

The history of a brand

The day the Popemobile was spared

- / **A fire in SEAT's factory in Barcelona jeopardised the brand's historic car collection**
- / **Swift action taken by SEAT personnel and fire-fighters prevented damage to the vehicles**
- / **The collection features gems such as a Popemobile, the second last 600 ever made or the first official rally car driven by Carlos Sainz**

Martorell, 27/02/2019. – With only a few days remaining before the visit by Pope John Paul II to Barcelona and Madrid in 1982, a call came through to SEAT from the Vatican. The vehicle car used by the Pope on his official visits did not fit through the doors of the Camp Nou and Santiago Bernabéu stadiums where the Pope's main events were being held. So a new model had to be made in a matter of days. The engineers at SEAT rose to the challenge and in record time adapted a Panda, creating a true Popemobile used by John Paul II during his visit to Spain.

This historic vehicle, which is housed in Building A122 at the Zona Franca factory along with the rest of the SEAT vintage car collection, nearly fell victim to the fire that broke out in the facilities last 11 February. The entire collection was spared thanks to the swift, decisive action taken by SEAT employees, the Barcelona fire department and other first responders.

“The fire started in the adjacent building. We were alerted by the alarm and began to douse the flames with the fire hoses and the SEAT Safety and Emergency Services and the Barcelona fire department quickly took over”, said Isidre López. **“In my opinion they're heroes. All of the teams did a great job”,** he added.

And what criteria was used to save the cars in the collection? **“First we removed the ones at the entrance to the building to give the fire-fighters enough room to work once they arrived. Then we moved the larger race cars and immediately took out the Popemobile, which was right next to the source of the fire. As it doesn't have a roof, all it took was one person to push it out”,** he recalls.

That is how the 317 vehicles of the vintage car collection were safeguarded, from the Popemobile and the first official rally car driven by Carlos Sainz, to the second last production model 600 and the electric Toledo from the Barcelona 1992 Olympic Games. Building A122 houses the historic heritage of the brand as well as of the country. Now they can add another chapter with a happy ending to their legacy.



The gems in the SEAT vintage car collection

- 1400 (1953): the first SEAT
- The 1400 Visits (1953): used at the inauguration of the Zona Franca factory
- The SEAT number 1 Million: it was a SEAT 124
- Formula 1430 (1971): the oldest racing model in the building
- The first 127 made (1972): it is the third best-seller after the Ibiza and the Leon
- The second last production model 600 (1973): the car that put the country on wheels
- Panda group 2 (1982): the first official rally car driven by Carlos Sainz
- Panda Popemobile (1982): the car used by Pope John Paul II in Spain
- Ronda (1982): the model that saved SEAT in the Competition Court
- The first Ibiza made (1984)
- The Ibiza Cabrio (1986), which was never marketed
- The Ibiza Bimotor (1986)
- Toledo for the Barcelona Olympic Games (1992): the first electric car
- Ibiza Kit Car (1996, 1997 and 1998): three-time world rally champion in the 2 litre category
- Tango (2001): a two-seater concept car
- The Leon WTCC world champion for manufacturers and drivers (2008 and 2009)
- IBX (2011): the orientation of the future SUV range

SEAT is the only company that designs, develops, manufactures and markets cars in Spain. A member of the Volkswagen Group, the multinational has its headquarters in Martorell (Barcelona), exporting 80% of its vehicles, and is present in over 80 countries on all five continents. In 2018, SEAT sold 517,600 cars, the highest amount in the brand's 68 years of history.

The SEAT Group employs more than 15,000 professionals and has three production centres – Barcelona, El Prat de Llobregat and Martorell, where it manufactures the highly successful Ibiza, Arona and Leon. Additionally, the company produces the Ateca and the Toledo in the Czech Republic, the Tarraco in Germany, the Alhambra in Portugal and the Mii in Slovakia.

The multinational has a Technical Centre, which operates as a knowledge hub that brings together 1,000 engineers who are focussed on developing innovation for Spain's largest industrial investor in R&D. SEAT already features the latest connectivity technology in its vehicle range and is currently engaged in the company's global digitalisation process to promote the mobility of the future.

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