

SEAT: 70 years reinventing mobility

- Since the launch of the SEAT 600 in 1957, SEAT has set standards in urban mobility
- **SEAT's social influence was so deep that the '60s were known as "the Spain of 600"**
- The SEAT Marbella or SEAT Mii Electric, are perfect examples of how SEAT has always offered the right car at the right moment

Martorell, 09/09/2020. The SEAT 600 has played a key role in the development of Spain. Thanks to this car, large cities were able to expand because people could commute from the surrounding to the city centre. Second homes also became widespread because it allowed Spanish families from that time to travel from their usual homes to their second houses, where they could rest during weekends and holiday periods.

1957, the Spain of 600 begins

Small, manoeuvrable and a capable vehicle. The SEAT 600 was the ideal car for the city, at the time. But its meaning went much further. The SEAT 600 was able to take the average Spanish family and all their luggage on a vacation trip. Even if the couple had four children and the grandmother had to come, the SEAT 600, could deal with everything. They were different times. In 1957 the big dream was to own a car. This was the start of motorization in Spain. Back then, a motorcycle sidecar was considered a family vehicle. The SEAT 600, with its doors, its roof and its heating, went far beyond offering personal mobility. The SEAT 600 was a real luxury, at a price affordable for the Spanish middle class.

Before starting to manufacture the SEAT 600, its acceptance was so great that the waiting list was already over two years. During the second year the production volume was multiplied by six. After five years, on July 23, 1962, 100,000 units of the SEAT 600 had already been produced. It was the 600 N, the "Normal" version, which was manufactured until July 1963. In total, 131,985 units of the 600 N were produced. At that time, the Zona Franca factory in Barcelona was expanded to double its production capacity and the SEAT 600 D took over.

The SEAT 600 D increased the displacement of the four-cylinder rear engine, from 633 cc to 767 cc. However, the designation 600 -in reference to the displacement- remained unchanged. The power rose from 18hp to 25hp. The suicide doors -articulated from behind and opening in the opposite direction of travel- remained until 1970, when the 600 E appeared. Three years later, in 1973, the 600 L special edition ends the production of the SEAT 600, after 800,000 units left the assembly lines. After a 16-year career it was time for a new, safer model; more modern, more capable and more luxurious than the SEAT 600: The SEAT 133.

SEAT 133, the first model exclusively manufactured by SEAT

SEAT had reshaped Spanish urban mobility. In 1973, when the oil crisis erupted, SEAT already had a practical car in the form of the front-wheel driven SEAT 127. However, there was room in a segment below for a cheaper, purely urban car with the spirit of the SEAT 600. The model that was born in May 1974 was called SEAT 133. It inherited the powertrain layout of the SEAT 600 and the SEAT 850, with a design inspired by the SEAT 127. Its size practically equalled the 600, but it

offered more space and load capacity than the 850. In addition, it incorporated a modified engine from the SEAT 127. That engine received a new crankshaft to reduce displacement below 900 cm³, for a lower taxation. In addition, the lower compression ratio of the basic version of the SEAT 133 allowed the use of cheaper regular gasoline. A year after the launch, there was already a version with a twin-choke carburettor that increased the engine power to 44hp and a set of disc brakes were mounted in the front.

Safety was one of the biggest advances of the SEAT 133, with a dual-circuit braking system, one per axle. It had already adopted seat belts and an articulated steering column - in the case of a frontal collision intrusion was avoided – and the ends of the body consisted of progressive deformation structures.

The life of the SEAT 133 was successful, with more than 190,000 units sold, being manufactured also for export. At the end of 1977 it was also produced in Argentina and Egypt under a SEAT license. However, five years after its production started, a true icon was knocking on its door: it was time for the SEAT Panda.

1980, the intelligence of the SEAT Panda

A stunning design by Giorgio Giugiaro was making its way. With a simple and intelligent design, the SEAT Panda completely changed the concept of the urban car. The engine was placed in the front, the spare wheel remained, under the front bonnet. Two engines were available with displacements corresponding to the SEAT 133 and SEAT 127 engines (843 and 903 cm³, respectively). The rear suspension was still the responsibility of leaf springs, but placed longitudinally. Thanks to this layout, the boot of the SEAT Panda had a great capacity -272 litres-, considering the car was shorter than a 133. This rear suspension being typical of rougher and heavier vehicles, it allowed the Panda to perform extraordinarily well in rural surroundings, with big loads or on bumpy roads. In the front axle, it included modern mechanical components, such as, disc brakes or a rack and pinion steering.

Its modular customisable interior, washable upholstery, a rear seat with up to seven possible positions - even the possibility of being folded into a bed - and its simplicity revolutionized the concept of the urban car. Like the 133, the SEAT Panda did not have a long life either. At the age of six, in September 1986 production ceased after 463,000 assembled vehicles.

From SEAT Panda Marbella to just SEAT Marbella

In February 1982 SEAT had released a version of the Panda, called Marbella. It featured velvet-upholstered seats, fog lamps, a five-speed gearbox, and a digital rev counter. It was enriched by metallic paint, the steering wheel of the SEAT Fura and a distinctive grille.

This simple and well-equipped city car concept was the origin of the SEAT Marbella later in 1986. Josep Maria Martínez Serra, the head of design at the Martorell's Technical Center composed the new and youthful image. SEAT technicians developed an electronic system for carburation that allowed a catalyst to be used to clean the exhaust gases without the need for costly injection. Thanks to this, the 903 cm³ engine that debuted in 1969 on the 850 Sport Spider managed to stay alive for almost 30 years. Indeed, the SEAT Marbella was produced until April

7th, 1998; for more than eleven years. The SEAT Arosa was its successor as a city car in the SEAT range. However, the Marbella was still so popular that it continued in the market along with the SEAT Arosa for one year. With the nearly 600,000 units of SEAT Marbella, the production of vehicles in the Zona Franca ceased. Today, this section is in charge of car body stamping.

SEAT Arosa, a diesel for an urbanite

Small boot, large cabin: the SEAT Arosa presented in 1997 thus reversed the urban car concept known from the days of the SEAT Panda. It arrived a year and a half before the Volkswagen Lupo and, like this one, it was produced in Germany. It was the first SEAT to be manufactured there, before production moved to Martorell in mid-1998.

In addition to two gasoline engines (1.0 of 50 PS and 1.4 of 60 PS), the SEAT Arosa raised the possibility of an automatic change. The most surprising feature was the offer of a frugal Diesel engine (previously, it was only offered in the Terra, the Marbella-van variant). Before its restyling in 2000, a 101 PS 1.4 16v engine and a 75 PS 1.4 TDI three-cylinder were also offered. Talking about efficiency the Arosa also presented a 1.2 TDI variant called 3L, on the basis of its official consumption of 2.99 l/100km, but only a few prototypes were built.

In 2004 production of the Arosa ceased, after seven years, with 200,000 units manufactured. We had to wait until 2011 to see a SEAT in the A-segment again, the occasion was the launch of the SEAT Mii: the perfect city car. Eight years later, the brand launched it as an all-electric version, SEAT's first 100% electric car: The Mii electric. Like the 600 with its 800 variant, it had a 5-door version.

SEAT Mii Electric, the affordable electric

The SEAT catalogue has always offered the most suitable urban cars of its time. Today, when SEAT celebrates its 70th anniversary, this car is the SEAT Mii Electric. Beyond extreme manoeuvrability, it offers the kind of mobility that cities need. No noise, no exhaust gases and it takes up as little space as possible on the street. It takes full advantage of those six square metres to transport four passengers. They can commute or drive in the zero emission city centres. **They don't need to be tightly packed, nor breathing face to face as they would in public transportation.** The SEAT Mii Electric offers combustion engine acquisition cost, but with a lower cost of use. A range of up to 260 km (358 km in urban WLTP) is equivalent to more than ten hours driving in the city. A 40kW fast charger permits 80 percent recharge in one hour.

In Spain, most people learned to start-off on a ramp during their driving license exam at the wheel of a SEAT. In 1957 they would have asked what the meaning of a headrest or a safety belt was. Today, a SEAT Mii provides the safest mobility in urban cars. Rear seats include Isofix child restraints with a top tether. An electric motor is enough for starting-off smoothly, but the SEAT Mii incorporates a hill start assistant. Moreover, it accompanies it with as many assistants, safety and comfort systems that one would not expect to find in an urban car: side and curtain airbags, traffic signal recognition, as well as a lane assist. Once again, SEAT marks urban mobility. The new mobility.

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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