







Opel

Adam Opel GmbH



OPEL

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| Type | GmbH |
| Founded | 1863 |
| Founder(s) | Adam Opel |
| Headquarters | Rüsselsheim, Germany |
| Key people | Hans Demant, CEO |
| Industry | Automotive |
| Products | Automobile |
| Parent | Magna International (20%) Sberbank (35%) General Motors (35%) |
| Website | Opel.com |

Adam Opel GmbH, commonly known as **Opel**, is a German automaker. The company was founded on 21 January 1863, began making automobiles in 1899, and was acquired by General Motors Corporation in 1929. As part of GM Europe, Opel is GM's largest European brand and, along with Vauxhall Motors in the UK, it forms GM's core European business.

In early 2009, the future of Opel was thrown into uncertainty as the global financial crisis drove GM towards bankruptcy. However, on 30 May 2009, it was announced that a deal had been reached to transfer New GM Europe (Opel plus Vauxhall, minus Saab) assets to a separate company majority-owned by a consortium led by Sberbank of Russia (35%), Magna International of Canada (20%), and Opel employees and car dealers (10%). GM is expected to keep a 35% minority stake in the new company.

History

The company was founded in Rüsselsheim on 21 January 1863 by Adam Opel, originally manufacturing sewing machines and later bicycles. It was the leader in both markets at the time of Opel's death in 1895.

The first cars were produced in 1899 after Opel's sons entered into a partnership with Friedrich Lutzmann, a farmer from Dessau in Saxony-Anhalt, who had been working on automobile designs for some time. These cars were not very successful and so the partnership was dissolved after two years, following which Opel's sons signed a licensing agreement with the French Automobiles Darracq S.A. to manufacture vehicles under the brand name "Opel-Darracq". These cars were made up of Opel bodies mounted on a Darracq chassis, powered by a 2-cylinder engine.

The company first showed cars of its own design at the 1902 Hamburg Motor Show, and started manufacturing them in 1906, with Opel-Darracq production being discontinued in 1907.

In 1911, the company's factory was virtually destroyed by fire and a new one was built with more up-to-date machinery. In the same year, production of sewing machines ended. By 1913, Opel had become the largest car maker in Germany, and in 1924 it installed Germany's first car production line.

In March 1929 General Motors, impressed by Opel's modern production facilities, bought 80% of the company, increasing this to 100% in 1931. The Opel family gained \$33.3 million from the transaction. Subsequently, a second factory was built at Brandenburg for the production of 'Blitz' light trucks.



Bicycle production ended in 1937 and, following the outbreak of World War II, the company's factories were seized by the Nazi regime in 1940. Passenger car production did not resume until 1947, before which the factories had been badly damaged by Allied bombings, and production assets for the Opel Kadett had been seized by the Soviets as war reparations.

GM regained control of Opel in 1948, and the Rüsselsheim factory was rebuilt in 1950. In 1962, the company's 100th year, a new factory was opened in Bochum, initially for production of the revived Kadett. By 1972, Opel was once again Germany's largest car maker. In 1982, another new factory was opened in Zaragoza, Spain, initially for production of the Opel Corsa.

Opel worldwide

Many cars sold by General Motors worldwide are Opel designs, including such models as the Corsa, Astra, Vectra and Omega. Opel models are also sold under other GM brand names, such as Vauxhall in the UK, Holden in Australia and New Zealand, Saturn or Pontiac in North America, and Chevrolet in Latin America. Its Zafira people carrier was sold in Japan badged as a Subaru Traviq, while the Omega was sold in the US as the Cadillac Catera for model years 1997 to 2001. Other models sold in the US, but slightly modified, include the Saturn L-Series, Chevrolet Malibu and Cobalt. The majority of future Saturn models are expected to be either identical to (like the Saturn Astra and Sky) or closely based on (like the Aura and 2008 Saturn Vue) European Opels. The Pontiac LeMans (1989-1994) – the first car produced by Daewoo in South Korea for export to North America – was based on the Opel Kadett E (now Astra).

Opels appeared under their own name in the USA from 1958 to 1975, when they were sold through Buick dealers as captive imports. The best-selling Opel models in the US were the 1964-1972 Opel Kadett, the 1971-1975 Opel Manta, and the now-classic 1968-1973 Opel GT. (The name "Opel" was also applied from 1976 to 1980 on vehicles manufactured by Isuzu (similar to the "Isuzu I-mark"), but mechanically those were entirely different cars).

Opel was long GM's strongest marque in Japan, with sales peaking at 38,000 in 1996. However, the brand diminished in the following decade, and was withdrawn at the end of 2006 after sales had fallen to just 1,800 in 2005. In some markets outside Europe, the Opel brand name has been used on other GM products, for example, the Chevrolet Blazer was sold in Indonesia as the **Opel Blazer**, while in the mid-1990s, a version of the Holden Commodore was sold as the **Opel Calais** in Malaysia and Singapore.

Opel in Europe

Opel is the main GM brand name in Europe except in the UK, where GM's other European subsidiary, Vauxhall Motors, still uses its own "Vauxhall" brand name. In other right hand drive markets in Europe, like the Republic of Ireland, Cyprus and Malta, the main GM brand name is now Opel, and for many years, Opel sponsored the Republic's football team, using the slogan *Ireland's Number One Supporter*. However, many Vauxhall cars, imported second hand from the UK, are still sold in Ireland as a parallel import. Opel was also the main sponsor of FC Bayern München for some times, not only a club with a high profile but also an important marketing ploy for the company in the heartland of BMW - indeed, the Olympiastadion is directly overlooked by the BMW headquarters.

Some have suggested that the Vauxhall name should be dropped in the UK in favour of Opel, thereby harmonising GM's marketing strategy across Europe. However, Vauxhall has rejected this, on the grounds that its brand is well known, and in the eighties, there was a preference among fleet buyers (the main customer base at the time) for the Vauxhall brand. Opel also provides design and engineering to the American Saturn marque, similar to the Vauxhall situation in the UK.

The company headquarters are located in Rüsselsheim, and it has plants in Bochum, Eisenach, and Kaiserslautern, as well as in Zaragoza, Spain, and in Belgium, Poland, and Hungary. Opel cars are also made in Vauxhall's Ellesmere Port plant in the UK.

In October 2004 employees went on strike for six days due to the threat of 12,000 job losses. The threat was due to the unprofitable European markets because of low customer demand. The strike had a major impact on production. In 2006, the Azambuja, Portugal factory shut down and production of the Opel Combo transferred to Zaragoza. The move prompted a national boycott and caused the Portuguese government to sue GM. GM announced in April 2008 that it would invest €9 billion by 2012 in a bid to stop the market share erosion of the Opel brand in Europe. Approximately €6.5 billion is to be dedicated for the development of new models and engines, with the plants in Rüsselsheim, Bochum, and Kaiserslautern slated to be modernized.

On 1 June 2009, GM filed for bankruptcy in a court in New York. As the sale of Opel and Vauxhall had been negotiated two days before, both companies were in effect ring-fenced from any GM asset liquidation. Magna's plans for Opel includes attract GM or third-party carmakers to build their cars and electric vehicles in Antwerp.

Opel logo



Zeppelin 1937 logo

The lightning bolt on the Opel badging is a reference to the famous Opel Blitz truck (the German word 'Blitz' means lightning or flash). The logo was originally a Zeppelin, which became more stylized, and as the Zeppelin became less popular as a form of transport, the logo was changed. There is also a noticeable similarity between the winged Zeppelin and the lightning logo.

Starting with the Opel Insignia, the Blitz logo will be updated. The border that is circling the lightning bolt will be wider to incorporate the Opel name, and the surfaces will be more spherical to give the logo a three-dimensional look.

































