

LUXURY WITHOUT EQUAL

Mercedes-Maybach S-Class & Mercedes-Benz S-Class

True to its *Sonderklasse* heritage, the range that defined Mercedes-Benz as the ultimate luxury motoring brand, now stands even taller as the ultimate luxury limousine.



Mercedes-Benz is the proud custodian of a new luxury automobile. One that has few rivals in its class, and even fewer equals. Although it has been available to purchase since 2021, the official unveiling included a surprise showing of an even more exquisite sample of automotive engineering during the launch event.

Starting from The Table Bay Hotel in the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront in Cape Town, the official local introduction of the Mercedes-Benz S-Class, as well as the latest *über*-luxurious Mercedes-Maybach models, included a presentation and dinner at a R300 million Clifton mansion, a visit to delightful Franschhoek, and a delectable lunch at La Petite Colombe in Leeu Estate.

The Mercedes-Maybach S680 4Matic Edition 100, unveiled and showcased at the hotel entrance, garnered a lot of attention, but being the single one allocated to South Africa out of 100 produced, it was there for display purposes only, as it will be auctioned to the highest bidder. All

monies received over and above will be donated to charity.

THE MAYBACH CHRONICLES

“What is good must also be beautiful.” This was the credo of Wilhelm and Karl Maybach at the beginning of the 20th century. Father and son were regarded as gifted designers, trailblazers of automotive luxury, and pioneers in matters of style. With this simple-sounding formula, they created highly complex things: perfection and craftsmanship paired with innovation.

This is what the name Maybach stands for to this day. Although rooted in aircraft engine building, Maybach-Motorenbau GmbH first built an experimental car in 1919 and introduced it as a production model in 1921. Between 1921 and 1940, the company produced a variety of opulent vehicles, now regarded as classics, but after WWII ended, the company never returned to creating luxury automobiles, until Daimler-Benz purchased it in 1960.

Post-1960, the company mainly produced special editions of S-Class Mercedes cars in the W108 and W116 ranges, all virtually hand-built. Decades

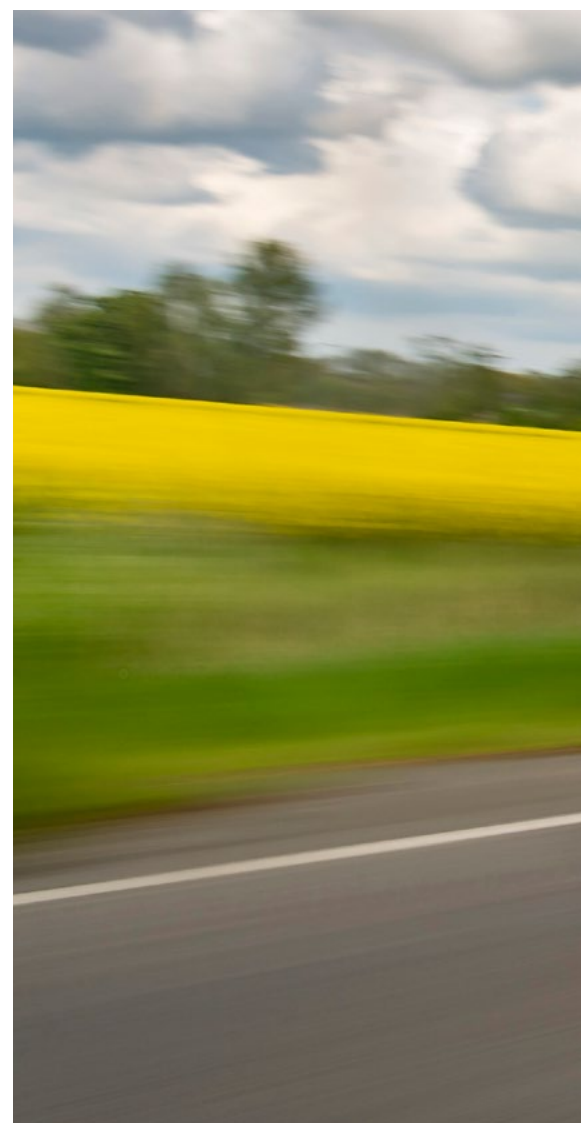




include a noise-insulated first-class rear compartment with Burmester 4D surround sound, heat and massage functions for the seats and high-tech screens for infotainment.

Compared to the long-wheelbase S-Class, the Maybach has a 180 mm longer wheelbase, and is equipped with all-wheel drive for the first time. While it represents ultimate sophistication and quintessential luxury, the S680 4Matic Edition 100 is fluently fast as well.

Endowed with the six-litre V12 engine (450kW and a colossal 900Nm of torque), the big saloon can reach 100km/h from standstill in 4.5 seconds and a top speed governed



later, Mercedes re-introduced the Maybach brand as an ultra-luxury vehicle concept at the 1997 Tokyo Motor Show. Two variants were introduced - a 5.7-metre and a 6.2-metre version - with a 57 S version joining the line-up in 2005.

Powered by a 6.0-litre V12 bi-turbo engine producing 450 kW and 1,000 Nm of torque, not even the enhanced Maybach saloon could save the brand from imminent demise. Weak sales, and the economic crash of 2008, sucked the last dregs of life from this audacious luxury vehicle project.

The Maybach nameplate was discontinued in 2012, with the last vehicle rolling off the production line on 17 December. However, in November 2014, Daimler announced the revival of Maybach as a sub-brand of the Mercedes-Benz S-Class (W222), positioned as an upscale version akin to the sportier Mercedes-AMG brand.

In anticipation of its April 2015 launch, the flagship Mercedes-Maybach S600 was unveiled in Los Angeles, United States, Guangzhou, China, and the production model at the 2015 Geneva Motor Show. Now recognised alongside its S-Class siblings, Mercedes-Maybach soon after unveiled its top-class GLS SUV, followed by the W223 Maybach S-Class.

MERCEDES-MAYBACH EDITION 100

To mark its centennial last year, Mercedes-Maybach presented special editions of the current S-Class and GLS models, each limited to 100 units (it is not clear if a GLS Edition 100 could find its way here, but it seems unlikely). The Edition 100 models were made available to dealers from the beginning of this year.

Characteristic Maybach hallmarks include the impressive radiator grille bearing the brand emblem, but the special S-Class and GLS models are distinguished by hand-painted two tones colours - high-tech silver and nautical blue - and feature a special leather interior in designo crystal white and silver-grey pearl.

The brand logo with Edition 100 inscription adorns the C-pillar (S-Class) or D-pillar (GLS), various stowage compartments and the illuminated panels in the interior, as well as the hub caps. The forged wheels of the GLS and the wheels of the S-Class also shine in a new grey finish.

A car cover with the iconic double M and a handmade case of soft crystal white or black leather further underline the exclusivity of the edition. Equipment highlights

at 250km/h. Its S580 4Matic sibling is powered by the AMG-derived four-litre V8 with a 48V electrical system, delivering 370kW (15kW electric) and 700Nm (200Nm electric) - affording it very similar performance to the V12 derivative.

However, the new Mercedes-Maybach is all about opulence, with chrome highlights and extravagant trimmings (some may find it overstated), giving it an exquisite elite signature look. This is reflected in the interior, with OLED (Organic Light Emitting Diode) tech, an intelligent MBUX system and a wide selection of the finest materials, refined surfaces and seat variations.

MERCEDES-BENZ S-CLASS

The pursuit of automotive perfection has been the driving force behind the development of the flagship sedan since the first officially designated S-Class - the W116 model - debuted 50 years ago in 1972. Even so, the S-Class legacy stretches back to the Ponton (although only the six-cylinder W180 and W128 lines are considered part of the S-Class chronology), the "Fintail", and W108/109 cars.

As centrepiece of the brand, the new S-Class still has classical sedan lines with a wide track and flush-mounted wheels to give it a muscular look. Compared to its predecessor, the W223 has reduced







character lines on the sides, and cleverly contoured surfaces create special light effects. The front section impresses with its signature, high-status grille, and the rear now has cleaner, more contemporary lines.

Holding connectivity, autonomy and digitisation in high regard, the seventh-generation model comes standard with the latest MBUX operating system running on a 12.8-inch OLED central display, plus a 12.3-inch digital driver display (with 3D optionally available), and its new dash layout is much more attractive, neater and more user-friendly than before.

Similarly, the overhead control panel and learning algorithms now use internal cameras to recognise and anticipate the occupants' intentions. By interpreting hand gestures and head direction, it responded with the corresponding vehicle functions, but it also got confused on occasion.

Active ambient lighting using fibre optics comprised of about 250 LEDs distributed in the vehicle interior as an additional light plane, and the 31-speaker high-end Burmester surround sound system has exciters integrated into the seat backrests. This adds another level to the listening experience - 4D sound - and the perceived sound intensity can be adjusted for each seat.

IN SUMMARY

Our introduction to the new S-Class has reaffirmed that it still lives up to its superior positioning in the Mercedes-Benz line-up. Yes, some may scoff at the muted design that appears deceptively evolutionary, but it tricks the eye at almost every corner - the automatically deploying and recessing door handles and incongruous triangular tail lights being exemplary cases in point.

That said, the expertly crafted curves and traditional design cues eclipse most other models in the Mercedes-Benz stable. And while the family resemblance is pronounced, the new W223 is still the brand benchmark, design icon, and tech thought leader. 