



Mercedes-Benz Classic

Press Information

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The new executive segment: Mercedes-Benz 124 model series, introduced 35 years ago

From a popular modern classic to an attractive, young vintage car: the Mercedes-Benz 124 model series inspires just as much today as it did at its premiere 35 years ago. The saloons were presented for the first time on 26 November 1984 in Spain. The estate, coupé, saloon with a long wheelbase and cabriolet were to follow. In 1993 the model series became the first generation of the upper executive segment of Mercedes-Benz to carry the E-Class name and thereby wrote itself into the long tradition of vehicles in this segment. Particularly sought-after classics include the 500 E and 400 E V8 versions, the performance versions by Mercedes-AMG as well as the elegant two-door versions. But vehicles of all other types in good, original condition and with low mileage are also in demand. ALL TIME STARS, the vehicle dealer of Mercedes-Benz Classic, has such very special cars of the 124 model series available again and again – for example, currently an E 200 from 1995 in the “Collectors Edition”.

Stuttgart. As modern as it was 35 years ago: this is the Mercedes-Benz 124 model series. On 26 November 1984 the brand from Stuttgart initially introduced the new saloons (W 124) in Seville (Spain). They were introduced to the market in December of the same year. Its premiere was, at that time, an unprecedented technological leap in engine and body development in the upper executive segment of Mercedes-Benz. Later the estate (1985, S 124), coupé (1987, C 124), saloon with a long wheelbase (1989, V 124), cabriolet (1991, A 124) and chassis for special bodies were to follow.

Today it is above all the top engines of the saloons as well as the coupés and cabriolets of this generation of the upper executive segment of Mercedes-Benz that are attractive collector vehicles. This is confirmed by the latest analyses, such as the “Emerging Classics” index, which is a part of the Mercedes-Benz Classic Index (MBC Index) of the Historic Automobile Group International (HAGI). For example, here the 500 E V8 version, the top AMG models as well as the cabriolets and coupés are amongst the most promising classic cars of the brand with the star, explains Dietrich Hatlapa from HAGI. Between its launch at the end of 2011 and September 2019, the MBC Index has more than doubled.

Highlights of the 124 model series in the ALL TIME STARS portfolio

ALL TIME STARS, the brand’s own vehicle dealer of Mercedes-Benz Classic, offers particularly attractive cars of the 124 model series such as these again and again. For example, in recent years it has included the legendary 500 E from 1993 in mother-of-pearl grey metallic, which was part of the ALL TIME STARS “Collectors Edition”. The vehicle dealer of Mercedes-Benz Classic gave new homes to not one, but two high-performance saloons of the E 60 AMG type: a “Collectors Edition” car from 1992 with fewer than

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* Further information on the official fuel consumption and the official, specific emissions for new passenger cars can be found in the publication entitled “Leitfaden über den Kraftstoffverbrauch, die Emissionen und den Stromverbrauch neuer Personenkraftwagen” (“Guidelines on the fuel consumption, CO₂ emissions and electricity consumption of new passenger cars”), available free of charge from all showrooms and from Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH at www.dat.de.

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130,000 kilometres on the clock and one of the “Concours Edition” from 1994, which had done only 63,000 kilometres.

“Alongside such performance saloons, the highlights of the 124 model series often also include the sporty and elegant two-door models,” says Patrik Gottwick, who is responsible for ALL TIME STARS at Mercedes-Benz Classic, confirming the market development described by the MBC Index. He names a coupé of type 320 CE with Sportline equipment from 1992 as well as a 300 CE-24 with four-valve technology from 1991 as examples from recent years. Both coupés belonged to the “Collectors Edition” of ALL TIME STARS.

But even vehicles of all other types in the 124 model series have the potential to become attractive young classic cars. Cars with a good original condition, low mileage and complete documentation are particularly in demand. For example, ALL TIME STARS is currently offering a saloon of type E 200 from 1995 with a silver paint finish and black interior equipment. The vehicle has had three previous owners and a mileage of only 48,800 kilometres (https://www.mercedes-benz.com/de/ats_vehicle/mercedes-benz-w-124-e-200-4/).

State-of-the-art concept

Unveiled in 1984, this model series was the first vehicle family from Mercedes-Benz. From 1993, it bore the name E-Class. Consistent lightweight design and optimised aerodynamics resulted in increased fuel economy and improved performance. Excellent driving safety was guaranteed by the innovative multi-link rear suspension. Mercedes-Benz also played a pioneering role in terms of reduced exhaust emissions: from autumn 1986, all petrol-engined models came as standard with exhaust gas emission control by a feedback-controlled three-way catalytic converter.

When the history of the 124 model series was beginning at Mercedes-Benz, the “Stroke/8” saloons of the W 114/115 model series were still in production: it was at the end of 1975 when the decision was made at the company for the successor of the 123 model series, in the upper executive segment, introduced to the market in January 1976. The development process was also accompanied by a change of generations in leading positions of what was then Daimler-Benz AG. Plus, there were also significantly stricter regulations for consumption and emissions, particularly in North America. Therefore, Mercedes-Benz developed new six-cylinder engines for the 124 model series along with a whole range of diesel engines, with four, five and six cylinders, with and without supercharging.

Relation to the new compact segment

In parallel with this, work was being done on the design of the new saloons. The goal was a lighter and significantly more aerodynamically optimised vehicle compared to its predecessor, along with greatly increased safety. There are parallels in the technology and design between the future 124 model series and the new W 201 compact segment, which was developed at the same time and would be launched on the market two years ahead of the upper executive segment. The first project descriptions and ten plasticine models of the W 124 were created in 1977 at a scale of 1:5 – a drag coefficient of $C_d = 0.32$ was aspired to in the specifications. In 1981 management decided on the final design with seven clay models in the original size.

In order to comprehensively test the new generation of vehicles, Mercedes-Benz began a series of crash tests in 1982 and undertook extensive road tests with around 60 vehicles in various climate zones. The W 124 was tested in the heat of Africa, on the high-speed course at Nardò in Italy, on the Sol y Nieve high road in Spain, 3392 metres above sea level, in Canada and Scandinavia (Arjeplog) as well as in the Alps, amongst other places.

From 26 November to 8 December 1984 the brand from Stuttgart finally introduced the new saloons to international journalists in the area of Seville. Vehicles from 200 D (53 kW / 72 hp) to 300 E (140 kW / 190 hp) were available for test drives. The vehicle concept with the most stable passenger

compartment of its class, higher efficiency and impressive Cd figures of 0.29 to 0.30 depending on the engine and equipment was very well received by the experts. Amongst the types with a petrol engine, the 260 E and 300 E with the new six-cylinder M 103 engines garnered the most interest.

Further development until the E-Class

The saloons of the 124 model series launched onto the market in 1985 with three diesel versions (200 D, 250 D and 300 D), the Mercedes-Benz 200 with a 2-litre carburettor engine as well as four petrol engine types with petrol injection (200 E, 230 E, 260 E and 300 E). The 124 model series was further developed over the following years and the range of types was expanded.

And thus, from 1985, the brand from Stuttgart offered the automatically engaging 4MATIC four-wheel drive for the six-cylinder types. It was a part of the Mercedes-Benz driving dynamics concept, which also included automatic locking differential (ASD) and acceleration skid control (ASR). The previous types with prechamber diesel engines were supplemented in 1987 with an exhaust turbocharger in the 300 D Turbo. From September 1986 all vehicles with petrol engines included a controlled catalytic converter as standard.

The 124 model series is an exceptionally versatile generation of the upper executive segment of Mercedes-Benz: on the one hand, saloons and estates proved themselves as taxis, with the chassis being used for patient transport ambulances and hearses. On the other hand, the coupés and cabriolets set standards for sporty luxury in this vehicle segment. The 400 E (205 kW / 279 hp) and 500 E (240 kW / 326 hp) V8 versions as well as the E 60 AMG (280 kW / 381 hp) ultimately positioned the W 124 in the area of absolute high-performance vehicles of their time.

In June 1993 the 124 model series received the name E-Class as part of the new nomenclature. At the same time, the system of model designation was also changed. The 500 E became the E 500, for example, and the 200 D became the E 200 Diesel. In 1995 production of the saloons ended at the Sindelfingen plant and in 1996 the manufacture of parts kits was also phased out (completely knocked down, ckd). In eleven years 2,213,167 saloons were built, resulting in a total of 2,737,860 vehicles of the 124 model series – making it the most successful E-Class by Mercedes-Benz.

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Captions

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Mercedes-Benz E 200 of the 124 model series from 1995. Vehicle from the current portfolio of ALL TIME STARS, the brand's own vehicle dealer of Mercedes-Benz Classic.

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Design drawing from the development process of the Mercedes-Benz 124 model series. Reproduction from 1984.

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Design development of the Mercedes-Benz 124 model series, work on models at a scale of 1:5.

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Mercedes-Benz saloon of the 124 model series in a wind tunnel. Photo from 1984.

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Test for passive safety: After a crash test of the Mercedes-Benz 124 model series it can be seen how the rigid passenger cell keeps its shape, whilst the front and rear absorb and remove the kinetic energy of the accident with defined deformation.

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Photo from 1985 with the type plate of the Mercedes-Benz 124 model series. Left to right: 200 D, 250 D, 300 D, 200, 230 E, 260 E and 300 E.

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Mercedes-Benz 200 D of the 124 model series. Exterior photo from 1986.

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Mercedes-Benz 300 E of the 124 model series. Exterior photo from 1984.

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Mercedes-Benz saloon of the 124 model series. Interior photo from 1984.

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Body variants of the Mercedes-Benz 124 model series: coupé, saloon and estate (from front to rear). Photo from 1987.

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Mercedes-Benz saloon of the 124 model series with automatically engaging 4MATIC four-wheel drive.

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Automatically engaging 4MATIC four-wheel drive in a saloon of the Mercedes-Benz 124 model series. Graphic from 1986.

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The 100th birthday of the car is celebrated in Stuttgart in 1986 with a party in the Hanns-Martin-Schleyer-Halle. Pictured is a Mercedes-Benz 300 E Saloon of the 124 model series.

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Mercedes-Benz saloon of the 124 model series as a taxi at Stuttgart's main station. Photo from 1987.

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Mercedes-Benz coupé of the 124 model series. Photo from 1987.

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Mercedes-Benz cabriolet of the 124 model series. Photo from 1993.

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Mercedes-Benz 500 E (W 124). Photo from 1990.