

CLASSIC DRIVER

Mercedes-Benz SL 'Pagoda'



Mercedes might refer to its 1960s SL by the sober model title of W113, but the motoring world recognises the Paul Bracq-styled roadster as a 'Pagoda', so named after its concave-shaped hard top.

The well-proportioned, all-new SL replaced both the slightly dowdy 190 SL and the magnificent 300 SL Roadster, a car too expensive for all but the world's super-rich.

The first 230 SL was introduced at the March 1963 Geneva Motor Show. Production carried on until 1971.

Fuel-injected, SOHC six-cylinder engines came as standard, with the first cars' 2,308cc (230 SL) motors replaced early in 1967 with a 2,496cc (250 SL) version and finally, in late 1967, a 280 SL was in the catalogue. The latter's 2,778cc engine finally gave the elegant car a little more 'go'.





Most commonly fitted with a 4-speed automatic gearbox (four- and five-speed manuals were alternatives at various stages in the car's life), the Pagoda could never be considered a sports car in the truest sense. However, it was rallied and a well-driven example could keep up with many ostensibly much faster GTs.

Mercedes' formidable works rally driver Eugen Böhringer won the 6,600km 1963 Spa-Sofia-Liège Rally in a specially prepared 230 SL, for example.





Pagoda ownership was more about understated style and long-distance holidaying. A very popular model in the USA, no golf or country club car park was complete without at least one Pagoda. US models, by the way, were distinguished by their different headlamp treatment and side reflectors, among other detailed changes.

In today's climate of ever-increasing asset values, the Pagoda is becoming better appreciated, and values for 'good' cars have risen.



No, the performance is not strong, and the chances are that the best available car will have an automatic gearbox.

But for timeless looks, solid German engineering and a definite sense of 60s style, the Pagoda has a lot going for it. And with nigh-on 50,000 built over nine years, if you don't find the perfect one straight away, relax: another will be along very soon.

Related Links

This 1971 280 SL is offered for sale by Classic Driver dealer E. Thiesen Berlin GmbH. You can see its full specification in the [Classic Driver Marketplace](#).

Other 'Pagodas' are listed in the [Classic Driver Marketplace](#).

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