a Speedster, and it was only in 2010 that Porsche released a new 911 Speedster with a low-swept windscreen as part of the 997 generation. This model saw a limited run of 356 units.