

1910 BENZ 'PRINZ HEINRICH WAGEN'

Built for Germany's prestigious Prinz Heinrich Race, this 1910 Benz stands as both an extraordinary example of pioneering engineering and a reminder of the origins of one of motoring's most important names. Its display marks the centenary of Mercedes-Benz, celebrating the 1926 merger of Benz & Cie. with Daimler-Motoren-Gesellschaft – an event that united two of the earliest automotive pioneers to create the Mercedes-Benz marque.

The significance of the Benz name was already firmly established decades earlier. In 1886, Karl Benz patented the Benz Patent-Motorwagen, widely recognised as the world's first practical automobile, laying the foundation for the modern motor industry. By 1910, Benz & Cie. had become one of Europe's leading manufacturers, using motorsport to demonstrate innovation, performance and reliability.

The Prinz Heinrich Race, founded in 1908 by Prince Heinrich of Prussia, challenged manufacturers to build four-seat touring cars that combined speed with endurance. For the 1910 event, Benz entered ten specially developed cars featuring technology far ahead of their rivals.

One of those ten, the car in front of you featured cardan drive, an enclosed shaft-drive system that replaced the exposed chains common at the time. Cleaner, smoother and more reliable, it represented a major leap toward the drivetrains used in modern automobiles. Combined with dual ignition, four-valve-per-cylinder technology and an aerodynamically streamlined body, this Benz was one of the most advanced touring cars of its era.

Driven by Carl Neumaier, it finished 11th overall in the 1910 race, before competing later that year in the Czar Nicholas Tour in Russia. One of only two survivors and recently faithfully restored by Mercedes-Benz Classic, this Benz stands as a fitting tribute to the engineering heritage that gave rise to Mercedes-Benz.

Brief Technical Specification

Engine: inline four-cylinder, 5710 cc Top speed: 75 mph approx
Power: 80 hp

On display Tuesday 28 April to Monday 11 May, courtesy of Mercedes-Benz Heritage.
For more information about the car, please see the cabinet outside the library on the first floor.