

SEAT's flagships, from 1500 to Tarraco

- The SEAT 1500 was the large saloon in Spain during the 1960s
- The SEAT 132 used to be the second most valuable car manufactured in Spain and the SEAT Exeo, the premium saloon with the best value for price
- Nowadays the high standing saloon has left the stage to SUVs as the SEAT Tarraco

Martorell, 09/10/2020. The first years of SEAT, after the 1400, the car connoisseurs of the time understood perfectly which cars the new SEAT 1500 tried to emulate when it was born in 1963: angular and prominent corners in its body, lavish chrome trims, diagonal white-wall tyres... Seventy years later, the body style to follow has the format of an attractive SUV like the one offered by the SEAT Tarraco.

SEAT 1500: spacious, comfortable, robust and oozing class

Better sized and priced than the American vehicles of the time, the 1500 adopted all the luxury and features one could dream of and afford in a car. Media of the time considered it as a "chauffeur-driven car", worthy of politicians, company managers and wealthy people. Of course, the SEAT 1500 was also ideal for large families, in a time when having six seats (the bench in front allowed three occupants) did not prevent a larger occupancy. Spacious, comfortable and with a huge boot capacity, it is not surprising that it was also a favorite model among taxi drivers and all kinds of official services.

Its reliable 1,481 cm³ overhead valve engine (hence the denomination 1500), produced 72PS at 5,200 rpm, good enough for a 1,200 kilos of weight. At the time, its 50PS /litre was acclaimed by the press. In comparison, the current turbocharged 1.5 TSI of the Tarraco offers 150PS (100PS/litre) from 5,000 rpm, and its maximum torque doubles that of the 1500 already offering it at 1,500 rpm, compared to the 3,300 rpm of the pioneer. The SEAT 1500 had a four-speed gearbox, all of them already synchronized with the gear lever placed next to the steering column. The SEAT 1500 admitted cruising at 120 km/h using only one of its twin choke carburetors, thus allowing it to travel with moderate fuel consumption. In addition, the 60 litre fuel tank gave the SEAT 1500 enough range to get off the map.

The SEAT 1500 was full of comfort details that drew a lot of attention at the time; such as wind deflector, laterally adjustable sun visors, mirror on the passenger sun visor, lockable glovebox, reading lights for the rear passengers, central armrest in the rear seats among others. There were also other elements that would attract great attention today; such as the engine oil pressure gauge, the windshield washer that the driver could activate by pressing a button with the foot, or the odometer that resembled a mercury thermometer.

Safety has always been at the core of SEAT. Thus, the brakes of the 1500 included four discs and a powerful brake booster. Lighting was acclaimed by the motoring press as excellent, they said of the original single headlight version, before a profound revamping in 1969 which gave rise to the two headlight model. That same year, SEAT began offering its first diesel unit, a smooth 1,8 litre engine with proven reliability. It employed indirect fuel injection to produce 46PS. This displacement implied renaming the version to SEAT 1800 Diesel. As the advertising of the time

said, “este vehículo le hará millonario en kilómetros” (“this vehicle will make you a millionaire in kilometers”). Two years later, in 1971, the SEAT 2000 Diesel was born, with 55PS from its two-litre engine.

This sequence of time shows that the 1500 enjoyed a continuous engineering evolution. From a 400-watt dynamo it switched to an alternator in 1967, at which point it also received 5 bolt rims instead of 4. In 1968, with the bifaro, the compression of the engine was raised to 9: 1 and the cast iron exhaust manifolds were changed to steel - a practically straight outlet that today we would say “inspired by the competition”.

A clock, air conditioning, and a two-speed windshield wiper were never adopted. These deficiencies had been criticized in the press when in mid-1972 the production of the SEAT 1500 ceased. As of April 1973, the SEAT 132 would be in charge of solving these inconveniences.

SEAT 132: a discreet revolution

Shorter, lighter, much more aerodynamic: the SEAT 132 represented a substantial advance over the SEAT 1500, and it was better adapted to that period of time. From those 130 km/h of the 1500, the 132 allowed a speed of upto 170 km/h with its 1,8 litre engine and 160 km/h with the 1,600 engine (with this unit, the 5th speed gearbox was an option). Both units were modern petrol engines. The presence of a double overhead camshaft distribution stood out, as in prestigious sports cars. This feature required careful manufacturing and it was much more expensive to produce, although the press at the time already guessed that such a good solution would become widespread in the future, as it did. Both engines adopted a timing belt, which was seen as a cutting-edge solution for making the engine much quieter, although it needed to be replaced every 40,000 or 50,000 kilometres.

The SEAT 132 continued with the classic layout of a longitudinal front engine and rear wheel drive. The live rear axle removed the Panhard bar as the 132 received a brand-new rear suspension giving a more effective guidance. In addition, the tyres were already radial, which was a great advance for handling and safety.

The 132 used a double headlight, the windscreen wipers were painted in matt black to avoid reflections, it was fitted with a side mirror and the front headrests were included as standard. Headrests, by the way, sparked intense debates about whether they induced to sleep and impaired safety.

Comfort was in the heart of the 132. To begin with, the media of the time highlighted that the SEAT 132 seats were even more comfortable than those of the 1500. They were very broad, upholstered in an attractive and thick fabric simulating a dense velvet. The suspension didn’t use stabilizing bars to avoid altering the virtues of a suspension design that made the 132 very comfortable. At the rear, there was good space for three people, with plenty of legroom and a center armrest was included (of course, with reading lights, grab handles on the roof, and armrests on the doors, too). The equipment was rich, but sober in appearance, nothing precious, except for the presence of “real walnut laminated wood on the dashboard.

The 132 was so stylish on the outside, with its flush door knobs and beautifully designed rims without hubcaps, that it was criticized for not having additional protective shields on the bumpers, just a fancy rubber strip.. In its 2200 diesel version from 1978, it was the second most valuable car on the national market (it was also the best-performing Spanish diesel).

SEAT Exeo: a stroke of ingenuity

SEAT had abandoned the D or medium-high segment in 1980 when production of the 132 ceased. In 2008 it was decided that there was an ideal opportunity for a return. A layout with a longitudinal engine would be repeated, but this time the potential range of engines and transmissions available was much broader. Three gasoline engines were selected, offering 102, 150 and 200PS, plus three 2.0 TDI diesel engines developing 120, 143 and 170PS . The SEAT Exeo had a robust structure, advanced safety features and a chassis with an effective multi-link rear suspension. Engineers at the SEAT Technical Centre developed a specific set up to get a comfortable character and precise driving, in line with its smooth operation and confident handling.

The SEAT Exeo had both great attributes and a very attractive price. For example, in terms of safety, the Exeo incorporated a knee airbag on the driver's side. It also cared for comfort thanks to a solar sunroof. When parked in the sun, the electricity generated by the sunroof activated the ventilation system, cooling the interior and, therefore, a lesser action of the air conditioning was needed to achieve a comfortable temperature. All this, without draining energy from the battery.

The Exeo's life was intense. In 2009, the station wagon body was launched, called Exeo ST, an acronym for SportsTourer. From that moment on, these two letters would accompany the wagon versions of Ibiza and Leon. In 2010 the engine range was expanded, with two 1.8 TSI variants (120 and 160PS) replacing the 1.8T with five valves per cylinder; and the 2.0 TFSI brought power to the 211 horsepower. In 2011, the restyling of the SEAT Exeo was introduced, with new headlights containing a LED strip, a new grille and new rim designs. In 2012, an Ecomotive variant achieved a fuel consumption of just 4.5 litre /100 km.

SEAT Tarraco: Now, the most is in the SUV

From the first moment, the success of the Ateca compact SUV confirmed that the customers look for spacious cars, with a large boot capacity, full of comfort equipment and the highest level of safety. And that's how the Tarraco was born.

The SEAT Tarraco is a large SUV with all the attributes a customer is looking for in 2020, with all the allure that makes a product the beacon of its range. Of course, it is wrapped in SEAT's dynamic and emotional design, fitting wheels up to 20 inches, it has a spacious interior for five or seven seats, but with a constrained weight (1,599 kg for the five-seat petrol version). Exciting to drive, with petrol engines ranging from the 150PS 1.5 TSI to the 190PS 2.0 TSI or 150 or 200PS 2.0 TDI diesel engines. A choice of either manual transmission or seven-speed DSG are offered, combined with front-wheel drive or all-wheel drive 4Drive. Or they can indulge in a sportier version like the recently introduced Tarraco FR. A car with a strong interior design, digitized and connected, with a high level of standard equipment. With Full LED lighting to show off what they

already said about 1500 in the 60s: "Excellent lights, as usual in this brand." Light to guide the way, too, in the rest of the models in the line-up and to show buyers the know-how of SEAT.

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), exports 81% of its vehicles, and is present in more than 75 countries. In 2019, SEAT sold 574.100 cars, the highest figure in its 70-year history, posted a profit after tax of 346 million euros and a record turnover of more than 11 billion euros.

In 2019, SEAT allocated 1.259 billion euros to accelerate its investment programme, mainly for the development of new electrified models. In addition, and as part of its commitment to decarbonisation, it invested 27 million euros in sustainable initiatives and is working on an ambitious environmental strategy, called Move to Zero, which aims to make Martorell a zero-carbon footprint plant by 2030.

SEAT employs over 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 in the Czech Republic, the Tarraco in Germany, the Alhambra in Portugal and the Mii electric, SEAT's first 100% electric car, in Slovakia.

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