

Porsche hybrid cars

Ferdinand Porsche proved himself to be a visionary in 1900 with his first hybrid car. Today, the hybrid is an intrinsic part of Porsche.

The Lohner-Porsche was a star of the Paris world fair in 1900. It was way ahead of its time with the two hub-mounted electric motors. However, it was also met with scepticism in light of the rapidly rising numbers of cars with combustion engines. Ludwig Lohner, who commissioned Ferdinand Porsche to build the electric car, shared the concern that the air would be inexorably damaged by increasing numbers of petrol engines. But the electric car had a disadvantage: the low range. It could barely manage a journey of more than 50 kilometres of normal driving. Charging the heavy lead batteries posed a further problem.

Porsche, who was still a young designer, therefore combined the electric drive of the Lohner-Porsche with two single-cylinder petrol engines. They powered two generators, which supplied power to the electric motors and the batteries. The 'Semper Vivus' could then achieve a range of around 200 kilometres. The car gave rise to a small series of the 'Mixte' hybrid with similar technology.

More than a century went by before Porsche revisited the idea of a hybrid drive. The company announced in 2005 that it was to design a hybrid model. A Cayenne hybrid prototype that was nearly ready for production followed in 2007. The Porsche Cayenne S Hybrid entered series production in 2010. In the same year, the 911 GT3 R Hybrid, which had been built for GT racing demonstrated what the concept of a flywheel generator with regenerative braking was all about. The Panamera E-Hybrid was launched in 2011 and by 2014, Porsche had added three plug-in hybrids to its range: the Cayenne S E-Hybrid, Panamera S E-Hybrid and 918 Spyder. With a system power of 887 horsepower, the 918 Spyder demonstrated the potential of the hybrid drive. Factory driver Marc Lieb set a new lap record with the supercar on the Nordschleife of the Nürburgring. This was the first time that a series-produced car had completed the track in less than seven minutes. The Panamera Turbo S E-Hybrid set a benchmark of its own in 2017 as the fastest plug-in hybrid saloon yet to be produced.

The 919 Hybrid LMP1 racing car developed for the FIA World Endurance Championship also proved that hybrid drives and motor sport make a perfect match. Between 2015 and 2017, it reigned supreme every year at the 24 Hours of Le Mans, achieved 17 victories in total and brought home three manufacturers' world championship titles and three drivers' championship titles in succession.