

TH TOUR DE CORSE HISTORIQUE DU 05 AU 12 OCTOBRE 2024

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A GENUINE PORSCHE 550 SPYDER ON THE START LINE

For the first time ever, an authentic Porsche 550 Spyder will be at the start of the Tour de Corse Historique. While everything has been written about this legendary model, the story of chassis number 137 will surprise many...

Its concept is simple yet revolutionary: a modestly powered 4-cylinder engine (135 hp), an aerodynamically streamlined body, and a lightweight construction (570 kg) thanks to the use of aluminum. The Porsche 550 Spyder triumphed

in the Sport 1.5 category, notably winning the 24 Hours of Le Mans and the Carrera Panamericana in 1954. It even outpaced larger cars at the Targa Florio in 1957, earning it the nickname "Giant Killer."

From these victories emerged the Carrera and Targa suffixes, which have become classics in the famous 911 lineup. Its influence on Porsche's current range remains undeniable, as evidenced by the "Spyder" designation used for the 718 model, a current symbol of German craftsmanship.

Beyond its racing achievements, the myth of the 550 Spyder also lies in its rarity. There are many replicas, but only 90 authentic examples, which Porsche reserved for a select few enthusiasts. Among them was James Dean, who on September 30, 1955, tragically died in chassis number 55 on the road to Salinas where he was set to race. By taking the star of *Rebel Without a Cause*, the car became the symbol of the cool spirit, tinged with tragic romanticism.



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A chassis with an unusual story

The model featured at the Tour de Corse Historique also has a remarkable history and a top-tier patron, as its purchase was financed by... Marshal Tito! The dictator made this decision in 1957, following a news report on Yugoslav television, where he saw the local driver Milivoje Božić struggling with his outdated BMW 328 against better-equipped rivals. The Porsche 550 Spyder, chassis 550A-0137, was delivered at the beginning of 1958... Too late to compete against the newer Porsche 1500 RSK models.

Milivoje Božić still managed some standout performances, including a 3rd place at the Supercortemaggiore Grand Prix in Monza in 1959, despite the handicap of having only one set of tires for the 1,000 km race. This remarkable achievement reached the ears of Porsche's competition chief, who then offered Božić a complete overhaul of his car, allowing him to race for another two years and win the European Hill Climb Championship in his category in 1960.

In 1961, the Porsche 550 Spyder was traded by its owner, the Auto Moto Club of Yugoslavia, with an Italian collector for... a Fiat 850! Still preserved in Italy, the car is now rarely seen, and for good reason: its value exceeds 3 million euros.

Photos (banner above and thumbnails above):

The Porsche 550 Spyder, chassis 550A-0137, commissioned by Tito and driven by Yugoslav Milivoje Božić between 1958 and 1961.



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