

The history of the Technik Museen Sinsheim Speyer



The transport of the Soviet shuttle in spring 2008 from Bahrain across the open sea to Rotterdam and from there on a pontoon up the Rhine to Speyer was a media event of the highest order. Source TMSNHSP



... this has now been surpassed by the transport of the U17 submarine in spring 2023. They are all looking forward to the onward journey to the Technik Museum Sinsheim. Source TMSNHSP

1. The Technik Museum Sinsheim

The history of the Technik Museum Sinsheim began in late 1980. During a meeting of technology enthusiasts the idea was born to give the public access to all the gems of technological history that had been restored, often in years of painstaking attention to detail. A museum club was founded and but few months later the Technik Museum Sinsheim opened its doors for the first time on 6 May 1981. From the beginning the museum was a great success and the ever increasing number of visitors made it possible to quickly extend the exhibition area from the initial 5,000 m² to more than 30,000 m². Besides many other vintage cars from all eras of automobile history and many other exhibit items the Technik Museum Sinsheim today presents the largest private collection of vintage Maybach, supercharged Mercedes, and Bugatti automobiles in Germany, several hundred motorcycles, aircraft, record vehicles, racing and sports cars, locomotives, military and utility cars, engines and much more.

In 1996, the Technik Museum Sinsheim created a unique film experience with the IMAX 3D large format movie theater. Never before had it been possible to admire 3D movies that even began to compare to this quality on a huge screen. Since then IMAX films have been casting a spell on over 5 million visitors in Sinsheim. In 2016, the IMAX 3D Sinsheim made history again, the IMAX 3D Sinsheim is presenting the brand new and revolutionary IMAX 4k laser technology as one of the first movie theaters worldwide.

In 1999 the museum club managed to acquire a Russian Tupolev Tu-144 supersonic passenger aircraft. In a spectacular transport, the aircraft was transported from Moscow to Sinsheim over

land and sea and mounted in starting position on the roof of one of the museum halls in early 2001. Enough room was left for the only other supersonic passenger aircraft ever built, the French/British Concorde, which at that time was still in service. Only four years later this gap could be filled when a Concorde was donated to the museum by Air France after the retirement of their Concorde fleet. The Technik Museum Sinsheim is the only museum in the world in which the only two supersonic aircraft ever flying in regular service can be visited side by side.

Over the last three decades Technik Museum Sinsheim has been displaying over 3.000 exhibits throughout the world of technology and they are constantly increasing. Therefore, it was only a matter of time until the capacity limit was reached – new facilities were needed.

The Association's Board of Directors agreed on an extension- the so called Hall 3. The new museum's hall (approx. length 65 m, width 45 m) a cubic construction with a size of approx. 3.000 sqm as well as an attic height of 12 m is planned to mainly host periodically changing special-themed exhibitions. Until August 2024, the museum organisers are dedicating a special exhibition to the endurance race on the Sarthe: "One hundred years of the 24 Hours of Le Mans". Around 30 racing cars from the early days to the present day will form the centrepiece of the exhibition, which will be constantly changing until January 2024. Watercolours by Le Mans enthusiast Uli Ehret and historical photographs accompany the exhibition on oversized banners all around and reflect the atmosphere of the chase through day and night in racing scenes.

In April/May 2023, the Technik Museen Sinsheim Speyer shared a very special event with the public: From Kiel through the North Sea, the Netherlands and across the Rhine to Speyer - the exciting journey of the decommissioned Class 206 submarine to its temporary accommodation in the cathedral city took three weeks. Until summer 2024, precautions will be taken to ensure its onward transport to Sinsheim. Upcoming work includes removing the batteries, which weigh several tonnes, and making them accessible for future visitors. The rotation of the submarine is also being tested - after all, this is the only way to get U17 under the Old Bridge in Heidelberg. This promises to be a next-level challenge.

3. The Technik Museum Speyer

In the early 1990s, when the possibilities of expansion in Sinsheim were nearly exhausted, the opportunity to build a second Museum in the very center of Speyer on the premises of the former Pfalz Aircraft Company came as a rare and fortunate chance. The first exhibition hall was the so-called "Liller Halle", a listed factory building from 1913, which today mainly shows vintage cars, motorcycles, aircraft, and fire engines. Today the museum has more than 25,000 m² indoor space and over 150,000 m² outdoor area.

Due to the huge outdoor area the museum made it possible to show very large and unusual exhibit items. The beginning was made in 1993 with the U9, a submarine of the German Navy with a length of 46 m and a weight of 466 tons. In 1999 it was followed by the Antonov An-22, the largest propeller-driven aircraft built in series with a wing span of 64 m and a length of 58 m. In 2003 the museum wrote history when a Boeing 747 "Jumbo Jet" of the Lufthansa was mounted on a gigantic steel scaffold erected on the premises of the museum. To this day, the Jumbo in the Technik Museum Speyer is the only aircraft of this kind which was dismantled, transported to a place outside from an airport and reassembled again. Other large exhibit items which have complemented the exhibitions in Speyer during the last years are the rescue cruiser John T. Essberger of the German Maritime Search and Rescue Service, a Transall transport aircraft of the German air force and a Vickers Viscount from Lufthansa.

The IMAX DOME movie theater at the Technik Museum Speyer, the only movie theater of this kind in Germany, opened in 1997. Contrary to other movie theaters, in the IMAX DOME the movie is not projected on a flat screen but rather on a gigantic dome. In 2000, the Museum Wilhelmsbau was opened in a historic building, which once housed the administration of the Pfalz Aircraft Company, on the premises of the Technik Museum Speyer. On four floors with 3,000 m² exhibition space this "museum within a museum" shows, besides other things, automatic musical instruments, fashion of the 18th and 19th century, artistic dolls, historic weapons, and uniforms. A special attraction is the "Lindenstrasse Room" with many exhibit items from the popular German telecast "Lindenstrasse".

The high point of the history of the museum so far was the acquisition of a Soviet Buran orbiter, the counterpart of the US American space shuttle. The transport of the Soviet shuttle in early 2008, which led from Bahrain over the open sea to Rotterdam and from there on a pontoon up the Rhine to Speyer, was an outstanding media event. To adequately present the shuttle to the visitors a new hall was built on the premises of the museum in Speyer. The building has a length of 85 m, a width of 75 m and a height of up to 22 m. The total exhibition space on three levels sums up to about 9,000 m². Outside from Russia and the USA the Buran in Speyer is the only space shuttle which can be visited in a museum.

Besides the Buran the Technik Museum Speyer shows in the new hall the space exhibition "Apollo and Beyond". With the help of many unique exhibit items, this exhibition tells the exciting story of manned space flight. From space suits to space food and a toilet which also works in weightlessness the exhibition encompasses everything connected to space flight. SPACE EXPO also succeeded in obtaining the original SPACELAB training module from DLR for the

exhibition. In addition, the museum received a 1:1 model of the ISS module COLUMBUS from the aerospace company EADS Astrium and a 1:10 model of the International Space Station ISS from the European Space Agency ESA. In May 2010 the exhibition was complemented by another spectacular exhibit item: the original landing capsule of Soyuz mission TM 19 which took the German astronaut Ulf Merbold back to Earth in 1994.

On occasion of the 50th anniversary of the first manned space flight in early 2011, the exhibition was considerably extended and now also shows 60 information panels and 100 exhibit items describing the history of manned Soviet/Russian space flight. One particularly interesting object is a true-to-the-original 1:1 replica of the Vostok spaceship with which Yuri Gagarin first flew into space in 1961.

In June 2013 another highlight could be added to the space flight exhibition. In the newly designed exhibition area "The Moon" the history of the moon landings is now comprehensively presented. Besides detailed information tables this section shows true-to-the-original 1:1

replicas of the Apollo 11 landing module "EAGLE", the Lunar Roving Vehicle, which was employed during the Apollo 15 - 17 missions, and of the space suits worn by the Apollo 17 astronauts Eugene A. „Gene“ Cernan and Harrison H. „Jack“ Schmitt. The absolute highlight, however, of the ensemble is a moon rock which was chipped off from a basalt boulder by the astronauts Dave Scott and Jim Irwin at station 4 of the second Apollo 15 excursion within the Hadley Apenninen landing zone on 1 August 1971. Within Germany the Technik Museum Speyer is the only museum presenting a genuine moon rock in a detailed setting with well-grounded information.

Other highlights in the space flight hall are changing special exhibitions, mainly covering automobiles, as well as the permanent motorcycle exhibition - a Münch exhibition comprising 26 specimens of the legendary "Mammut" from the workshop of the German motorcycle constructor Friedel Münch. Since March 2024, visitors have had the opportunity to experience an extensive transfer of technologies from space to Earth up close. The special exhibition "ALL.TÄGLICH!" impressively demonstrates how technologies from space research are transferred to Earth and lead to groundbreaking advances in everyday life. The INNOspace exhibition is presented in collaboration with the German Aerospace Center (DLR) and can be seen at the Technik Museum Speyer until 24 November 2024.

3. Opening hours, contact information and admission fees

www.technik-museum.de

Media information:

presse@technik-museum.de

Address, telephone and E-mail:

Technik Museum Sinsheim, Museumsplatz, 74889 Sinsheim

Fon +49 (0)7261 / 9299-0, Fax: 13916, E-mail: info@technik-museum.de

Technik Museum Speyer, Am Technik Museum 1, 67346 Speyer

Fon +49 (0)6232 / 6708-0, Fax: 6708-20, E-mail: speyer@technik-museum.de

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Mediabox: <http://media.technik-museum.de/>

Pressekontakt: presse@technik-museum.de