



Fascination

# Direct from the Original Owner

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When you see 76 classic Porsche diesel tractors coming towards you single file, it's an amazing spectacle and looks like a lot of fun. It may require a quick double-take to convince you: It's real! These days, in fact, this legendary technology has actually acquired cult status.

**At first** you'll only hear them. A very unusual sound penetrating the birch forest: the melody of countless diesel engines running at low revs, sonorous and rhythmic like African drums. A little while later, they show up: a kilometer-long line of brilliant red tractors putt-putting along the winding trail near the edge of Wertheim, where the river Tauber flows into the river Main. The drivers are waving at you: it's showtime in the forest. And in this case, that means Porsche time.

Once again it is time for the big get-together on Dr. Wolfgang Porsche's country estate in the Tauber Valley for the active members of the Porsche Diesel Club Europa e.V.—a precisely scripted reunion including their tractors. The owners of Porsche tractors have traveled here from all over the country for this diesel parade—76 of them, on this occasion. “That's a record,” exclaims Harald S. Stegen, the president of this very active club, as he makes his way in long strides among the tractors in their precise lineup.

In the midst of it all are the three tractors of the host, Dr. Wolfgang Porsche, who enjoys watching the parade and stops to join a small group standing around a tractor marked “AP 17.”

The “AP” stands for “Allgaier Diesel System Porsche.” Starting in 1950, the Swabian company Allgaier Ackerschlepper manufactured tractors under license and with engineering plans by Professor Dr. Ing. h.c. Ferdinand Porsche (1875–1951). The AP 17, with its air-cooled, 1.3-liter, two-cylinder diesel engine and its 18-bhp

**Parade in red: The members of the Porsche Diesel Club Europa are proud to present their treasures**

power output, was already based on pioneering technology needed by farmers in the years following World War II. At first the tractors were yellow. Later Allgaier painted them green. When Porsche took over the production in-house, all tractors were painted red. And those red tractors revolutionized motorized agriculture with their visionary design features.

This is borne out by the example of the tractor model Porsche Junior, whose partially aluminum, lightweight construction, oil-hydraulic clutch, and a centrifuge to clean the oil made it the most advanced tractor of its day. It had only one cylinder with 822 to 875 cc and delivered only 12 to 15 bhp, but it became the biggest-selling Porsche tractor thanks to its maneuverability and its technology. Just like the Junior, the model Standard with two cylinders and a power output of between 20 and 30 bhp has also become an icon of the company's history. The model Super with three cylinders and from 30 to 40 bhp was designed for larger operations. The strongest horse in this stable and the star of this meeting is the model Master with its timeless magnificence, four cylinders, and 50 bhp.

The typical in-line engine design, using a kind of building-block principle to provide any required power output, was as ingenious as it was logical and demonstrates to this day the visionary power for the Porsche engineers are known. What's more, these engines were extremely low-maintenance and very durable. All models were being built concurrently, and all of them were available in a wide range of versions. The result was a virtually unlimited range of possible applications, which rendered the Porsche tractors technologically unbeatable. Production was halted after 120,000 units in 1963, principally because of market saturation. But one-of-a-kind designs such as the Gigant, an all-wheel drive prototype of 1963 that never went into production and that presides over the other classics here as a kind of chief fossil, still demonstrate the creative power of those engineers.

## The Porsche Tractors: An Overview

### Junior



**Engine:** One cylinder with 822 to 875 cc  
**Power output:** 12 to 15 bhp at 2,200 to 2,250 rpm  
**Curb weight:** 845 to 1,000 kg (1,863–2,204 lbs.)  
**Speed:** 16.5 to 20 km/h

### Standard



**Engine:** Two-cylinder with 1,374 to 1,750 cc  
**Power output:** 20 to 30 bhp at 1,950 to 2,300 rpm  
**Curb weight:** 1,110 to 1,510 kg (2,447–3,330 lbs.)  
**Speed:** 19 to 20 km/h

### Super



**Engine:** Three-cylinder with 2,467 to 2,625 cc  
**Power output:** 30 to 40 bhp at 2,000 to 2,300 rpm  
**Curb weight:** 1,985 to 2,450 kg (4,376–5,401 lbs.)  
**Speed:** 19 to 27 km/h

### Master



**Engine:** Four-cylinder with 3,288 to 3,500 cc  
**Power output:** 50 bhp at 2,000 rpm  
**Curb weight:** 1,788 to 2,450 kg (3,941–5,401 lbs.)  
**Speed:** 19.5 to 22 km/h

Creativity continues to be a very useful asset to the club members. “Restoring a Porsche tractor is somewhat like becoming a dad,” says one of the participants. “It just takes longer.” There's something to that. Because once a Porsche tractor fan discovers such an object in some barn, he's done for. Manfred Krämer, from the Allgäu region, spells it out: “Every Porsche tractor has its own history that will determine how much of an effort is required to restore it.” It's not always as simple as for Jürgen Schmid from Höfingen, who is here with his 1960 Porsche Super. “From the original owner,” he declares proudly. “It belonged to my grandpa. See here, I've even got the original purchase contract.”

Time and patience are important prerequisites for the wonderful friendship between man and machine. And your heart has got to be in it. That's also what accounts for the emotional bond among Porsche tractor fans. Fortunately, the restoration scene for Porsche tractors has changed significantly. While a few years ago it was a major undertaking to find tires, wheel rims, or replacements for corroded electric parts, today there are very committed dealers who are eager to meet almost any requirement, whether for wheels or pistons or cylinders, and who will even make replacement parts. There is also a spare-parts catalog. And there are specialists with a firm commitment to the Porsche tractors—like Helmut Unrath. He supplies handmade, complete cable sets for the electrical system. This technical support network is very helpful not only in restoring ancient Porsche diesels but also, curiously, in creating one-of-a-kind and sometimes extravagant additions and modifications. ▶



Project Porsche Junior

# The Fixers



This project connects generations: under the motto “From Inaction to Creativity,” the “Project-Porsche-Diesel” club, in cooperation with the Porsche Diesel Club Europa e.V. and with the support of Porsche schools and social institutions, provides opportunities for restoring old Porsche tractors. Most of the vintage tractors are provided by members of the Porsche Diesel Club.

In this project, young people gain some of the know-how and experience necessary to recondition old machines to their original state. In well over 30 educational institutions, more than 400 students have volunteered to restore a long retired and usually defunct tractor to its original working order and appearance under the supervision of experienced and qualified teachers.

The idea for this remarkable program came from Harald S. Stegen, president of the Porsche Diesel Club Europa, who also directs this project. Should the institutions involved have questions regarding this work, the appropriate contacts at the Club provide answers and advice.

The results are gratifying: with the rust all gone, the Porsche tractors shine brightly once again. And the young workers benefit as well. The project includes a log of all the work performed. This record serves as a basis for job folders that the students can include in their applications, which may be useful in their search for a job training opportunity.

Quite a few Porsche tractor fans have, for instance, installed various storage cases or containers on the back of their vehicle. Made of wood or aluminum, some weatherproofed with marine finishes, others painted in cheerful colors. For all sorts of baggage or for their dog, who naturally wants to go along for the ride. Some aficionados are aghast at such individualistic restorations. “The original Porsches were completely assembled and only then given a total paint job,” one of them sniffs with a sidelong glance at some shiny metallic bolts, “in a crimson shade of red, to be more specific, in RAL Color 3002. So there weren’t any shiny bolts.” Purists call these gussied-up restorations “circus horses.” But such are magisterial and snobbish views that can be found even in the best of circles.

What really counts when it comes to this trip is the collective experience. On the narrow forest roads along the Tauber, where the red column of Porsches winds through the birch forest, there are no naysayers. And if 75 out of the 76 Porsche tractors that started reach the finish line, that’s a clear indicator of the restorers’ skill and expertise. Make no mistake about it: the diesel classic scene is alive and well, and the fascination with Porsche tractors remains undiminished. Their legendary technology has now reached cult status. Established in 1996, the Porsche Diesel Club Europa e.V. presently has about 600 members.

And the fan community is growing steadily. The tractor buffs aren’t just reveling in the past. On the contrary, they’re just getting off to a good start. At the bureau of motor vehicles in Flensburg, for instance, 22,000 Porsche tractors are still registered. According to a statistic by Harald S. Stegen, 4,000 of these are listed in the club’s registry, “and 3,000 of those haven’t even been restored yet.” This means that the old Porsche tractors still have a great future ahead of them. ◀



**Full quorum: 76 participants—more than ever before—show off their lovingly restored tractors in a snappy lineup**