

## On Auction: The Perfect Porsche

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The Porsche 550 RS Spyder was a strikingly simple design

An exceptionally original, never restored, beautifully preserved 1956 Porsche 550RS Spyder, estimated at £4.7-6.2 million has been announced for the Bonhams Goodwood Revival Sale, taking place on 10 September in Chichester, West Sussex.

“The 1956 Porsche 550RS Spyder offered is so original, that you could travel back in time 60 years and find it in much the same condition. It’s exactly how a 550 would have looked, smelt and felt like when James Dean famously purchased his example back in 1955. Chassis number 550 0090 hasn’t been thrashed around, it’s been well looked after, and even won the FIVA award for originality at Pebble Beach Concours d’Elegance in 2010 - the perfect Porsche. A real time warp, and likely the last one left in such excellent, original condition.”

Launched in 1953 at the Paris Auto Show, the lightweight roadster was the first true competition car to come from the Stuttgart marque. Just ninety 550s were built, each featuring a super lightweight aluminium body, with two seats and an open-top. It looked incredible on the road, and even more so at speed on the track.

Throughout the 1950s, the Porsche 550 was one of motor sport's most dominant race cars, out-performing almost all other models in its class.

American monthly magazine, 'Road & Track', said of the model: "The 550 had full road equipment, with lights and so forth, and a top, and enough stamina and ground clearance to compete in rallies - which it did. The bodywork and weather gear qualified the 550 for international sports car races - and Hans Herrmann took first in class and sixth overall in the 550's first race, the 1954 Mille Miglia.... Herrmann was third overall in that year's Carrera Pan Americana. There were 75 cars with bigger engines in that race, and Herrmann beat 73 of them..."



The view many rivals would have seen of the Porsche 550 RS Spyder



Streamlined shape of the Porsche 550 RS

The cars were built by Porsche in exclusive numbers. In the US, the model did not qualify as a production sports car, even with its top and road equipment. There weren't enough of them to be a real road car, according to the governing SCCA (Sports Car Club of America). Unofficially, the same rule makers would later cheerfully confess they kept the Porsche 550s out to give other makes a

Spyder

chance!

These little Porsches were extremely quick in a straight line - having a claimed top speed of some 220km/h - 137mph - and accelerating from 0-100km/h - 62mph - in less than 10 seconds - spectacular indeed with such a small capacity engine in the early 1950s.

The 550 is an icon of 1950s sports car design. It stands today as one of the most collectable cars produced by the Stuttgart marque, with examples appearing in only the finest collections around the world.



Porsche 550 RS Spyder dash



Porsche 550 RS Spyder interior

*Words and photos courtesy of Bonhams*

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