

Hola!



SEAT essence: 70 years concentrating sportiness in a compact size

- In the 70-year history of SEAT, the compact sporty car has always played an important role in its model catalogue
- Performance and handling of a sporty car, at the right size and price, with the expected safety: a continuous achievement by SEAT

Martorell, 09/11/2020. What does a very light coupé weighting just 720 kilos with rear-wheel drive have to do with a multi-purpose five-seater front-wheel drive that triples its power? Both symbolize how SEAT has always been able to tune in to its audience. SEAT discovered very early on, that sporty cars opened the door to the hearts of the younger public.

Creating the right sporty car for each era requires being in true harmony with the public. Revolutionize, when necessary. If coupés were all the rage 60 years ago, today even three door cars have almost disappeared. For SEAT's 70 years, we are going to do a quick review of some SEAT models that were icons for the Spanish sporty car market and objects of desire among young people of all ages.

SEAT 850 Coupé: Latin Heart

In 1966 Spain was motorizing at high speed. The SEAT 600 had a big brother, a more spacious and capable touring car, the 850. Only a year later one of the first aspirational cars produced in Spain was born, the 850 Coupé, an evolution of the SEAT 600. It had the engine hanging at the back, the propulsion was entrusted to the rear wheels and it was only a 2 + 2-seater. The price of the 850 Coupé was set at 105,000 pesetas at the time, 30% more expensive than the 850 saloon. A surcharge that whoever could, paid gladly; because the 850 Coupé brought driving pleasure to its users. The 850's engine received a twin-body carburettor, also a higher compression ratio was adopted by the Coupé. With these measures, the power soared by 10PS, to provide 47PS at a high regime for the time, 6,200 rpm. Together with its aerodynamic silhouette, this allowed it to reach 140 km/h. To match the chassis to performance, the 850 Coupé was the first SEAT to receive front disc brakes. With 720 kilos of weight, agility and fun were guaranteed. Two years later, in 1969, the power increased to 52PS by incorporating an engine that would be classic in SEAT, the 903cc. After this, the name changed to SEAT 850 Sport Coupé and distinguished itself from afar with its double optics, both front and rear ends. There is no wonder that those parties in the 60s took another course, when whoever came to them got out of an 850 Coupé.

SEAT 1200 Sport: the party continues, in the newest direction

In 1975, the first results of the brand-new SEAT Technical Centre arrived: the SEAT 1200 Sport, the first exclusively self-designed model for the brand. Original, making the most of resources. The style was penned by Aldo Sessano, a talented Italian designer. The bodywork was manufactured at Inducar, a company headed by Antoni Amat. The Technical Centre not only harmonized the set: it had to be able to position the longitudinal engine of the SEAT 124 in a transverse layout (tilting it down 16 degrees so that it fits in) and attach a gearbox for this new arrangement and

one that supports the torque. And it succeeded. The coupé was initially launched with the 1,197cc (67PS) engine that is given the name SEAT 1200 Sport.

A year later, the SEAT Sport 1430, with 77PS, arrives. The originality of its interior takes care of detail and exudes sportiness on its dashboard and instrumentation. Its exterior, while evoking previous stylistic concepts from Sessano, incorporates a ground-breaking and unprecedented front in black polyurethane that earned it its nickname "Bocanegra". 19,322 units were built (two-thirds of them were 1,200) before ceasing production in 1979.

SEAT Fura Crono: the long (and fast) shadow of the SEAT 127

SEAT already knew how to fly alone. The 127 model was derived in 1981 into the SEAT Fura. Not a year passed before SEAT gave it a sporty personality, with the name Fura Crono. It was certainly no longer a coupé like its predecessor, with that specific design, its own solutions and high production costs. It was much more interesting to be able to improve a model produced in large numbers, as popular as the Fura was, and to be able to offer it at much more competitive prices, in order to reach a larger audience. At the same time, both the SEAT brand and the Fura model thus achieved a halo effect, of dynamism and sportiness.

Who said that Bocanegra had no successor before that tribute version of the fourth generation Ibiza? The Fura Crono filled the entire front of the car with black plastic trim, too. In fact, black protections also surround its perimeter, with the widening of the wheel arches and the side mouldings. These are visual enhancements, that are also practical for urban use and are now back in fashion: what then emphasized the sporty character, today serves to reinforce the SUV character.

The recipe for a sports car always begins with adding power. As its predecessor, the reliable and proven 1,438cc engine was used with a power output of 75PS. Weighing just 760 kilos, the power-to-weight ratio allowed it great agility. Fast and easy to drive, it was very stable on curves and its five-speed gearbox allowed it to be used on the highway at a lower engine speed, with greater acoustic comfort and lower consumption.

As it was not enough, the Fura Cup was launched based on the Fura Crono, which managed to bring together the best Spanish drivers of the moment for three years and even rescue old motor-sport figures for the championship. SEAT and sports went hand in hand.

SEAT Ibiza SXi: an injection of modernity

The Ibiza marked the graduation of SEAT as a top brand, it was a leap into modernity. In its first generation, the productive talents of SEAT, the genius designer Giugiaro, the knowledge of Porsche to develop a robust engine, and the experience of Karmann for the industrialization of the car body, all came together. Of course, the sporty version could not be missing from the Ibiza. It came four years after the launch of the Ibiza, with an important technical contribution, the application of gasoline injection on the existing 1,5 litre engine. The development carried out by the engineers of the Martorell Technical Centre brought the power from the 85PS of the carburettor version to 100PS. The name of the sport version was Ibiza SXi, with the "i" in honour of the injection, and the "X" for the double brake circuit arranged in an X. This was already an

important improvement in safety, which was also accompanied by front ventilated discs, to adapt it to the greater performance of this small sporty car.

The Ibiza SXi followed in the steps of the aesthetic treatment of the Fura Crono, adding wide wings, side skirts and lateral mouldings in black, which visually wrapped and protected it, along with the bumpers of the same colour. Two black spoilers above and below the rear window announced its sportiness to the world. It was a fast car, easy to drive, and the injection also reduced fuel consumption.

The Ibiza SXi had raised the sportiness of SEAT a step, now in a multi-purpose car, more liveable, with a larger boot and faster than the Fura. The Ibiza SXi was not only a hot hatchback, but it also added another key aspect: a high degree of equipment and a neat and striking presentation. It was not a GTI, at 3.6 metres in length, but it was on the doorstep.

SEAT Ibiza GTI: The second generation grows

The second-generation Ibiza grew to 3.8 metres and showed that one could be a true GTI when one has what it takes to be one. Giugiaro participated again in the genesis of this Ibiza that would see the light of day in 1993. He worked intensively with the Martorell Design Centre to change everything and create a giant killer. The traditional straight lines of the successful Italian designer became bulbous, rounded and aerodynamic for the Ibiza II. Everything was brand new. And the Ibiza II was the model that started the Martorell plant operations.

The new platform allowed it to be compact on the outside, big on the inside. This time, unlike previous models, the Ibiza did not make great statements of its sportiness outwardly. It was hiding discreetly a six pack under the hood: in this case, a two-litre injection engine, the largest displacement in the segment. Fast, agile, easy to drive (it incorporated power steering), it was light (1,010 kilos) and with good handling. It could even take on top segment rivals with its 115PS. SEAT Sport included it in successive Dirt Rally Cups to demonstrate its sportiness and reliability, using standard engines. It gained temperament in 1994 with a second engine under the acronym GTI, this time a 130-horsepower 1.8 16v. The second generation of the Ibiza grew so much that SEAT began participating in the World Rally Championship with it.

SEAT Ibiza FR: endless sportiness...

Since the third generation of the Ibiza, FR has been the name given to SEAT sporty cars. Today, in 2020, the fifth generation of the Ibiza continues the tradition, offering FR versions with that sporty touch. Sporty, yes, but as always throughout SEAT's history, well adapted to customers demand. It is not just about being a true sleeper, being able to surprise the public with regards to larger, more expensive and more powerful cars; with the performance of its mechanics and its manoeuvrability. It achieves this thanks to its 150PS 1.5 TSI engine, however, SEAT also offers a 110PS Ibiza 1.0 FR for those who only need the agility of its chassis (its suspension is lowered 15 mm compared to the normal Ibiza, with specific shock absorber settings and Normal and Sport modes) or the image (with rims that can be 18 inches). Today, this SEAT also adds safety and comfort. Now, more than four metres long, the current Ibiza FR has room for four adults. With five doors to access it, just as the public requests right now. First offering FULL LED lighting in this segment, Ibiza FR adds traffic jam assistance, automatic city braking, adaptive cruise control,

fatigue recognition... and the luxury of a wireless mobile charger with a GSM signal amplifier or DSG shifters in the multifunction steering wheel: not even in science fiction books could that proud driver of the 850 Coupé have imagined everything that a sporty SEAT contains today.

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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