



STAR NEWS

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MERCEDES BENZ CLUB OF AMERICA SOUTH FLORIDA SECTION

Submitted by Mike Chrusch, President, MBCA South Florida Section

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Over the years I have found myself spending time in the Mercedes-Benz dealerships in the countries I was visiting. I like to visit the dealerships to see how they may be different from the dealerships we have in the United States and of course, I like to purchase MB items that I have not seen before in the local dealerships or on-line. I enjoy looking at the cars and trying to see if I can notice any differences between the cars there and the cars in the U.S.

Usually the side markers (color and/or shape) and the rims are slightly different. I always find the local dealerships very hospitable and wanting to talk about their dealerships and learn more about the Mercedes Benz Club of America. I generally spend about an hour in each dealership. In this issue, I wanted to take some time to share with you some of the favorite Mercedes-Benz dealerships I have recently visited around the world.

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Monaco (August 2011)



Visiting Monaco was a wonderful experience. In addition to Monaco being one of the most beautiful cities in the world, it is also the host of the annual street circuit motor race Monaco Grand Prix, one of the original Grands Prix of Formula One. Getting a chance to visit one of the two dealerships was very exciting. Monaco is a sovereign city-state and microstate, located on the French Riviera in Europe. France borders the country on three sides while the other side borders the Mediterranean Sea. Monaco has an area of 0.78 square miles and a population of about 37,800. It is the second smallest and the most densely populated country in the world. So imagine, two Mercedes-Benz dealerships in an area of about 500 acres!

The showroom was a little small because as previously mentioned, the entire city-state is quite small. Although the showroom was a little small, they had a very decent amount of inventory in the garage behind the dealership. The Mercedes were a little more expensive in Monaco because they were priced in Euros. I had a nice time meeting with the sales people and representatives at the dealership. I bought an AMG polo shirt at the dealership. I will be back in France and Monaco in August 2016. I look forward to seeing my friends again in the Monaco dealership and hopefully making new friends in one of the dealerships in Paris, France.



Spain (August 2011)



While visiting Barcelona I stopped into the local Mercedes-Benz dealership. The dealership was in the center of the city. It was located on a busy street. I wondered how safe it would be just to get there! Once inside the dealership I was amazed at how modern it was. As customary, I went directly to the boutique. I bought a casual Mercedes-Benz sport belt. I make sure to wear it to every one of our Concours D'Elegance events. It was a fairly big dealership. The representatives were very nice and very helpful.



Germany (September 2013)



I had planned to visit Germany for many years – particularly Stuttgart and Affalterbach. I decided to combine such a trip around Oktoberfest. I arrived in Munich in late September. I brought my parents with me so we could have a family vacation. After three days in Munich celebrating Oktoberfest, we headed to Stuttgart. I rented a Mercedes-Benz 300E Wagon and we drove from Munich to Sindelfingen Germany, which was about a 2.5 hour drive. Driving the autobahn in a Mercedes-Benz was great. We took our first Mercedes-Benz factory tour in Sindelfingen. It was really amazing. We were

based around the Mercedes-Benz plant because it was so big. I remember learning that over 10,000 engineers were employed just in that one plant and in one building! I bought a ton of stuff at the boutique. We had lunch at the restaurant within the factory. We left around 4 pm and drove to Munich, which was only about 20 minutes away.

The next day we visited the Mercedes-Benz museum in Stuttgart (as pictured on page 1 and bottom of page 5). After visiting the museum we went on the factory tour, which lasted a few hours. We spent the whole day in the huge 7 story museum and on the factory tour. The next day we drove to Affalterbach, which is the home of AMG. I went to see the AMG factory and wanted to meet the engineer who built my engine. I was really excited to take the tour. When walking from the guest lounge (as pictured below) to the factory we saw and heard various types of AMGs racing up and down the streets. The cars were covered in black paneling so no one spying on the factory could



easily learn any AMG secrets. The tour lasted about 2 hours. I was disappointed, but also happy to learn that my engineer was promoted to a management position and was no longer building engines; therefore I was not able to meet him as part of the tour. I was thrilled to learn that the super-charged V8 in my S63 AMG was the best engine ever produced by AMG according to the tour guide. As a gift for attending the tour, I received an AMG Private Lounge hat. The next day we went back to the Mercedes-Benz Museum. As you can imagine, I bought all sorts of stuff at the Museum, including pens, paper, posters, hats, etc.

After visiting Munich, Sindelfingen, Stuttgart, and Affalterbach, it was time to visit Berlin. In addition to the site-seeing and numerous tours, it was time to check out the biggest Mercedes-Benz dealership/museum in Berlin (as pictured on left below). It was a dealership and museum. After days and days of walking, my parents stayed in the hotel on that Sunday while I went to explore the dealership. The dealership was huge – about 4 floors of all different types of Mercedes-Benz for sale and on exhibit. I spent about 2 hours walking around the fantastic building enjoying every minute of it. I had lunch at the café in the center of the showroom. As it got to be close to 4 pm, I decided to leave the dealership. I went back to the hotel. We had dinner, packed, and flew home the next day. Maybe one day I will return to re-live all the fun I had there in Germany.



Inside Mercedes Benz museum



Sindelfingen lounge area



Sindelfingen factory

Aruba (June 2016)



I just returned home from Aruba. What a beautiful island. While being transported from the airport to the hotel, I noticed a Mercedes dealership so of course I knew that would be the first thing to do on my list Friday morning. Before heading over to the dealership I called to see if they had any Mercedes-Benz merchandise with the name Aruba on it. They said no, but I still wanted to go and check out the dealership. The dealership is about a 10 minute cab ride from the high-rise hotel section of Aruba. I went immediately to the parts department, which normally includes the boutique items. I met the parts department manager Evert. I looked through the merchandise and selected a hat. After making the purchase, the manager showed me around the showroom. There were about 8 models

from the C class sedans to the SUVs. It appeared as if they had about one model from each of the major categories, i.e. C class; E class; and the SUVs in the showroom. I noticed that the cars were more expensive in Aruba (about \$10,000 - \$20,000) as compared to the U.S., which is probably because of the import taxes. On the way to the dealership, the cab driver said that car parts on the island cost up to 3 times the original cost of the part! So that's why I didn't see any Mercedes on the roads of Aruba!



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Indonesia (December 2013 January 2014)



There is a saying in Jakarta (the country's capital) and Bandung Indonesia – one thing in one day. That means you can really only do one thing in a day in either of those cities. Why? Because the traffic is so bad! I remember traveling about 1 – 1.5 miles taking about 1 hour long. There is so much traffic it is unbelievable. So when I said I wanted to visit one of the Mercedes-Benz dealerships, it really was one of the only things we did that day. However, for me, it was ok to burn a day hanging out in the dealership. I purchased a hat that had the name Jakarta embroidered on the back of the hat. I remember the security being pretty tight as we entered and exited the dealership. I also remember that the S550 cost roughly \$500,000 U.S. dollars!! I was really shocked at that price difference between the Mercedes-Benz in Jakarta and in the U.S. When I was in Jakarta I owned a S63 AMG. I couldn't imagine what that car would have cost in Jakarta. There were no AMGs in the showroom or in stock. I don't blame them. With that much traffic, there would no place to test the engine. Because of the extremely high prices there were only a few Mercedes-Benz on the road in Jakarta.



Jakarta, Indonesia

After visiting Jakarta I went to Bali, Indonesia. The traffic in Bali is usually not that bad, as I have been told, but it was extremely bad during my visit because I was there on New Year's Eve and for a few days after. After a little research I discovered the location of the local Mercedes-Benz dealership.

Upon arrival I was very disappointed to discover the dealership was closed. However, I was determined to walk around the parking lot and look inside the showroom windows. My first goal was to see if there was a guard in the guard house.

Thankfully there was a guard present and he unlocked the gates for me to enter the property. There was no one working that day at the dealership so I could not go into the showroom or look at the items in the boutique. However, the security guard called his friend who was in charge of maintenance for the dealership. The maintenance manager brought with him an umbrella that included the dealership's name and address, which I was very happy to have received. The maintenance manager said all employees receive such umbrellas. When I told him where I was from and the about the MBCA, he gave me his umbrella. The umbrella included the Mercedes-Benz star and the local dealership's name and address. I gave the manager money for the umbrella and I left the dealership. After I left the dealership I began to think that maybe the amount of money I gave him was not enough. Feeling guilty, I asked my driver to turn around and go back to the dealership after I first stopped at an ATM to get more money. Remember I mentioned how bad the traffic was? Well, what would have taken about 5 minutes to do with no traffic took me a little over an hour.

But when I returned to give the maintenance manager and the security guard some more money they were astonished and very appreciative. I felt it was the right thing to do and I believe in karma. Those two people made my experience in Bali truly special so how can I really put a price on that? By the way, that umbrella didn't fit in my luggage so I had to check it in like an extra piece of checked luggage. The umbrella survived three flights and about 10,000 miles to return home. It was worth it.



Bali, Indonesia

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