
1957 Mercedes-Benz 300 SL - Roadster

Roadster

Lot sold	USD 0	Condition	Used
Year of manufacture	1957	Location	
Lot number	232	Exterior colour	Red
		Car type	Other

Description

Estimate:

\$1,100,000 - \$1,200,000

- Fitted with its original engine as verified by its Mercedes-Benz Classic Certificate
- Also retains its matching numbers gearbox, differential, steering box, and left and right front axles
- Known ownership history from new
- One of just 1,858 roadsters produced
- Includes fitted luggage and both hard and soft tops

The original Mercedes-Benz 300 SL was created for the 1952 season to test the waters prior to Mercedes-Benz making a full-scale return to racing competition. It was merely a placeholder until the firm's 1954 Grand Prix car was completed. To deem this exercise successful is an understatement – a second and fourth at the Mille Miglia; first and second at LeMans and the Nurburgring; the same in the Carrera Panamericana; and one-two-three at Bern.

Mercedes-Benz had no intentions of putting the car into production, but U.S. importer Max Hoffman had ideas of his own. Hoffman convinced Daimler-Benz to offer a production model by ordering 1,000 of them to-be-built and sent to the United States. Since the competition model had been sourced from off-the-shelf parts of Mercedes-Benz's 300-series saloon cars, it seemed relatively easy for the manufacturer to honor his request. The resulting car however, was exceedingly complex mechanically and not really designed for volume production. Nonetheless, thanks to the persistence

(and clout) of Hoffman, M-B proceeded with limited production.

The 300 SL became the first Mercedes to be introduced in the United States before it was shown in Germany. Unveiled in New York on February 6, 1954, it took the automotive world by storm. The SL or "super light" moniker reflected the pioneering use of multi-tube space frame construction. It also featured fully-independent suspension in addition to its 240 bhp 2,996 cc straight six with dry sump lubrication and Bosch mechanical fuel-injection (the first production car to do so); the motor inclined to the side in order to reduce the height of the bonnet. Power was delivered through a four-speed manual gearbox giving the car a 150mph top speed and 0-60 mph time of just 8.8 seconds; making it the fastest production automobile of its time. The result was a car that you could buy in New York City in 1954 for a princely sum of \$6,820.00 and cruise to your weekend home in Connecticut at top speed, should you dare.

The spectacular Mercedes-Benz 300 SL Gullwing remained in production for three years (through 1957), during which just 1,400 cars - not including racers and prototypes - were built largely by-hand in Stuttgart's highest luxury car traditions. Despite the low volume, Daimler-Benz was sufficiently convinced of the value of an expensive sports car as part of its model lineup to develop an improved version.

U. S. importer Max Hoffman is claimed as being largely responsible for Mercedes' decision to build a roadster version of the gullwing coupe. About 80 percent of production was delivered to the United States and Hoffman was convinced his pampered customers wanted a bit more comfort, a larger trunk, and the open-air driving experience a convertible afforded. Whether or not Hoffman prompted the decision, the roadster made its first appearance in the spring of 1957 at the Geneva Motor Show. By the end of the year, the final 70 gullwing coupes and the first 618 roadsters produced came off the assembly line. More importantly, it established a long history of high-performance two-seat convertibles as part of the Mercedes-Benz hierarchy. Roadster production ended on February 8, 1963 after 1,858 were produced.

This beautiful 300 SL has known history from new and its history is highlighted in the Gullwing Group Roadster Registry. It was delivered new to the United States on October 15, 1957, originally in DB 050 White over DB 333 blue leather along with a folding fabric top in 896 dark blue. As a U.S. delivery car, it retains its proper U.S.-spec headlights with separate turn indicators, bumper guards, and a speedometer registering in miles per hour. A correct factory hardtop finished to match the body color and fitted luggage as originally specified are also included; along with a service manual, M-B Classic documentation, and all books and records. The Becker Mexico radio originally ordered with the car, is retained, too.

Philip C. Kennedy of Las Vegas, Nevada owned the car for many years. Under his ownership, the 300 SL received a comprehensive body-on restoration of the highest standards which included body, chrome, trim, leather, upholstery, engine, and a complete mechanical overhaul. All of this work is documented and included in a large file to remain with the vehicle. It is available for inspection upon request. Kennedy became ill and sold the roadster for a then-record sum to a well-known dealer/collector during which time a major service was completed and a new clutch installed. During subsequent ownership, the vehicle participated in road rally events and more recently, was serviced and attended to by David Grant of David Grant, Ltd. in order to maintain its high standards, both mechanically and cosmetically.

Today, finished in a stunning combination of red over black leather along with a contrasting black convertible roof and chrome wheels, this Mercedes-Benz continues to delight. Recently, all fluids have been changed and the front and rear bumpers re-chromed. Both the paint and interior are described as in excellent condition and everything works as intended. The consigner notes that the 300 SL starts easily and drives great and is the perfect example to drive and enjoy as Mercedes-Benz intended. To view this car and others currently consigned to this auction, please visit the RM website at rmsothebys.com/en/auctions/mo20.

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