


CLASSIC DRIVER



1958 Mercedes-Benz 300 SL - Roadster

Roadster

Lot sold	USD 0	Zustand	Gebraucht
Baujahr	1958	Standort	
Losnummer	163	Außenfarbe	Rot
		Automobiltyp	Sonstige

Beschreibung

- Formerly of the Blackhawk Collection
- Fire Engine Red over Cognac leather; matching Cognac luggage
- One of just 324 examples produced for the model year
- Benefits from a previous restoration; acquired by the consignor in 2003

At the 1957 Geneva Motor Show, Mercedes-Benz introduced a convertible version of the celebrated 300 SL coupe "Gullwing," the 300 SL Roadster. In an early suggestion of the increasing focus the manufacturer would place on luxury cars over the ensuing decades, the new Roadster was, above all, a more refined car than its winged predecessor.

There was no denying the 300 SL's mechanical performance, which had decidedly improved in the Roadster; the updated six-cylinder engine received the competition camshaft used in the NSL racing coupes—good for a boost of 20 horsepower. Handling also benefited from a revised rear suspension with a lower axle pivot-point, minimizing the tendency for oversteer. Despite the added weight of chassis reinforcement required by an open model, the Roadster was every bit the performance car that the Gullwing had proven itself to be.

The Roadster's overwhelmingly luxurious character, however, generally obscured its performance capabilities. With a convertible top, the model was never subject to the uncomfortably hot cabin that bedeviled the coupe, and the Roadster's redesigned tube frame afforded lower door sills, facilitating far easier access than the Gullwing's challenging ingress and egress.

The new 300 SL was an improvement on the Gullwing in nearly every capacity, at least from a road-

going perspective, and it has since evolved into one of Stuttgart's most collectible models, a darling of both concours fields and vintage rallies.

Production of the roadster continued until early 1963, and with 1,858 built, it proved even more popular than its gull-winged predecessor. Yet it still remained exclusive enough among the well-to-do: Like the earlier coupe, it was, in its day, the car in which to see and be seen, and it was favored by celebrities, racing drivers, and just about anyone who appreciated fine machinery...and who also had the bank account to acquire it. Today the 300 SL still carries with it an indelible aura of speed, power, and sophisticated style. It is fast enough for the sports-car lover yet comfortable enough for those who demand luxury, and it has remained for nearly 60 years as one of the most desirable automobiles in the world.

According to its Mercedes-Benz trim tag, this particular 300 SL Roadster was originally provided in the reserved shade of blue gray and delivered new to the United States. The pinnacle of the Mercedes-Benz catalog with a price and exclusivity to match, just 324 topless examples of the 300 SL were produced for the model year.

While its earlier history is unknown, this 300 SL Roadster was previously acquired by the esteemed collector Don Williams for inclusion to his "Blackhawk Collection" and museum. Thereafter sold to the consignor in 2003, the car is presented today wearing much of the finishes provided by a complete restoration executed during the late 1990s. The exterior has been clad in the period-correct shade of Fire Engine Red over a neatly trimmed cognac leather interior; the 300 SL's ever-desirable luggage has also been trimmed to match this handsome shade. Additional details which enrich the accurate presentation of this roadster include the Becker Mexico radio and set of color-matched steel wheels shod in wide whitewall tires.

This exemplary 300 SL Roadster is now accompanied by its matching luggage, tool roll, and owner's manual. Far from a relic, the 300 SL's masterful blend of exquisite style and remarkable engineering—and, when it comes to the Roadster in particular, its ease of use—make it an excellent, robust, and highly sought companion for long-distance touring at high speeds. For all these reasons and more, it is hard to imagine the appeal of the model fading for the foreseeable future. To view this car and others currently consigned to this auction, please visit the RM website at rmsothebys.com/en/auctions/am21.

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