

BMW history

BMW 507



Model history

After a difficult post-war start in the automotive industry, BMW surprised everyone by launching a large premium car in 1951, just three years after resuming production. The BMW 501 incorporated several technical features from before 1939 and though the vehicle created publicity for BMW, it was unable to contribute to the company's financial wellbeing.

A second model with a V8 engine, the 502 was an even more impressive creation. Several versions were available from 1954, but none sold well enough to make a substantial profit for BMW. Bubble cars like the Isetta did much to balance the company's books: the money they brought in was used to finance production of the loss-making larger automobiles.

Despite these financial difficulties, once BMW had established its course, the company kept its sights firmly fixed on its ambitions. Prompted by suggestions from its US importer, BMW began the construction of a sportier version of the 502 in 1954: this model was primarily intended for well-off clients abroad. The designer was no less a person than Albrecht Goertz, an aristocrat then living in New York and a former pupil of celebrated industrial designer Raymond Loewy.

In New York, Goertz prepared several sketches of sports car for the BMW board of directors. These sketches were the basis for the design of the 507, a truly exceptional roadster. From a technical standpoint, the chassis which carried this automobile was essentially that of the 502 3.2 Liter Super but 35.5 cm shorter, while greater compression allowed the engine to up its strength from 140 to 150 hp. The car made its debut in New York in mid 1955. Although beautiful to look at, it did not become as popular in the USA as originally hoped: compared to some other roadsters, the BMW 507 lacked sufficient power.

Production ceased in early 1959, by which time only 254 cars had been built. BMW offered three different rear axle transmission ratios with speeds ranging from 190 to 220 km/h. As with the BMW 503, BMW created a second version of the 507. Launched in 1957, this second series was immediately recognisable thanks to its fuel tank flap on the car's right-hand rear flank. This smaller tank held 65 instead of 110 litres and was located under the floor of the boot, not behind the rear seats. The instrument panel was different as well: it was larger and provided more space for the radio. Thought by many to be the most beautiful BMWs ever made, most of these rare and exclusive sports cars have survived to this day.

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Special models

In total, only two BMW 507 chassis were used for special models. The American designer Raymond Loewy acquired one of them in 1957; Loewy taught the designer of the 507, Albrecht Goertz. He created an exceptional, modern two-seater coupé body for this chassis. The body was made out of synthetic materials by the French company Pichon et Parat. Loewy drove this car for a few years and then donated it to a museum. A second 507 chassis was acquired by the Italian bodyshell makers Michelotti in 1958. Designer Giovanni Michelotti produced sketches of an angular roadster body with a hardtop and had these designs made by Vignale. Not entirely dissimilar to a Triumph TR 4 in looks, this prototype premiered at the 1959 Turin motor show. It remained a once-off and has survived to this day.

Current information

**Please contact this
address if you would
like to find out more:**

BMW V8-Club
c/o Erich Reckel
Wendenstr. 3
37073 Göttingen
Germany
Tel: +49 551 484282
Fax: +49 551 58548

**Copies of technical
literature are available
from:**

BMW Veteranen-Club Deutschland e.V.
Andreas Pytel
Dilbornstr. 43
47804 Krefeld
Germany
Tel: +49 2151 711933
Fax: +49 2151 720357

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Data sheet

Manufactured from	1956 - 59
Total no. produced	254 (chassis)
Cost at production start	DM 26,500; hardtop: DM 1,500

Engine	Type	V8
	Bore x stroke in mm	82 x 75
	Displacement in ccm	3168
	Fuel induction	2 Zenith 32 NDIX double carburettors
	Compression	1 : 7.8
	Valves	Overhead, central camshaft
	Power in hp/rpm	150/5000; sports engine for the USA: 165/5800

Transmission	Clutch	Single-plate dry clutch
	Transmission	Four-speed floor shift, fully synchronised
	Gear ratios	1st gear 1 : 3.776
		2nd gear 1 : 2.353
		3rd gear 1 : 1.490
		4th gear 1 : 1.00
		Reverse 1 : 5.377
	Sports transmission:	
	Gear ratios	1st gear 1 : 3.540
		2nd gear 1 : 2.202
		3rd gear 1 : 1.395
		4th gear 1 : 1.00
		Reverse 1 : 5.03
	Drive ratio	1 : 3.7 (series) / 1 : 3.42 / 1 : 3.9

Electrical system	Generator	200 W
	Battery	12 V 56 Ah
	Spark plugs	Bosch W 24 RT 1 or Beru E 240/14 (with radio)

Chassis	Bodyshell / chassis	Fully-cladded perimeter frame with tubular crossmembers
	Front wheel suspension	Individual suspension with 2 A arms and stabilisers
	Rear wheel suspension	Banjo axle on suspension levers and track bar
	Front brakes	Hydraulic duplex brake with servo
	Diameter of front brakes in mm	284
	Rear brakes	Hydraulic simplex brake with servo
	Diameter of rear brakes in mm	284
	Wheel rims	4.5 E x 16
	Tyres	6.00 - 16

Dimensions and weight	Wheelbase in mm	2480
	Front / rear tyre tread in mm	1445/1425
	Length x width x height in mm	4380 x 1650 x 1260
	Unloaded weight	1220 kg
	Permitted total weight	1500 kg
	Average fuel consumption per 100 km	17 l
	Top speed in km/h	190 - 220