

Heidelberg (Germany), May 30, 2009:

Bertha Benz Memorial Route ready for Motoring Tourists

The world's first long-distance journey by automobile

Bertha Benz Memorial Route is a route of industrial heritage of mankind, because it follows the tracks of the world's first long-distance journey by automobile 121 years ago.

In 1886, Dr Carl Benz invented the automobile, the Benz Patent Motorwagen, in Mannheim/Germany (Reich Patent No. 37435) - but nobody wanted to buy it. But when Bertha Benz, his wife, went on the first long-distance trip in 1888 - without his knowledge - from Mannheim (near Heidelberg) to Pforzheim (Black Forest) and back to prove that the horseless coach was absolutely suitable for daily use, it became a huge success with almost a billion drivers worldwide today! This pioneer's action and probably most important marketing activity of all times was in danger of being forgotten.

A dynamic monument

So a nonprofit association, founded by Frauke and Edgar Meyer, wants to prevent this with your help! For this reason, they are inviting you to join them on an exciting discovery trip into the past, and at the same time to visit Baden, one of the most attractive scenic regions in Germany, the land of wine and enjoyment smiled upon by the sun.

Modern life on earth would be hard to imagine without Bertha Benz, who brought mobility to the world. So the association decided to honor Bertha Benz dynamically by setting up road signs along the route she took in 1888 and earmarking it as a modern scenic route. Now everyone can follow the tracks of this monument of industrial culture and let themselves be taken back to those hot days in August of the year 1888.

The world's first filling station

In Wiesloch, some kilometers south of Heidelberg, Bertha and her two sons ran out of fuel. As a result, the three courageous automobilists bought Ligroin in the Wiesloch Pharmacy, a detergent used as a fuel at that time. Thus, the pharmacy in Wiesloch became the world's first filling station - and you can visit it, because it still exists today.

Repairs with a hairpin and a garter

However, two bad troubles happened in the middle of the road, so that "on-board" tools had to be used for the repair. These two pretty dramatic situations were described later rather coolly by Bertha Benz, „The first time, the fuel line was clogged – my hairpin turned out to be helpful there. The second time the ignition was broken. I used my garter to fix it.“

On her return trip, she had to get the Motorwagen's brakes fixed in Bauschlott north of Pforzheim. The local shoemaker nailed the leather on the brake blocks for the courageous lady in front of the „Adler“ (Eagle) guesthouse. This site and other historic sites still exist and can be visited today!

Romantic sceneries

However, the authentic route taken by Bertha Benz not only links almost forgotten original sites she passed on her way, it also leads to one of the most beautiful holiday regions in Germany, featuring highlights such as romantic sceneries and historic towns.

Mark Twain loved it

In the Palatinate, the area around Heidelberg, you will find 2000 years of history and culture perfectly embedded in Mediterranean surroundings. The area is characterized by delightful mediaeval villages, river landscapes like the romantic Neckar valley, which already inspired Mark Twain in 1878 (A tramp abroad), excellent food, wines from four different regions and cool beer brewed in more than 100 different varieties. The Odenwald offers stretches of woodland, wild, romantic gorges, and inviting valleys. See the mellow nature of Kraichgau with rolling vineyards, natural parks, lakes, streams and culture wherever you look.

Hermann Hesse and the Black Forest gateau

Just some kilometers off the tourist road you will find the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Maulbronn monastery, where Hermann Hesse (Steppenwolf) was a student. And finally make an excursion from Pforzheim near Baden-Baden to the south to see the Black Forest girls, Black Forest houses, traditional hats and cuckoo clocks, and taste the original Black Forest gateau – the Black Forest epitomizes picture-postcard holidays in Germany throughout the world.

The lost heart

By following the tracks of Bertha Benz you will see the magnificent palaces and fairy-tale castles of Mannheim, Heidelberg, Bruchsal and Schwetzingen, as well as Pforzheim, the centre of the German jewellery and watch-and-clock industry. Visit Baden, where modern mobility was born, and leave singing the student song: „I've lost my heart in Heidelberg!“

A very special highlight

Visit “Automuseum Dr. Carl Benz” in Ladenburg near Heidelberg. The museum has now moved into the renovated buildings of the original “Benz & Söhne” factory.

At the moment Winfried A. Seidel, former president of “Mercedes Benz Veteranen Club” and owner of the museum, can offer you a special highlight,

the “Benz Patent Motorwagen Nr. 3”, most probably the vehicle used by Bertha Benz for her legendary trip from Mannheim to Pforzheim. It’s the oldest original car of the world, usually only to be seen in the Science Museum in London. It now has temporarily come back as a loan to Ladenburg, where Dr. Carl Benz and Bertha Benz lived and died. Their grave can be visited to honor these legends!

Come and get to know the “Mother of all Automobile Roads” – visit the places where it really happened 121 years ago!

Length: 194 km. More information: www.bertha-benz.de

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