

THE SCHOOL OF COOL
50 YEARS
PORSCHE TRACK EXPERIENCE

Happy birthday!

The "Porsche Sportfahrschule" was founded 50 years ago. It is the nucleus of today's Porsche Track Experience. At the same time, the decision to create the "Porsche Sportfahrschule" was also born out of enthusiasm. Because even back in the days of the Porsche 356, it proved true: those who can handle their sports car properly simply get more out of it. The development of the Track Experience into the diverse program it is today has been an evolution brimming with passion.

Text: Heike HIENTZSCH Photos: PORSCHE AG
Historical research: Jürgen GASSEBNER





"In 1956, at a small racetrack in Thompson, Connecticut, eighty percent of the participants were average American drivers accustomed to huge engines and automatic transmissions. For them, our delicate sports cars with manual transmissions, clutches and comparatively sophisticated engines were completely new territory. It was incredible to see what some participants were able to learn in a matter of two or three days. Suddenly, they were completely different drivers."

Herbert LINGE (*1928 – 2024)

Legendary racing driver and Plant Manager at the Porsche Development Center in Weissach



"My first assignment was in Mugello in 1993. The organization was great and the atmosphere among the instructors and participants was very friendly. The program, which was perfect in terms of driving physics and technology, created an even stronger bond between the participants and the brand."

Walter RÖHRL

World Rally Champion 1980 and 1982

Driving pleasure thrives on skills. If you want to experience a Porsche intensively and, most importantly, safely, you have to be able to control it. Porsche veterans Huschke von Hanstein and Herbert Linge recognized this back in the 1950s. At that time, von Hanstein was both race director and head of PR. Linge would make company history as a works and test development driver and as plant manager of the Weissach Development Center. The first driving training with official Porsche participation dates back to 8 April 1954. Even in those days in Lugano, Switzerland, theory came before practice: inspecting the track on foot, noting the ideal line and braking points, then watching the professionals do their laps. After that, you would drive your own Porsche 356, practice and improve your speed. And of course there was plenty of shop talk over dinner together.

Around two years later, the first course in the USA attracted media attention by including a special treat in the program of activities: Porsche shipped a 550 Spyder to the east coast for demo laps. "We were able to impressively demonstrate what our small Porsche company at the time was capable of," recalls Linge, not short on pride. "The customers also wanted to be able to exchange ideas with us experts. And being able to ride alongside a racing driver like Graf Berghe von Trips was the ultimate experience for them."

So things continued happily with sporadic events that gradually become more and more sophisticated — driven by great enthusiasm, but still without an organizational structure. It was not until the first Porsche 911 Turbo, introduced in 1974, that the company had a real

need for driving schools. With 260 PS of power, 343 newton-meters of torque and a top speed of more than 250 km/h — the key data alone made anything previously seen on the road pale in comparison. But power and speed were not the biggest challenges. The legendary designer Hans Mezger incorporated the exhaust turbocharger, which had been highly successful in Porsche race cars, into the six-cylinder boxer engine of the 911. Correctly calculating the very abrupt onset of the powerful turbo boost requires some practice, especially when cornering and overtaking — especially on wet roads. Including operating instructions in the glove box was simply not enough to ensure that customers could handle this automotive powerhouse safely while also enjoying themselves. Porsche responded by initially providing handling training for the sales representatives. The official founding

of the Sportfahrschule for interested customers in that same year, 1974, was viewed as the logical next step. From 1980 until 2009, a woman was at its helm, Claudia Schäffner. Even as a little girl, she preferred her brother's toy cars to any doll. She completed her training as an industrial clerk with her dream brand Porsche and ultimately ended up in sales promotion.

If we take a look back at everyday office life back then in the mid-1980s, lean management was the credo for a company in serious crisis. For Claudia Schäffner that meant freedom on the one hand, and plenty of work on the other. As a project manager, she managed eight to twelve courses per year with a total of 800 to 1,000 participants. Computers? Email? Event agencies? None of that existed



Wolfgang Graf Berghe von Trips was at the wheel of the Porsche 550 Spyder in March 1956 on the small racing circuit in Thompson, Connecticut. Numerous Porsche customers were eagerly waiting to take a ride.



Female Porsche customers were also very interested in improving their driving skills in the 1950s.



Herbert Linge looks into the engine compartment of the many times victorious 550 Spyder.



Safe control of the vehicle and safely exploring your own limits as well as those of the vehicle — in the early 1970s, those were the main reasons to start seriously considering a Porsche Sportfahrschule for customers.



“These events always had a special appeal. Participants with vehicles from other manufacturers frequently showed up the next time or the time after that with their own Porsche.”

Claudia SCHÄFFNER
Project Manager Porsche Sportfahrschule from 1980–2009

yet. Participants cut out a registration card from the advertisement, attached a check to it, and then both ended up on Claudia Schöffner’s desk via snail mail. She inspected racetracks, agreed contracts, was present when bends — the so-called track layout — were marked out all while setting up a network of 60 instructors. This crew was made up of talented employees who not only knew exactly how to handle the accelerator pedal and the steering wheel, but were also willing — and able — to effectively communicate technical knowledge in great detail. They came from a wide range of Weissach development areas — engine, transmission, chassis, aerodynamics — as well as from Ludwigsburg and Zuffenhausen. And one or two professional racing drivers also shared their experience with customers.

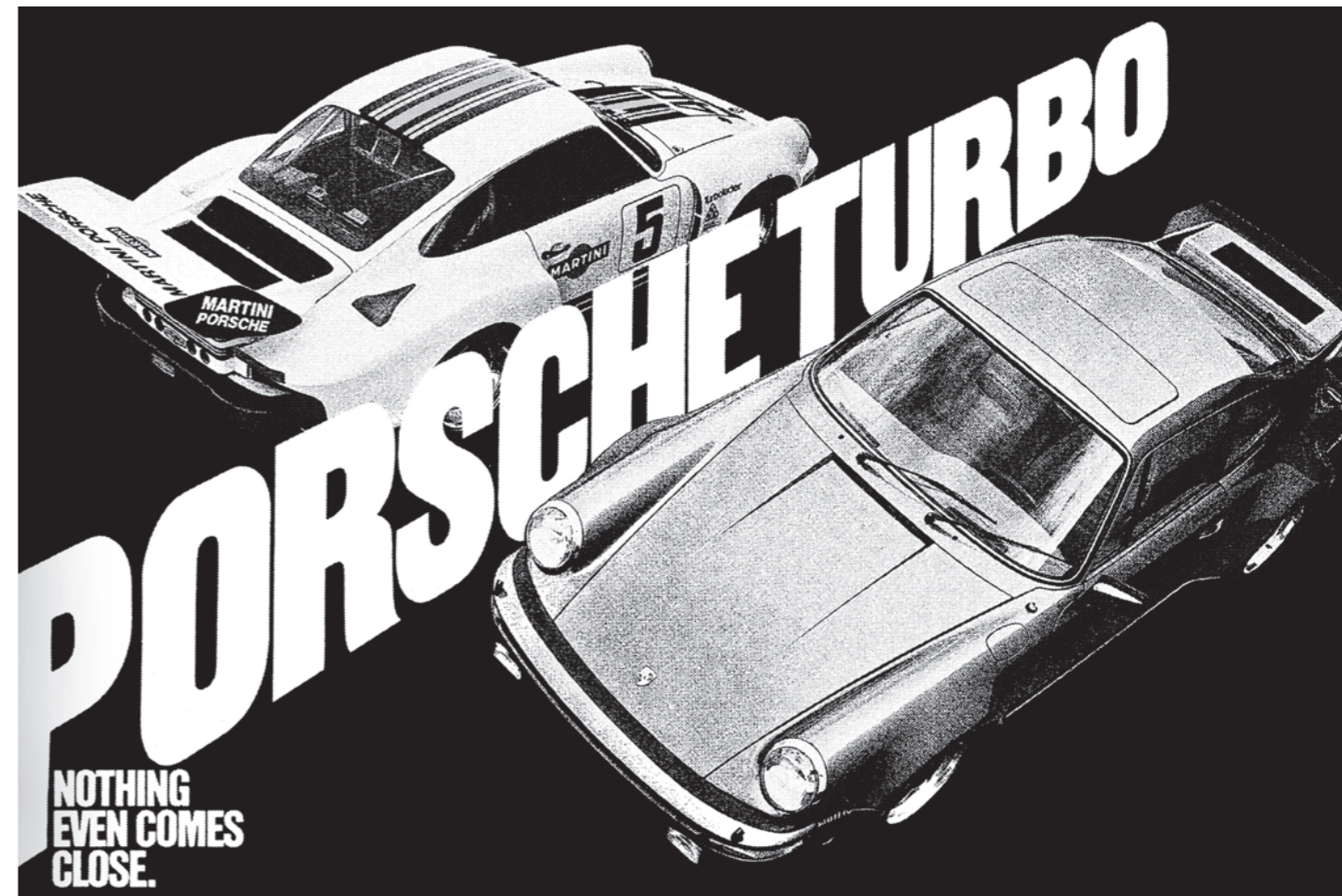
Regular instructor training guaranteed a uniform level and know-how in multiple disciplines, from rescue operations to etiquette. When it came to driving, Claudia Schöffner was always there, eager to learn and take the courses a step further. She often had to prove her abilities, as some driving students would rather turn to an inexperienced intern than have a qualified woman explain the differences between friction braking, stutter and lock braking. Before introducing ABS, power steering and other electronic assistance systems, teaching pure driving physics was the core focus. Customer feedback on the vehicle’s capabilities went directly to the development departments via the instructors. The Porsche Sportfahrschule provided dynamic market research.



“I’ve been a personal instructor for ten years. The events on the Nürburgring Nordschleife are my personal highlights. I feel the Porsche history here — and of course my own dedication to this challenge. The participants are advanced. After two days, they go home mentally and physically exhausted, but bright-eyed.”

Timo BERNHARD
Le Mans overall winner, two-time endurance world champion, Nordschleife record holder

Brutal machine:
In 1974, the first Porsche 911 Turbo proved to be a challenge for customers. It was the reason for the official founding of the Porsche Sportfahrschule.



Training for greater driving pleasure: Bringing your own vehicle was a prerequisite for taking part in training courses at the early Porsche Sportfahrschule. Porsche developed a special buggy in Weissach for slalom driving. It could withstand even the wildest steering maneuvers without ever tipping over. Early on, holding the courses on selected major racetracks became part of the Sportfahrschule concept.



Enthusiastic family:
The instructors at the Sportfahrschule came from various development areas, inspiring customers with their first-hand know-how.



“As an instructor, I’m sometimes the driver and sometimes a passenger. This is a relationship that requires trust and that brings people together. For some students, motor sports changes their entire life, even at an advanced age. They work hard on their physical and mental fitness because they see their racing dream as an achievable goal. One started out with a body weight of 120 kg. When he competed in the 24-hour races four years later, he weighed a healthy 77 kg.”

Jens RICHTER
Supervisor Driving Programs, Sport Driving GmbH

Initially, the requirement for participation was use of your own vehicle, which did not necessarily have to come from Zuffenhausen. Although other manufacturers had also begun to offer courses, permitting third-party vehicles was a unique selling point. Once Porsche owners experienced firsthand, in the most dynamic sense of the word, what their vehicles were truly capable of, it served as a confirmation of their purchase and enhanced the appeal. Novices with vehicles from other manufacturers would frequently show up the next time or the time after that with a Porsche.

In order to achieve this kind of success, the Sportfahrschule was under constant development. A key decision was made early on: the courses would take place on international racetracks. They met the high safety standards and would also serve as attractive travel destinations. The testing area, the track in Weissach, was no longer part of the program. A buggy was being developed for slalom driving in Weissach. It was a bizarre-looking piece of machinery — basically a bare chassis with a roll cage that could withstand even the most optimistic steering maneuvers without ever tipping over. Without any body or an ounce of comfort, this wheeled lightweight was already pretty rapid with an

engine from the VW Beetle. Eventually, a 911 power unit would be mounted in it.

Modern team apparel was introduced to create a professional appearance, even for the evening events. To counter the wasteful use of paper cups, porcelain cups were printed with images of the current vehicles. They remain collector’s items to this day. Embroidered fabric napkins, badges, caps, bags, T-shirts — little by little a small collection of merchandise was being created. At the same time, the successful team’s range of courses was growing. The first course aimed exclusively at women began in 1986. In 1990, the first winter training course took place on the icy Bodenalm in Seefeld, Austria. Due to the unpredictability of snow and ice at such latitudes, the focus shifted to northern regions. In 1996, the first training session was held in Rovaniemi, Finland. The program included snowmobile trips and drives in 911 Carrera 4s provided by Porsche, to acquaint participants with the benefits of all-wheel drive. In 1997, “Rally Professor” Rauno Aaltonen joined the team of instructors in Rovaniemi. In 1999, to commemorate the Sportfahrschule’s 25th anniversary, former works driver Bob Wollek was added to the program in Imola, Italy, taking passengers along for rides in the 911 GT1. At the



"I've been here for over 20 years and love my job in Leipzig. Beginners in particular can overcome their fears with us. The high safety standards of the FIA-certified track make an important contribution here. Many participants keep coming back again and again because they want to brush up on their skills and they appreciate the familiar atmosphere. Our guests enjoy an all-inclusive package, from the shuttle in the morning to the magic of the paddock in the evening."

Susann ALTINOK

Project Manager Porsche Track Experience, Porsche Experience Center Leipzig

French Magny-Cours racetrack, participants could even drive Formula 3 race cars. Yet another innovation was the first sports driver course with the aim of acquiring the Class C national racing license. Special courses on the fine art of drifting were also being introduced, preferably on ice and snow. This helped protect the equipment while allowing drivers to freely enjoy themselves and learn proper handling with a variety of driving techniques. Just as much fun as running barefoot into the ocean, but with a high priority on safety. The exclusive training session was Walter Röhrl's first crowning achievement as a teacher.

The use of professional racing drivers, mostly from the large Porsche works driver squad, set a precedent. Whether established masters like Derek Bell and Hans-Joachim Stuck, or modern-day talents like Timo Bernhard, Jörg Bergmeister and Mark Webber — they all share their knowledge at what has grown over the years to become today's Porsche Track Experience. These stars were not at the center of attention, but at the service of the customers. That was the case in Herbert Linge's time; and despite all the innovations, this has never changed and never will.



Pure enthusiasm at the Red Bull Ring: As part of the Master GT3 RS course, Porsche Experience customers explore the technical sophistication of the Porsche 911 GT3 RS down to the smallest detail.

Learning from international stars: Porsche regularly involves professional works drivers as instructors. Nordschleife record holder Timo Bernhard knows the "Green Hell" like no other.



911 GT3 RS

Consumption data according to WLTP:
 Fuel consumption combined: 13.4 l/100 km;
 CO₂ emissions combined: 305 g/km; CO₂ class: G;
 Status 03/2024



Diverse offer:

The training portfolio is extensive and clearly structured. This means everyone can find the training experience they are looking for, with driving pleasure guaranteed.



"I've been part of developing the Porsche Sportfahrschule into what it is today as the Porsche Track Experience since 2005. We have continually expanded the programs and our setup with immense passion over the years. Every innovation has further strengthened our identity and created new opportunities, ensuring that everyone can now benefit from our platform and find the offer that suits them best. We're also happy to provide exclusive and individual solutions tailored to the wishes of our customers."

Sabine SINN

Project Manager Sales and CRM, Porsche AG

"HERE WITH US YOU MEET FRIENDS AND LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE AND ENJOY A GREAT TIME WITH PORSCHE ON AND OFF THE RACETRACK."



Jubilant participants experience the thrill up close at the Circuit Paul Ricard. A lunch break with a touch of adrenaline and unmistakable Porsche flair.



“When I joined eleven years ago, we were still holding two-day events on the major international racetracks. Today, we stay in one place for ten days with our mobile Porsche Experience Center. A crew of 60 takes care of customers from over 40 countries. Depending on the exclusivity of the program, we welcome between twelve and 120 participants per day. Some come for the opportunity to drive a model that they still have to wait for in their home country. Others bring their own vehicle to learn how to control it. We always have the latest Porsche GT models available. We have up to 120 GT cars and 40 race cars.”

Fabian PEVNY

Head of Customer Communications Porsche Track Experience, Manthey Racing GmbH

With the dawn of the new millennium, the product portfolio changed. As the brand's first SUV, the Porsche Cayenne then also required a terrain to suit its capabilities. This was followed by the Macan, which found ideal training conditions at the recently opened Porsche Leipzig factory, with its FIA-certified circuit and off-road course with 18 terrain modules. Today, the area is one of ten Porsche Experience Centers worldwide that offer this kind of diversity. Germany now also houses the Porsche Experience Center Hockenheimring.

The Porsche Track Experience product portfolio has continually developed over the years — with the training categories DISCOVER, LEARN, BOOST & RACE, interested customers can now choose what suits them best from the diverse offer. The Precision, Performance, Master, Master RS, Master GT3 RS and GT Trackday or g-Force drift training stages leave nothing to be desired.

There are also the beginner training courses in the Porsche Experience Centers and the advanced training programs that are part of the Porsche Track Tour on the major Grand Prix racetracks across Europe. On request, even training to compete in professional motor sports can be provided, with the exclusive Rennsport programs. And needless to say, the courses also include an equally diverse event program offered by our international Porsche markets, thereby guaranteeing Porsche Track Experience driving pleasure worldwide!

The evolution from the nucleus of the Porsche Sportfahrschule knows no limits. It remains as it began: responsive to the brand products and to the wishes of its customers. Because they are the ones who bring sports cars to life.

You can find more information about the Porsche Track Experience and the international offer in the accompanying “50 Years Track Experience” leaflet attached.



ONE FAMILY. ON TRACK. LET'S CELEBRATE.

Half a century in the fast lane. Time for a paddock party and birthday donuts. Fasten your seat belts and celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Porsche Track Experience in the spirit of the former Porsche Sportfahrschule, accompanied by the “School” vibes from 50 years. Newly reinterpreted — but as ever “turbo fast,” with racetrack flair, full of emotion, adrenaline and of course plenty of fun! You can look forward to a paddock atmosphere, demo drives, exciting workshops and inspiring panel talks. Not to mention Porsche racetrack cars, of course — for you to admire, touch, experience, and all lined up for a special birthday serenade.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Anniversary event at the racetrack with festival flair
- Demo drives in a variety of Porsche models as well as a vehicle exhibition
- Panel talks with special guests from the Porsche world, Porsche works drivers and real Porsche racetrack legends
- Additional activities for younger guests
- Evening program with live music and a barbecue

And of course there will be many more birthday activities during the Porsche Track Experience 2024 season.

Scan the QR code and find out all the latest information about the anniversary event.
porsche.click/50YTrack