

EBERHARD THIESEN



AUTOMOBILE RARITÄTEN SEIT 1972



# 1937 – Mercedes Benz 540 K Cabriolet A

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# 1937 – Mercedes Benz 540 K Cabriolet A



- Original mileage of only just under 53,000 km since delivery
- One of only 83 Mercedes 540 K Cabriolet A produced and one of less than 50 in this late body style
- Delivered new to Milan with only six known owners in total, in family ownership in Germany for over 40 years from 1980 onwards
- Attractive colour scheme in two-tone green, the excellently preserved original green leather also reflects the low mileage
- Very original vehicle, engine "matching numbers"
- The car was technically overhauled by a Mercedes compressor specialist in 2019 and recently received an extensive inspection



## This Automobile

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According to the Mercedes Benz commission documents, this 540 K Cabriolet A was delivered on 21 October 1937 via the Milan Mercedes Benz dealership. The first owner was Carlo Saporiti, an industrialist in Italy, who had ordered the car at the time for a price of around 22,000 Reichsmark. He kept the sporty convertible until shortly after the Second World War and then bequeathed it to an automobile museum in Milan, where it remained for around 20 years.

In the mid-1960s, the 540 K was acquired by a Swiss banker in Basel, who appreciated the car as a collector's item even then. After all, the vehicle was already almost 30 years old at the time. He then had a comprehensive and professional restoration carried out in 1970, with the exception of the engine. The monumental eight-cylinder in-line engine received an extensive overhaul a few years later in 1978.



A year later in 1979, the supercharged Mercedes moved to its fourth owner (name known) in the south of Germany. It is said that the buyer drove the car from Switzerland to his new home on his own wheels, because he was convinced that cars like this were still intended and made for driving.

In 1980, an article on this vehicle and its history appeared in the renowned German motor magazine "Auto Motor und Sport". It was up for sale again and, at a price of DM 350,000, was described as the most expensive vehicle in Germany at the time. Shortly afterwards, the 540 K passed to its next owner in Germany (name unknown). He and the next generation of his family remained loyal to the car for a whole 40 years !



During this period, the car was used and presented at numerous rallies and events, which is also supported by contemporary photographic material. In the 1980s, for example, it was a participant in the high-calibre 'Monte Carlo Rally for Historic Vehicles' on several occasions, where it impressed amongst similar high-quality collectors' cars.

In 2019, the 540 K underwent a comprehensive partial overhaul at a German specialist workshop for compressor Mercedes, including cylinder head repair and paintwork – and was thus brought up to a very good technical and visual standard. A precise list of the scope of this work for around EUR 80,000 is available. A year later, the car was then sold to its current owner via EBERHARD THIESEN, who integrated it into his pre-war automobile collection. The vehicle recently underwent an extensive inspection.



With its original engine, original bodywork and original leather interior without creases, this Mercedes 540 K Cabriolet A is in extremely good condition for a pre-war car. The low mileage of only just under 53,000 km (!) since delivery also speaks in favour of this vehicle. Among the 500/540 K models, the Cabriolet A is probably the most attractive version and one of the most beautiful German cars of its era. Whether a "Special Roadster" is even more beautiful is in the eye of the observer. However, that one costs around five times as much. With only 83 examples – less than 50 of them in this late variant – a Cabriolet A is also a valuable asset to any collection anyway.

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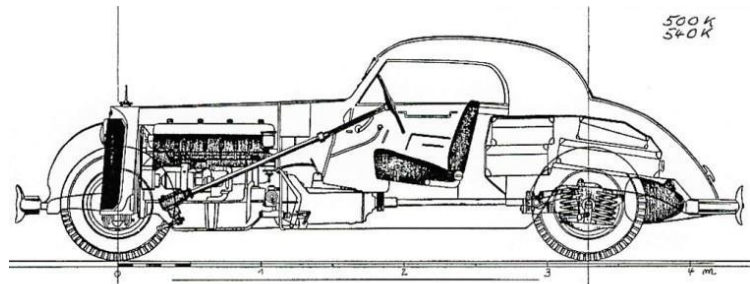




## Model History

Mercedes Benz's discerning clientele soon became dissatisfied with the performance of the 380 model (1933-1934), particularly because they had come to appreciate the large-volume and powerful models of the previous Mercedes "S" family (S, SS and SSK). In 1934, Mercedes quickly developed the subsequent 500 K (W29 series) from the 380, the official designation of which was initially "Type 500 with supercharger".

The new engine with switchable Roots supercharger now had a displacement of 5 litres and the engine output was 100 hp without and 160 hp with the supercharger. The modification of the engine was extensive and also required a new crankshaft. Moreover, a high-speed gearbox with semi-automatic shifting was used for the 500 K transmission. The clutch did not



need to be operated when shifting from third (direct) gear to high gear.

The 500 K made its debut at the International Motor Show (IAMA) in Berlin. The 500 K was available in seven body variants: in addition to the chassis, a 4-door saloon ("Innenlenker"), a 2-seater roadster with two emergency seats, the convertibles A, B and C as well as a 2-door open touring car. In autumn 1934, a very elegant special roadster was added. It was also possible to order special bodies based on a "rolling chassis". The Roadster, Special Roadster, Cabriolet A and "Autobahnkurier" models were built on the chassis with a set-back engine, in which the radiator, engine-transmission unit, steering gear and seats were offset a good 10 cm to the rear.

In April 1936, the engine capacity was increased to 5.4 litres and the power output rose to 115 hp and 180 hp with supercharger. The new 540 K made its official debut at the Paris Motor Show in October. The gearbox described above was modified so that the high-speed gear became the fourth (direct) gear by changing the transmission ratios. In February 1939, the 540 K then received a genuine five-speed gearbox.

The design of the Cabriolet A body in particular changed from the 500 K to the 540 K. The wings were more massive and "fuller", the rear was no longer "boxy" but sloped down to the bumper with a tailgate. In addition, the spare wheels changed position from being mounted at the rear to the front wings on the left and right.

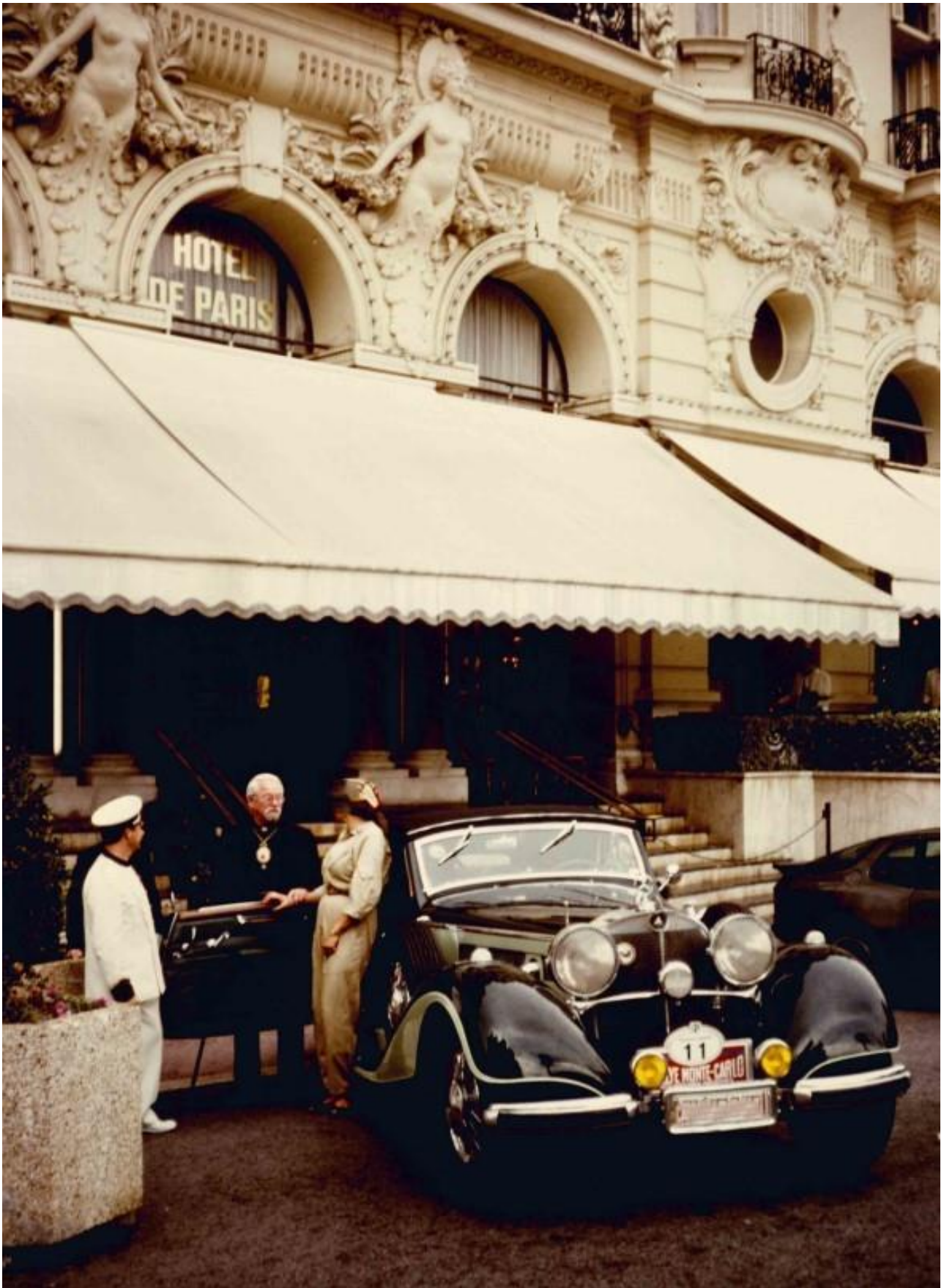
A total of 761 examples of the W29 series were manufactured between 1934 and 1939, of which 342 were 500 K and 419 were 540 K models. Even though the numbers seem like series production, these vehicles were largely customised and handcrafted in a manufactory-like production process. With the bodies for the eight-cylinder cars, the Sindelfingen factory's special car construction achieved a generally recognised level of beauty and finish quality that could hardly be surpassed.

Source: *Mercedes Benz Public Archive*

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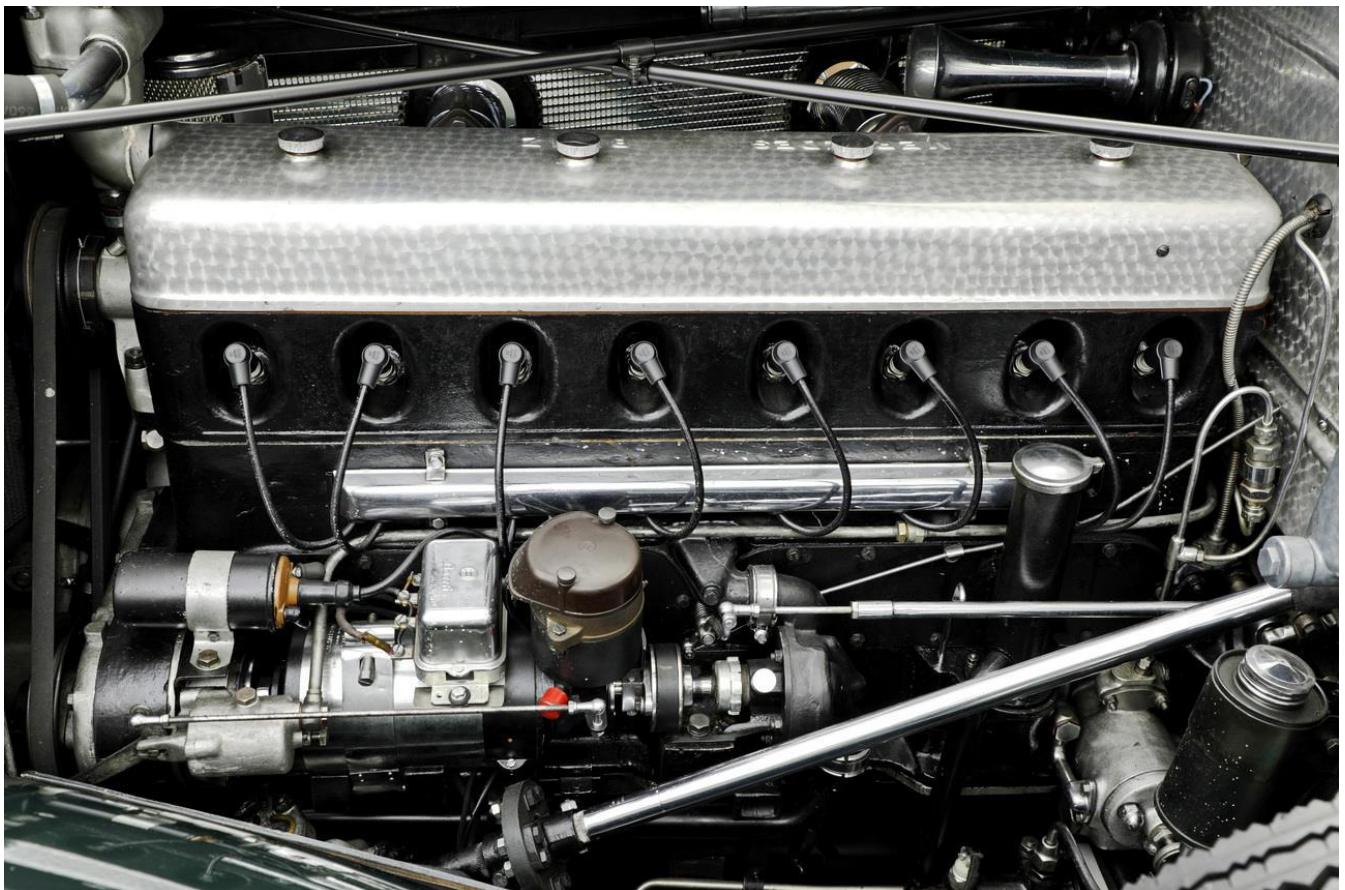
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## Data & Facts

Year of construction	1937
Quantity	in total 419 examples (from 1936 to 1939), including 83 cars as a Cabriolet A
Body-style	2-seater Cabriolet A, Sindelfingen factory bodywork
Colour scheme	two-tone green with a leather interior in green and soft-top black
Mileage (reading)	52,900 km
Engine	Eight-cylinder in-line engine (DB M 24 II), switchable Roots supercharger, water-cooled, 1 lateral camshaft with drive via spur gears, 1 MB rising-flow twin carburettor
Displacement / power	5.401 cc, approx. 115 hp without and 180 hp with supercharger at 3400 rpm (factory data)
Gearbox	manual, 4-speed, centre shift lever
Brakes	drums front/rear, hydraulic with vacuum booster
Empty weight	approx. 2,350 kg
Top-speed	approx. 170 kph
Documents	German historic registration, commission data from Mercedes Benz, article and in period photos, invoice on overhaul in 2019





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## Appendix

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Location	Hamburg, Germany	
Price	<b>on request</b> (VAT not to be shown)	
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