

BMW 5 Series Euro Delivery

It is fairly intuitive, and has two buttons on the steering wheel you can program. It also has a nice looking interface. Anyone who says it's too confusing probably can't use windows that well either. Granted, I am an IT professional, but still, it's really not hard at all. All of the writers that bashed it did so based on the use of it for what, a few hours? Cars today are way more complex and require a little more training before maximizing the true benefits. Anyway, enough about that.



We drove around the corner to the Porsche Leipzig dealership where I looked around and took some photos to kill some time. They had a GT3RS there, as well as an anniversary edition Boxster S. They also had some other tequipment and wheels, including the TechArt in the dealership for sale. After a few pics, we departed back to the plant.



After a half hour in the parking lot, I pulled up to the guard at the Porsche Leipzig gate (who by the way looked at the car from all angles and said, "it's very nice car!" – this coming from the gate at a factory that produces Carrera GTs and sees a million Porsches a day!). Very cool. After pleading with him to let me go to the Selection shop, he called down there and let me in early.



I gotta tell you – this place was truly AWSOME! I had about an hour to watch cars go around the track and take pics. To my delight, there was a speed yellow Carrera GT squealing like a pig doing donuts in the test track. This thing just sounded UNREAL. Man, I wish I had remembered that I could take mpeg video on my camera! Doh!



Anyway, several items of note – first, there was another GT just sitting on the side that I got some great pics of. Also a GT3, tons of

BMW 5 Series Euro Delivery

Cayennes, and a 911 TT running around the track as well. Second, I can confirm the Panorama roof option on the 05 Cayennes this summer. I inadvertently took a pic of it, but it was masked and taped on top. I was told that this one is definitely in for this model year. I guess they were having issues with the stability of it (man, these forums are scarily accurate at times!).

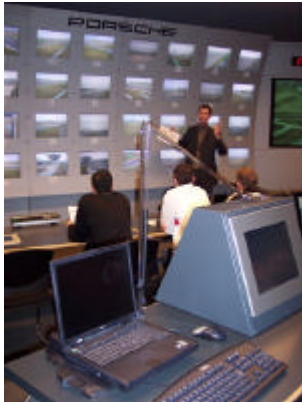


I did buy a couple of shirts in the shop, as well as a pair of adorable Ferdi bears to hang in the window! The tour was about to start, and I had a bunch of 17-18 year old high school students from England with us. It was neat to see some inspiration as they took the tour. I hoped that some of them saw these cars and the factory as a genuine thing they could work to attain. One made a funny comment to Klaus, our tour guide. He said, "who buys these?" I wanted to jump in and inspire the kid, but I held back. I didn't want it to seem like I was bragging. Man, it brought back memories of drooling over 911s as a kid from the "other side of the tracks", not realizing that my hard work would pay off at age 25 in the form of a new Porsche Boxster then. I never thought it was within reach of the common man. Klaus then panned the cameras around the track and saw my new 5 in the lot. I said, "hold up, I want a picture of this! It's my new one."

BMW 5 Series Euro Delivery



He then panned around to his Bimmer, a nice 316 compact near mine. We went off on a tangent for a moment about Bimmers. It was funny. I liked how true car enthusiasts in Germany have appreciation for all nice cars, unlike the NASCAR brand bashing in the States. He also mentioned the Maserati sedan as well while we chatted. Nice respect.



Anyway, back to the tour. It started in the control center where they can monitor and change track conditions from a ton of different camera angles. I also learned an interesting piece about how the track was designed from taking the most challenging pieces of about four other tracks and putting them together.



We then went up to the 3rd and 4th floors where the museum was. Cool cars that you can see in my pics. I especially liked the classics and also seeing the newer cars with personalized tequipment configurations.



After a short snack (nice touch) we went over to the manufacturing plant across the way. No pics here, sorry! The floor was clean enough to eat off of. What amazed me most was how small it was. They really were just integrators and assemblers there. Much of the car (the upper shell and interior) comes in from Batislava, and the power plant from Zuffenhausen. The tranny from Eisen (Asia) and it is all put together and “married” with 18 BOLTS! That’s it! Funny. After it is put together, they test drive EACH ONE on the track. I found that to be very interesting quality control, and also a testament to the difference between a VW and a Porsche.

BMW 5 Series Euro Delivery



Next we moved to the Carrera GT line, which was only 8 stations long. They hand push each piece to the next station. No robotics here. Simply amazing is all I can say about the Carrera GT. Carbon fiber body, pushrod suspension, and a whopping ONE produced each day. THAT'S IT. Their plan is to move up to about 2.5 in the future. They will build all that they promised (I think 1500) and then tear down the line (all couple hundred yards worth) and probably make way for the next Porsche, the front engine sedan or 2+2 coming out based on the Cayenne engines.



After the tour ended, it was pitch dark outside, and I was sad that the day was over ☹. I thoroughly enjoyed talking with Klaus and seeing Porsche Leipzig. It was definitely the highlight of the week. We left and drove back to the Rusterhof for another night of rest in a very enjoyable village.

Friday, 19 March 2004 (day 5)



Got up and head another nice breakfast at the Rusterhof. We paid our bill (our best value for the trip, less than 50 Euro a night!) and said goodbye to Gunter and his wife and set out for Stuttgart!



On the way, we had to snap a picture of this sign. Where else have you ever seen a danger frog sign? ☺

We drove around Leipzig on the Autobahn this time and saved quite a bit of time versus the backroads. On the way down to Stuttgart, we saw a sign for Grafenwoehr, a US Army base. Being an Army Officer, I figured it would be nice to see a base in Germany, and while I was there I could fill up the tank at the AAFES for US prices. It seemed to be 37km off the exit. No harm, right?

BMW 5 Series Euro Delivery



Well, on the way, the first gate was closed. The next one was a good half an hour past it. Long story short, my little detour cost us a few hours. At this point my wife and I were even, since her route to Leipzig wasn't exactly direct! The good thing was that we did at least get to fill up the tank for a quarter of what it would have cost us. We stopped outside the base for what turned out to be a very forgettable lunch at some little Italian café. Oh well, no big deal, part of the adventure, I guess...



We were then back on the Autobahn to Stuttgart, trying to get to the Porsche museum before close. After several more hours, we arrived at our destination, the Porsche museum and shop in Zuffenhausen (just outside of Stuttgart) at 4:15PM. We looked through the selection shop real quick before walking next door to the museum when, to my dismay, the museum closed an hour earlier at 4PM!



I was pretty bent about it and my wife obliged me to come back first thing in the AM when they opened at 9AM and then go to Salzburg, Austria, as it was on the way anyway.

We headed out in search of the Zentrum (downtown) in Stuttgart. We made it very close when I came across a parking spot. We parked and then walked in search of a nice restaurant. We ate dinner at a place called "Koncerthaus" which was right next to a theater. We had a very nice candlelight dinner and walked back in search of the car.



We then left to go find our lodging in Stuttgart, a castle that my wife was very excited about. It was supposed to be one of our nicer (and more expensive stays in Europe). We got there after dark, so we couldn't really get a good appreciation of the outside.