

Porsche 1958 356A Speedster 1.6 & 1997 Boxster 2.5

Published: 22nd August 2019 By: Glen Smale

Online version: <https://www.porscheroadandrace.com/porsche-1958-356a-speedster-1-6-1997-boxster-2-5/>



A 1997 Porsche Boxster (left) and a 1958 Porsche 356 A Speedster (right)

The day dawned bright and clear with little sign of any clouds, a typical Highveld winter's day. After an early morning meeting for coffee, the small group consisting of two owner/drivers, a journalist (myself), a photographer and support crew, headed north-west from Johannesburg. The convoy included a 1958 356A Speedster 1.6-litre, a (then) new 1997 Boxster 2.5-litre and our support pick-up that served as the photographer's vehicle.

The route took us out towards Pelindaba (South Africa's main nuclear research centre), near the Hartbeespoort Dam, along winding roads with rocky outcrops on either side which kept the driver's attention fully focused on the road. With the Boxster leading the way and the Speedster close on its tail, our 6-cylinder 4x4 support vehicle brought up the rear at an ever-increasing distance.

While losing a bit of ground on pull-away, the Speedster otherwise sat very close to the Boxster's tail through the twisty bits, and the ride in the older car was exhilarating on all fronts. The then 40-year old unrestored Speedster, stuck to the tarmac like glue, providing an extremely firm ride with good seat support. In fact, the Speedster's roadholding seemed even greater as the speeds rose, crouching low into the corners. The driver of the Boxster tried to give the older car the slip through the tight sections of country road, only to find the Speedster still right on his tail!

Year	Model	Engine	Output	Production	Price
1958	356A Speedster	1582 cc	60 bhp	2910 units	DM 11,500
1997	Boxster	2480 cc	204 bhp	55,705 units	DM 78,000

With a suitable spot selected, we offloaded some camera gear along with those of us not needed for the rolling photo shoot. Repeated tours up and down this stretch of road with a photographer hanging precariously out of the back of the pick-up must have left some passing motorists somewhat alarmed, but that is the way it is done. Then came the static shots, which saw our intrepid snapper standing atop a ladder in a farmer's cabbage field. Fortunately, the farmer was nowhere to be found, and no damage was done.



Snapped - A 1997 Porsche Boxster (left) and a 1958 Porsche 356 A Speedster (right) photographed from the cabbage patch with the Magaliesberg mountains in the background. Sorry Mr. Farmer, but we didn't damage anything, promise!

Parked side by side, it was amazing to see the difference in actual size between these two classics. With a rich race pedigree to draw from, added to the design aids, advanced production processes and advanced technology of today's car manufacturers, the resultant Boxster was a stunningly brave exercise. The Boxster, then, was a genuine attempt by Porsche to recapture the imagination of the sports car market, offering a blend of performance, handling, comfort and safety.

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