
Porsche 356 'Continental': A short story about a well-known name

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Yes, Porsche, too, built a 'Continental'. It was way back in the mid-1950s and was a special version of the 'pre-A' 356, specifically aimed at the North American market. The Ford Motor Company, however, was none too pleased...

Like so many successful marketing ideas of the time, it came from the German company's North American importer, Max Hoffman (the man who also brought the world the 356 Speedster and the Mercedes 300SL 'Gullwing').

As a means of clearing stock of soon-to-be-outdated 356 coupés and convertibles, he suggested naming them 'Continental', to emphasise the international, sophisticated European nature of the advanced sports cars from Zuffenhausen.

All Continental-badged cars were the top-model, 1500cc version, with many extras.

The chrome badge was in Porsche's characteristic script, set on the top of each front wing. The cars were well equipped, too – a foretaste of special editions from all manufacturers in years to come.

Very few of these special 356s were built, though, as Ford was none too keen on Lincoln's well-known 'Continental' name being applied to any other car. Legal proceedings, settled in favour of the Blue Oval, meant that only a handful of 356 Continentals were produced. For 1956 the name changed to 'European'. This example, a 1955 pre-A 356 Cabriolet, is a genuine Continental and the concours-ready car is in its original colour scheme of Terra Cotta with Yellow Earth interior – a combination specified by its first owner, Robert Jackson.

The car, available for sale at Classic Driver dealer Driver Source, has been the subject of the most meticulous restoration. Concours- and event-ready, it carries a 21st Century price of USD 379,000.

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