



Mercedes-Benz Classic

Press Information

4 April 2024

First series-production car 130 years ago: The Benz Motor-Velocipede drives into the future

- The future and history of automobile production come together in Sindelfingen
- Mercedes-Benz Classic brings the vehicle of 1894 back on the road in 2024
- Benz & Cie. started production of the world's first series-production car 130 years ago

Stuttgart. From 1894 into the future: in March 2024, the 130-year-old Benz Motor-Velocipede made its first outing in the anniversary year at the Mercedes-Benz plant in Sindelfingen. The location is also the home of Factory 56 with state-of-the-art production technology. This is where Mercedes-Benz is trialling the use of humanoid robots for production logistics, for example. Projects like this are as innovative today as the development and production of the first ever series-production car 130 years ago.

Photos of the Benz Motor-Velocipede on the test track in Sindelfingen and at other historically significant locations: <https://mercedes-benz-archive.com/marsMuseum/de/instance/ko/130-Jahre-Jubilaeum-Benz-Motor-Velociped-1894.xhtml?oid=191741440>

Mercedes-Benz Classic has got the vehicle ready to drive to the highest standards of originality with the expertise of the company's own Classic Centre in Fellbach. For such projects, it draws on the extensive historical documents and information in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives. The Motor-Velocipede was previously on display at the Mercedes-Benz Museum. In 2024, the 130-year-old car can be seen in action by the public at selected events.

The innovative series-production car became a bestseller

In 1894, the innovative Benz Motor-Velocipede with its lightweight construction marked a turning point for the automobile industry. "The demand for this vehicle was quite literally overwhelming. What we made was sold immediately." This is how automobile inventor Carl Benz remembered it in an interview in 1909. All in all, some 1,200 examples of this model family of compact Benz automobiles were built at the Benz factory in Mannheim between 1894 and 1902. Known as the "Velo" for short, the model was the first series-production passenger car in history.

Benz & Cie. described the performance of the successful car as follows in 1894: "This Velocipede has an engine that can develop 1½ horsepower." Two years later, the catalogue stated the maximum speed and driving behaviour: "The Velocipede is able to cover around 20 kilometres per hour and overcome gradients of up to 10% on good roads." It cost 2,000 marks "complete with the finest fittings and lanterns".

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* Further information on the official fuel consumption and the official, specific CO₂ emissions of new passenger cars can be found in the publication entitled "Leitfaden über den Kraftstoffverbrauch, die CO₂-Emissionen und den Stromverbrauch neuer Personenkraftwagen" ["Guide on the fuel economy, CO₂ emissions and power consumption of all new passenger car models"], available free of charge from all sales outlets and from Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH at www.dat.de.

Innovation proceeded at a rapid pace. From 1896 onwards, Benz offered more powerful engines and additional equipment options. As a luxury version of the Motor-Velocipede, the Benz Comfortable came with a longer body, a third gear available at extra cost, more elaborate seat upholstery, a rear-facing child seat and a crank for easier starting. Optional extras included pneumatic tyres for better driving characteristics.

The vehicle concept was produced as the Benz Motor-Velocipede until 1900, and as the Benz Comfortable until 1902, and was continuously developed further. In particular, the power output of the horizontally installed 1-litre single-cylinder engine with vertical flywheel increased from **1.1 kW** (1.5 hp) in the first Benz Velo of 1894 to **3.3 kW** (4.5 hp) in the Benz Comfortable of 1902. From 1901 (2.6 kW/3.5 hp) to 1902 alone, the power output increased by an impressive 28.5 per cent.

The model family was also an export success. This is shown in the trilingual catalogue in German, English and French from 1901. In France, the “Velo” was marketed as the “Éclair” (“Lightning”). In 1895, Benz granted a licence to the British engineering company Arnold to produce the Motor-Velocipede. The “Arnold Motor Carriage” was one of the first British automobiles.

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Captions

24C0006_001

Benz Motor-Velocipede with 1.5 hp engine from 1894. Action photo on the test track of the Mercedes-Benz Sindelfingen plant, March 2024. (Photo index number in the Mercedes-Benz Classic Archives: D831020)

24C0006_002

Benz Motor-Velocipede with 1.5 hp engine from 1894. Action photo on the test track of the Mercedes-Benz Sindelfingen plant, March 2024. (Photo index number in the Mercedes-Benz Classic Archives: D831030)

24C0006_003

Benz Motor-Velocipede with 1.5 hp engine from 1894. Exterior view from above, March 2024. (Photo index number in the Mercedes-Benz Classic Archives: D831010)

24C0006_004

Benz Motor-Velocipede with 1.5 hp engine from 1894. Close-up of the vehicle badge, March 2024. (Photo index number in the Mercedes-Benz Classic Archives: D831093)

24C0006_005

Benz Motor-Velocipede with 1.5 hp engine from 1894. Close-up of the engine compartment, March 2024. (Photo index number in the Mercedes-Benz Classic Archives: D831103)

24C0006_006

Benz Motor-Velocipede with 1.5 hp engine from 1894. Photo in front of the Carl Benz House in Ladenburg, the former home of the Benz family, March 2024. (Photo index number in the Mercedes-Benz Classic Archives: D830998)

24C0006_007

Benz Motor-Velocipede with 1.5 hp engine from 1894. Photo outside the garage of the Carl Benz House in Ladenburg, the former home of the Benz family, March 2024. The building is the world's first garage built specifically for an automobile. (Photo index number in the Mercedes-Benz Classic Archives: D831002)

24C0006_008

Benz Motor-Velocipede with 1.5 hp engine from 1894. Photo in front of the Dr Carl Benz Automobile Museum in Ladenburg, the former automobile factory of C. Benz Söhne, March 2024. (Photo index number in the Mercedes-Benz Classic Archives: D830996)

24C0006_009

Benz Motor-Velocipede with 1.5 hp engine from 1894. Photo from the Mercedes-Benz Classic Centre, Fellbach, October 2023. (Photo index number in the Mercedes-Benz Classic Archives: D824000)

24C0006_010

Benz Motor-Velocipede with 1.5 hp engine from 1894. Photo of the delivery from the Mercedes-Benz Museum, October 2023. (Photo index number in the Mercedes-Benz Classic Archives: D823996)

24C0006_011

Benz Motor-Velocipede. Advertisement by Benz & Cie, Rheinische Gasmotoren-Fabrik, Mannheim, from 1894.

24C0006_012

Photo from 1894 of Carl Benz (in dark suit) with his children on board a Benz Motor-Velocipede. (Photo index number in the Mercedes-Benz Classic Archives: U53459)

24C0006_013

Emancipation Run from London to Brighton on 14 November 1896. On the left in the photo, an Arnold Motor Carriage built in 1896 under an 1895 manufacturing licence for the Benz Velo. (Photo index number in the Mercedes-Benz Classic Archives: U77666)