

SEAT: 70 years and 16 special cars

- **70 years of ingenious approach: peculiar cars, for celebrities, for commemorative purposes or just authentic inventions**
- **16 rare vehicles stand out in the SEAT Heritage Collection**

Martorell, 10/08/2020. An electric car accompanies the Olympic flame on its last stretch towards the opening ceremony. We are at the Barcelona 92 Olympics. Thus, the car could not be any other than a SEAT, an **electric SEAT Toledo**.

2020 can no longer be remembered as an Olympic year, but it is still SEAT's 70th anniversary. Enough years to create history and countless peculiar and unique like that Toledo, the first electric SEAT. It had 16 lead batteries that increased the car weight from 1.015 to 1.545 kilos but allowed 55 km to be travelled in an urban cycle use. Enough range for the electric SEAT Toledo to also make way for the athletes during the marathon race on the final day of the Olympics.

The SEAT Toledo was not only the official car of those Olympic Games, but it was "The car of the champions". Each of the 22 Spanish medallists received an exclusive car, developed for them, the **SEAT Toledo Podium**. A Toledo recognizable by its two-tone grey paint, and with an interior finish of the maximum luxury at the time. It even had a fax and a phone between the seats, an entirely cream-coloured interior with leather upholstery and wooden inserts on the dashboard and doors.

Special cars

In 1956, based on the first SEAT model, the **SEAT 1400 Visitas** was developed. Its name says it all – in English: SEAT 1400 Visits. No doors, no roof, the 1400 Visitas was ideal for the transferring of illustrious visitors through the SEAT factory. It was manufactured by the same 1400 series production employees, and in 2005, when it was restored by “merging” the two manufactured units into one, it was also made by early retired SEAT employees.

It took until 1964 for another SEAT icon, the SEAT 600, to be used as a car for the visiting authorities at the factory. No one would say that this small urban car served as the basis for the **SEAT Savio**. The Italian company Carrozzeria Savio put into practice Pietro Frua's surprising design. It consisted of a minivan with three rows of seats, on a wheelbase of just 2 meters, that permits the Savio to easily manoeuvre alongside the assembly lines. The glazed roof provides great visibility, but at SEAT's request, Savio made it even more exclusive: the roof could be removed, making it into a convertible minivan.

The same quest for agility was the reason why SEAT received a very special request on behalf of the visit from John Paul II. A less bulky vehicle than his pope-mobile was needed for the pontiff's visit to Spain in 1982. The reason can be found in the fact that the official car did not fit through the entrance of the main venues, the stadiums of Real Madrid C.F. and F.C. Barcelona. Working round the clock, Zona Franca Factory workers made the **SEAT Panda "Papamóvil"**. Entirely white, the workers removed the ceiling and the glazing, and created a padded tubular structure

at the back where the Holy Father could hold on, saluting whilst standing. Not being an armoured car, it was only used inside the stadiums for security reasons.

Also commissioned by a Head of State, SEAT transformed an Ibiza in 1986. It was the gift received by the actual King of Spain, Felipe VI, upon attaining the age of majority. They called it **SEAT Ibiza Rey** or Ibiza King. The bespoke Ibiza Rey advanced the technical specifications of the Ibiza SXI, the version which would go into production two years later: 100 PS injection engine and dual brake system in X with ventilated discs for the mechanics, in addition to a special steering wheel, Recaro seats and air conditioning for the interior. It was the most exclusive of the more than one million first generation SEAT Ibiza manufactured, distinguishable by its golden colour and its widened rear sides.

A generous artist gave rise to another SEAT exclusive model, the **SEAT Leon CUPRA "Pies Descalzos"** – "Barefoot" in English. It is named after the foundation for displaced children in Latin America created by the Colombian singer Shakira. Autographed on the hood, the car was also known as SEAT Leon Shakira, as it was decorated to the liking of the artist, in lilac, both body and interior. One of the two units produced remained in the SEAT Heritage Collection, the other was raffled among donors to the foundation. The winner was a student who collaborated with 1 euro through an SMS.

Milestone cars in the history of SEAT

Before the SEAT Ibiza reached its first million units, SEAT had already passed other milestones related to that figure. Sixteen year after starting the car production, the **SEAT "One Million"**, a SEAT 124 driven by the then Minister of Industry, left the assembly line. It was raffled among the workers as well, but the graceful one did not even have a driving license and had just married. He preferred to return the car to SEAT in exchange for the equivalent amount of money.

Since 1975 SEAT had been developing its own cars in the Technical Centre. In 1982 the SEAT Ronda was presented, a SEAT Ritmo based model hugely home-developed together with Rayton Fissore. SEAT was ready to pave the way to becoming a leading car exporter as it is today, with a network of independent dealers in Europe. However, the car was filed with lawsuit by plagiarism. How to convince a court with hundreds of technical details? A black SEAT Ronda, but with the its own elements painted in yellow, was able to convince the court -and anyone else- that the SEAT Ronda was a true SEAT. This **SEAT Ronda "Tribunal de Paris"** never needed to be registered to become a key pillar of SEAT's history.

If the milestone we were looking for was sportiness, apart from those glorious 124 of the Monte Carlo rally, we should look to 2014. The icon would be the **SEAT Leon CUPRA SC 280 "Nürburgring record"**, with its well-deserved and explicit name. For the first time a front-wheel drive production car broke the 8-minute barrier in the legendary Nürburgring (7: 58.44 to perform the lap). Jordi Gené was behind the wheel of a yet camouflaged CUPRA equipped with Performance Pack specifications during a final set-up session.

Power to the creativity

If there is an ingenious car, this is the rally-car **SEAT Ibiza “bimotor”** named after the Spanish “twin engine”. In 1986, the rally driver José María Serviá surprised the dirt rally championship with a SEAT Ibiza 4x4. In this discipline you need a lot of traction and a lot of power. The solution found was to place an Ibiza motor on each axle, each one coupled to its own gearbox. They called the car 1.5x1.5 [due to the displacement of its engines]. The power reached was almost 300 PS and eventually it got two runners-up.

When it comes to traction, this is the moment for the striking **SEAT Ateca "Mattracks"**. It was made for a media presentation in 2017, on the occasion of the SEAT Ateca Snow Experience. A set of snow tracks produced by Mattracks replaced the wheels of an Ateca 2.0 TDI 190 PS 4Drive. Raised and hyper-widened, its natural habitat is the snow, but it is approved for circulation on the street.

Open cars are more attractive than radically creative. Anyway, SEAT Ibiza has received numerous proposals, which have never been included in the series production. The first one stands out, the **SEAT Ibiza Cabrio** based on the first generation of Ibiza. The purity of the lines of this 2+2-seater, without a roll-over arch, came from the Itai Design studio. That is, the company of Giorgio Giugiaro, responsible for the design of the Ibiza at that time. In 2014 the **SEAT Ibiza Cupster** arrived, an eye-catching and elegant speedster with a low windshield and humps at the rear. Even since the 1969 SEAT 850 Spider, the time was still not right for SEAT to put an open-roof model in production.

The **SEAT Marbella Pick Up** was about to be built. It was a simpler and more feasible version than the Marbella Playa concept, which did not go into production either. The most striking element was that the cargo box was separated from the cabin only by a protective grille.

Ground-breaking is the last of SEAT's outstanding singular creations. Specifically, the foil wrapped car reminds the "trencadís", the decorative mosaic with which Gaudí brought to art the reuse of broken tiles. The **SEAT Leon Trencadís** is an artistic camouflage, applied during the final stage of development of the fourth-generation SEAT Leon. More than decorative, Trencadís is rooted to very current values. And, undoubtedly, anyone who sees the car passing by would know, unequivocally, that he was catching a glimpse of a SEAT “Created in Barcelona”.

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), sells vehicles under the SEAT and CUPRA brands, while SEAT MÓ covers urban mobility products and solutions. SEAT exports 81% of its vehicles, and is present in more than 75 countries. In 2019, SEAT sold 574,100 cars, posted a profit after tax of 346 million euros and a record turnover of more than 11 billion euros.

SEAT employs over 15,000 professionals and has three production centres – Barcelona, El Prat de Llobregat and Martorell, where it manufactures the Ibiza, Arona and Leon. Additionally, the company produces the Ateca in the Czech Republic, the Tarraco in Germany, the Alhambra in Portugal and the Mii electric, SEAT's first 100% electric car, in Slovakia. These plants are joined by SEAT:CODE, the software development centre located in Barcelona.

SEAT will invest 5 billion euros through to 2025 in R&D projects for vehicle development, specially to electrify the range, and to equipment and facilities. The company aims to make Martorell a zero carbon footprint plant by 2050.

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