


1964 Mercedes-Benz 300 SL - Roadster

Roadster

- Lot sold USD 0
- **Year of manufacture** 1964
- **Lot number** 115
- **Condition** Used
- **Location** 
- **Exterior colour** Other
- **Car type** Other
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Description

- Believed to be the third-to-last 300 SL Roadster delivered; one of only three examples invoiced in 1964
- One of 218 late-production examples equipped with disc brakes and an alloy engine block; European-specified car with European-style headlamp lenses and rare stone guards
- Comprehensive two-year restoration in its factory colors completed by the Legendary Classic Center of Costa Mesa, California in 2017
- Mildly driven example displaying 80,342 km (~49,923 mi) at time of cataloguing; benefits from a 42-year period of single ownership
- Offered with owner's manual, toolkit, and factory hardtop; documented with factory build card copy and restoration photos

When Mercedes-Benz introduced the 300 SL Roadster in 1957, the new model addressed many of the perceived shortcomings of the outgoing 300 SL Gullwing. Primarily, a redesign of the Gullwing's tube frame allowed for the use of conventional doors, which improved the ease of ingress and egress. This refinement also allowed for the implementation of standard wind-up windows, significantly improving cabin comfort.

The unforgiving high-pivot swing-axle geometry of the Gullwing coupe was discarded in favor of a low-pivot swing-axle rear suspension. This configuration utilized a coil spring mounted transversely above the differential that was linked to the axles by vertical struts, serving to minimize oversteer. The frame and suspension redesign also facilitated the installation of softer coil springs, which provided the Roadsters with a more comfortable ride quality without compromising handling. The highly developed inline-six-cylinder engine was standard-equipped with the sport camshaft that had been so effective in the racing alloy-bodied Gullwings, increasing horsepower by 25.

In 1961 four-wheel disc brakes became standard equipment, improving the 300 SL's stopping capabilities and bringing the model in line with concurrent mechanical advancements at Ferrari. A year later the engines were updated with aluminum alloy blocks, helping to minimize weight. Just 218 Roadsters were factory-equipped with disc brakes and alloy engine blocks, making these cars the apogee of 300 SL development—and a rarity in the bargain.

Claiming a two-year restoration conducted by the Legendary Classic Center of Costa Mesa, California, this beautiful 300 SL Roadster is one of the finest examples offered in recent memory. As confirmed by a factory data card (Fahrzeug-daten) dated 24 February 1964, a copy of which is on file, chassis number 003207 was originally finished in gray-blue (DB 166) paint, upholstered with red leather, and equipped with a black hardtop. Specified for the European market, the 300 SL was fitted with the attractive one-piece headlamp lenses, which were then protected with rare factory stone-guard mesh covers. Like most late-production roadsters, the car was equipped with paint-matched "sport" wheels finished in chrome with alloy rims.

While the 300 SL's chassis number places it as about the 50th-to-last car in numerical sequence, the Roadster was not finished until February 1964, giving it the distinction of being one of just three examples invoiced that year; it is believed to be the third-to-last car to leave the factory. The Gullwing Group's Roadster Registry shows the car being shipped to Iran and it is strongly believed that it was destined for the Shah of Iran, as he was a major shareholder of Mercedes-Benz and an avid collector of 300 SLs.

While specific details of the Mercedes-Benz's early history in Iran are currently unknown, we can conjecture what a glamorous life it may have led, as a period photograph depicts the Shah of Iran standing next to the Roadster on a European tarmac, with the tail section of a Royal Dutch Airlines Lockheed Constellation in the background.

Eventually finding its way to the United States, the 300 SL was offered for sale in 1971 by a noted Seattle-based marque dealership, and by the end of the year the roadster was purchased by an enthusiast residing in nearby Bellingham, Washington, who dutifully maintained the car while driving it very sparingly.

The 300 SL retained a high degree of originality during the owner's stewardship, experiencing just one repaint during the 1970s, and mechanically left as original as possible, though it appears that the factory-equipped rear axle has been substituted with a correct original unit. In 2013 the car was finally sold to a new owner, a fellow marque aficionado in Seattle, concluding a remarkable period of 42 years of single ownership. At the time the odometer reportedly displayed 80,237 km (49,857 miles), illustrating the modest driving use the car enjoyed over the prior four decades.

The new owner kept the Mercedes-Benz for a short time only before selling it in March 2014, at which point it was acquired by the consignor. As the 300 SL offered an ideal foundation for a ground-up refurbishment, in 2015 the consignor commissioned the Legendary Classic Center to conduct a comprehensive mechanical and cosmetic restoration, with the latter portion performed to match the car's original factory color combination.

Completed in 2017, the meticulous restoration resulted in a stunning state of cosmetic presentation, and the 300 SL has reportedly accrued fewer than 10 miles since. Accompanied by a restored set of fitted luggage and a proper hardtop, chassis number 003207 is also offered with an owner's manual in German, a service book, a Becker radio manual, and what is believed to be an original toolkit.

It should be noted that the alloy engine block retains its original riveted engine number tag, though the engine stamping on the block is found on the back of the engine instead of in the usual location, together with a separate tag that identifies the block as a factory replacement unit. Mercedes-Benz Classic Center has confirmed that the type 198.982 alloy blocks were frequently changed because of an incompatibility with over-sized pistons. Rather than rebuild blocks to accommodate these pistons, the alloy blocks were often swapped out with factory replacement units and then re-stamped, according to factory practice, with the number of the original engine. As a result, it is fairly uncommon to encounter an original block on the alloy-engine Roadsters. However, the presence of the original riveted number tag and the knowledge that this is a factory replacement block speak to the car's high level of authenticity, which rivals that of any other disc-braked, alloy-engined Roadster.

Displaying 80,341 km (~49,923 miles) at the time of cataloguing, claiming a 42-year period of single ownership, and correctly restored by Legendary Classic Center in the original factory color combination, this entrancing 300 SL Roadster shines as a particularly recognizable, last-of-the-breed example. It is further distinguished by its rare build attributes, as one of the 218 examples that were factory-equipped with disc brakes and an alloy engine block. It remains today, as it was then, a stellar example of the apogee of 300 SL development.

Please note that there is only one owner's manual, and it is in German.

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