







SEAT

SEAT, S.A.



SEAT

Type	Subsidiary of Volkswagen Group
Founded	1950
Founder(s)	Instituto Nacional de Industria
Headquarters	Martorell, Spain
Area served	Europe, Africa, Central America, South America, Middle East, Asia
Industry	Automotive
Products	Cars
Services	design, manufacture and distribution of SEAT cars
Employees	14,500 (2006)
Parent	Volkswagen Group
Divisions	SEAT Sport

SEAT, S.A. (English pronunciation: /'seɪ.æt/ "say-at"; Spanish: ['se.at]) is a Spanish automobile manufacturer founded in 1950 by the Instituto Nacional de Industria (INI), with initial Fiat assistance, and now a wholly owned subsidiary of the German Volkswagen Group. Its headquarters are at Martorell near Barcelona, Spain. Its production reached 408,318 cars in 2006. SEAT is an acronym for *Sociedad Española de Automóviles de Turismo*, or in English *Spanish Passenger Car Company*.

Initially, SEAT manufactured rebadged Fiat models which differed very little visually from the products of the Italian parent. The SEAT Panda (later restyled as SEAT Marbella) for example was based on the Fiat Panda. The SEAT 600, based on Fiat 600, was the first car for many Spanish families, and became a symbol of the Spanish Miracle. By 1967 SEAT was Spain's largest auto-maker. In that year Fiat increased its holding in the company from 6% to 36%. At the same time the share held by the government holding agency was reduced from a controlling 51% to 32%. The remaining 32% was taken by six major banks. Although not a majority owner, Fiat now was seen to control the business: the deal also included various undertakings by Fiat to help in the growth of SEAT, and with the development of a new model (possibly the SEAT 133).

During the ensuing period, the manufacturer continued to dominate the Spanish auto market, producing 282,698 cars - more than 58% of the Spanish production total - in 1971 despite disruption that year caused by strikes and a serious flood at the coastally sited Barcelona plant. However, with just 81 cars per thousand people, Spanish car sales were seen as ripe for further growth, and SEAT faced the prospect of increased competition with other major manufacturers contemplating establishment or expansion of 'local' production facilities in the still heavily protected Spanish car market. In the early 1980s extensive discussions concerning funding and control took place between the major share holder, the Spanish government, and Fiat: SEAT needed major capital investment which Fiat was not prepared to inject. The outcome, by 1982, was an end after nearly 30 years, to the relationship with Fiat. The first car under the new SEAT logo without Fiat involvement appeared in 1982, and was called the SEAT Ronda. This was a restyled Fiat Ritmo, and sparked a lawsuit from Fiat against SEAT, as the former claimed the car was still too similar to the Ritmo. The then president of SEAT, Juan Miguel Antoñanzas, showed a Ronda to the press with all the parts different from the Fiat Ritmo painted in bright yellow, to highlight the differences. This ended the dispute. Rumour at the time had it that Fiat was angry because the Ronda restyling was in fact too close to their own planned restyling for the Fiat Ritmo, which they had to scrap. A few years after the withdrawal of Fiat in 1981, the Volkswagen Group subsidiary Audi AG signed a cooperation agreement with SEAT, becoming the major shareholder in 1986, and 100% owner of the company in 1990. During the mid 2000s, the ownership of the SEAT Company was realigned, with Audi AG transferring ownership of SEAT to the top-tier holding company Volkswagen Group.

Facilities

SEAT has its manufacturing facilities in Martorell, an industrial town close to Barcelona. The plant was opened by King Juan Carlos of Spain in 1993, and replaced SEAT's original assembly plant by the coast in Barcelona's Freeport zone. The development facilities are some of the newest in the Volkswagen Group. For example, the development and design of the Audi Q7 took place there.

SEAT in motor sport

Since the Volkswagen Group takeover in 1990, SEAT has been increasing its presence in the motor sport world. This was mainly down to VW's plan on focusing the SEAT brand as 'sporty', to appeal to the younger generation of drivers.

Rallying

SEAT's first serious attempt at a World Rally Championship (WRC) title was burdened on the small SEAT Ibiza, a 1.6L normally aspirated front-wheel drive car with its roots in the Volkswagen Polo. The Ibiza allowed the company to start building its rallying experience, and was officially engaged in some European national championships. The years went by and little success followed until a 2L version of the Ibiza was homologated as a kit-car, and extra wide tracks, larger wheels, brakes, etc, were fitted to it as the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) kit-car regulations allow. With these attributes, the car succeeded three times the 2L World Champion ('96, '97, '98), proving its maker had accumulated enough experience, and budgets, to take a chance at the reign category, the World Rally Car class of rallying cars.

SEAT's three conquests of the 2L FIA title and the sport's popularity in Spain, probably convinced Volkswagen Group management to go further and allocate sufficient budgets to the SEAT Sport department so as to allow it a chance to reach its goal. This situation came to an end in September 2000, when the company's, German upper management revoked its decision, and budgets, forcing SEAT Sport to retire from the World Rally Championship. The absence of convincing results must have obviously helped the management's decision.

SEAT's project to build a WRC-spec car was officially announced during the 1997 San Remo rally. It was in 1998 that the SEAT Córdoba WRC was first enrolled by the company to compete at the highest level of WRC racing. The Córdoba was based on the family saloon of the same name but was, naturally, a WRC class car. It had a 4 cylinder turbocharged petrol engine, permanent four-wheel drive, and active differentials were involved in its transmission. However, the short wheelbase and high-mounted engine (compared to its rivals) worked against the Córdoba, and results weren't impressive. Despite hiring ex-WRC champion Didier Auriol, and a new evolution of the car, SEAT pulled out of international rallying at the end of 2000.

Touring cars

In 2003, SEAT announced a one-make championship for the new SEAT León Cupra R, the SEAT Cupra Challenge. In 2004, SEAT with Ray Mallock Ltd. (RML) entered the British Touring Car Championship, running two SEAT Toledo Cupra for former-BTCC Champion Jason Plato, and 2003 León UK Champion, Rob Huff. In 2005, Huff left to join Chevrolet (run by RML in the World Touring Car Championship (WTCC), and he was replaced by 2004 Leon Champion James Pickford, and Luke Hines as SEAT expanded to three cars, now run by Northern South. 2006 saw the Toledo replaced by the new León, and Darren Turner joined the team with James Thompson when his WTCC commitments allowed. 2007 was SEAT's best year in BTCC, as Plato was locked in a season-long battle with Fabrizio Giovanardi, which came down to the final race of the season, but just missed out on the title.

Since 2005, SEAT has also competed in the World Touring Car Championship, with its best season being 2007, where a failed water pump robbed Yvan Muller of certain victory at the final meeting in Macau. SEAT utilised Audi's pioneering diesel engine technology (from the Audi R10 TDI LMP1) in touring cars, when they became the first team to run a TDI in the WTCC. French racing team Oreca cooperates with the WTCC team. SEAT's UK team followed suit in the 2008 BTCC. The BTCC team was sponsored by Holiday Inn. On the 11th September 2008 SEAT UK announced that it was to withdraw from all motor sport activity in the UK at the end of the season. The SEAT Cupra Championship and the SEAT BTCC campaign are to end at Brands Hatch on the 21st September. BTCC drivers Jason Plato and Darren Turner have been left without drives for 2009. At the opening of the 2009 WTCC, SEAT placed 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th in both races in Brazil.^[7] At the second meeting of the WTCC (in Mexico), the SEAT team placed 1st, 4th, 6th, 7th and 11th in the first race. The second race they placed 1st, 3rd, 7th, and 8th. While SEAT may have withdrawn from the BTCC, they are showing impressive results in the WTCC.

































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