Klassikstadt – a motoring mecca in Frankfurt, well worth a visit if you are in Germany

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Rachel Henson explored this fascinating automotive centre with plenty to offer all car enthusiasts.

(All words and photographs © Rachel Henson).

There is an unexpected motoring gem in the suburbs of Frankfurt, a short distance from the city centre. Klassikstadt is part workshop, part museum, part parking garage for interesting vehicles, and for those of us whose piggy bank can't quite extend to shelling out for a McLaren, it's a great opportunity to get close to vehicles that are usually out of our reach.

Housed in a disused, listed factory building, Klassikstadt fills 16,000 square metres with automotive curiosities, and it's free for visitors to have a look around.

The red-brick building extends over four floors, and was built in 1910 as a factory for agricultural machinery. It survived two world wars and a variety of uses, but after a two year renovation, a century after it was built, it reopened as Klassikstadt.


SCHAD
Originale
Porsche
Oldtimer Werkstatt
F AY 356H

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The ground floor hosts workshops and motoring businesses, which you are welcome to peer into as you explore. There are model shops, car dealerships, co-working and events spaces, and a restaurant when you need to sit and ponder all of the interesting cars you've looked at during your visit. The highlight for many people is the second floor, which houses privately owned vehicles in a glass-fronted parking garage.

In addition to hosting a diverse selection of automotive companies and offering secure parking spaces for valuable vehicles, it also holds special motoring events, which this year have included large meetings of Porsches, Japanese vehicles, Italian cars, and assorted supercars.



Down to Business

More than forty businesses are based at Klassikstadt, and with over 150 people working in the motoring industry here, the old factory building is full of life. The sounds of clinking spanners, revving engines, and the chatter of mechanics working on the latest project echo throughout the tall corridors.

On one side of a corridor a primrose yellow Mercedes 230 SL sat awaiting repair with its bonnet up in the Schad Orignale Mercedez-Benz Oldtimer Werkstadtt, while in the workshop opposite a state of the art McLaren appeared to be puzzling two workers staring intently at the engine. I kept a respectful distance in the workshop area but it was fascinating to see so many modern and classic cars rubbing shoulder to shoulder while the various businesses worked hard to deliver them back in pristine condition to their owners.

In every corner people worked quietly in their area of expertise, specialising in everything from exhaust systems to leatherwork, traffic law, photography, accident repair, big events, auctioneering, and Ferrari maintenance. There is even a business which specialises in classic car sharing for those who can’t commit to looking after one full-time.

Looking around the Pyritz showroom was particularly fascinating. As a company which focusses on rehoming high quality classic cars, each vehicle was immaculate after either a first class restoration, or having been preserved in pristine condition.



Their showroom housed so many gorgeous vehicles, it was difficult to spend my imaginary pocket money, particularly with so many highly polished 1950s and 60s cars such as their gleaming 1959 Austin Healey and a suave looking 1960 Chevrolet Corvette C1. However, I settled on a 1953 Tempo Hanseat S3. The German three-wheeled pickup was known for its reliability and practicality in the post-war years and has oodles of character. For 19,900 Euros I could have taken one home with me but there wasn't enough room in my suitcase this time.

Classics on Display



One of the most fascinating places to explore at Klassikstadt is the glass-fronted parking garage. Vehicle lifts are used to get the cars into position, and owners who are happy for visitors to look at their cars in exchange for a secure parking environment can show off their pride and joys here.

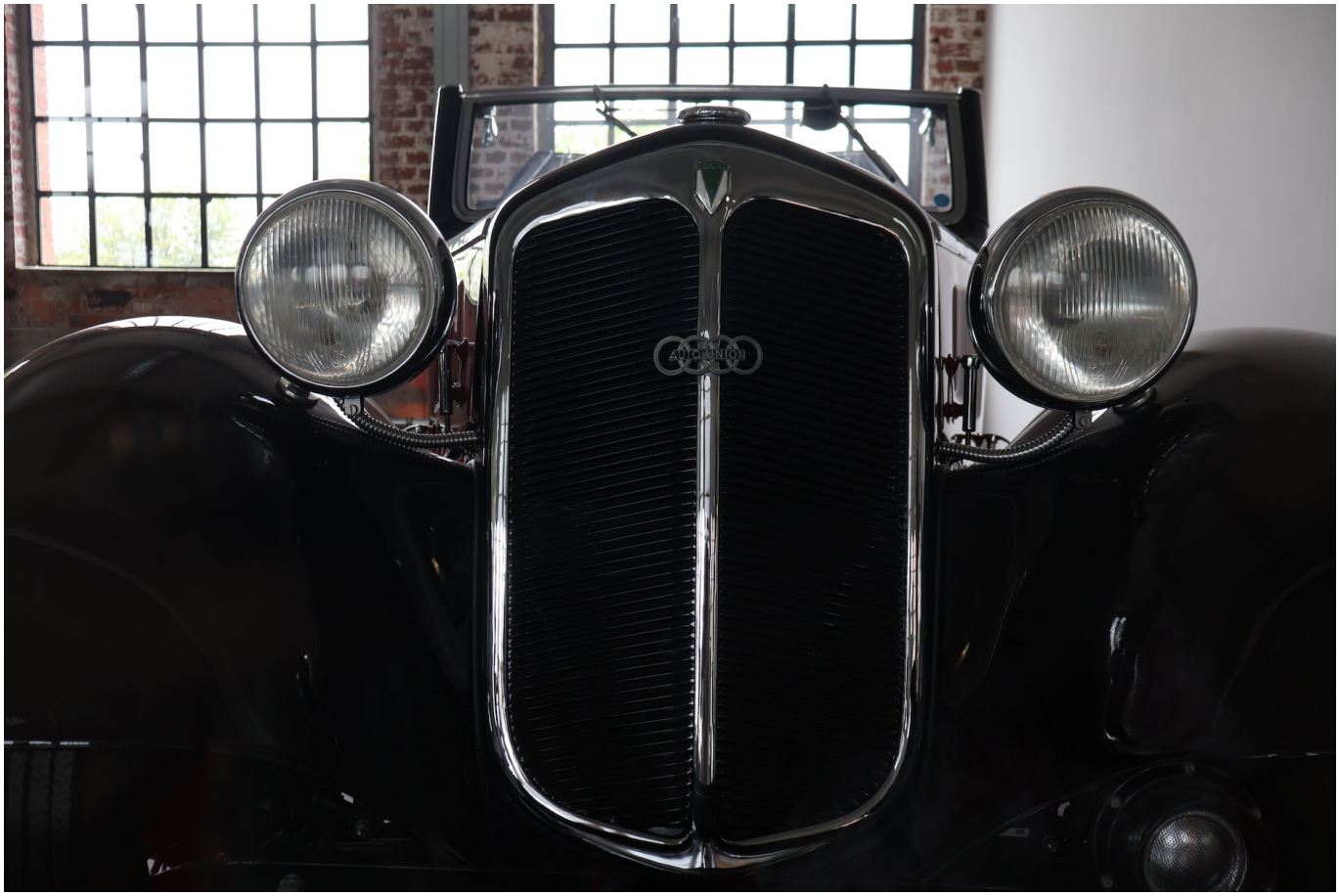
Known as the Klassikstadt Pit Lane, it acts in the same way as a museum for the casual visitor. Wandering up and down the lines of vehicles, I admired a Porsche 914 and daydreamed of popping up its headlights on a country drive. A striking BMW 8 Series with an exclusive paint job by artist Jeff Koons stood out. Only 99 of these 8X Jeff Koons edition vehicles were produced, with a cartoon pop-art style paint job, with the intention that instead of being a one-off museum piece, these cars would actually make it out onto the roads. This one is certainly being well-looked after between outings.



For €260 a month, owners can store their cars in the Pit Lane's temperature controlled parking facilities and access their cars at any time using a chip card. Each unit has a mains electricity connection and the various companies that operate within Klassikstadt are on hand to offer services such as battery charging if you get stuck with a flat battery.

Amongst the flashy Lamborghini Countachs and Ferrari 365 GTs, some older cars also stand proudly in line, including a beautiful example of an Auto Union AG Werk Chemnitz F5-700 Front Luxus Cabriolet from 1935. Built three years after the merging of four German car manufacturers, Audi, DKW, Horch and Wanderer, this lighter cabriolet model was built to be lighter and claimed a top speed of 56 mph, which was pretty good for the time.





Casual Visitors

It’s not just within the Pit Lane that you’ll find interesting cars at Klassikstadt. There are cars everywhere. Climb any flight of stairs and turn a corner and you’ll likely bump into something of interest. One of my favourite little cars to unexpectedly bump into was a Fiat Panda, parked unceremoniously in the public area of one walkway. Had I turned the other way, I could have tripped over a Lotus Elan.


FIAT
HG FP 94



Even the carpark is an education. The clientele was a mixture of motoring enthusiasts, families on an afternoon out, prospective buyers, and owners waiting for an assessment by a professional on their vehicle. The carpark reflected this with some modern cars, but many classics and special vehicles casually parked up.

On my visit I noted a Porsche 911, a classic Volvo PV, a replica Herbie 53 Lovebug Volkswagen Beetle, a Ford Mustang, and an impressive selection of Mercedes models all brought by visitors.

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Local Lunch

If walking around the huge complex builds up an appetite, Klassikstadt have that covered as well. Their restaurant, Die Werkskantine, overlooks the carpark (which is no bad thing with such interesting wheels parked up) and here you can taste local dishes while mulling over potential purchases. Will it be the McLaren 750s Spider or the Triumph TR4 that caught your eye earlier?

The staff here were friendly and helpful, and on noticing that I wasn't local to Frankfurt were keen to point out the regional dishes to try. As a result, lunch consisted of Handkäse (handformed cheese) with fresh farmhouse bread, followed by Frankfurter Grüne Sosse, a special local green sauce which is served cold but comes with hot eggs and potatoes. Lunch was washed down with the local Apfelwein cider, which means it was probably just as well I wasn't able to drive a Maserati home after all.

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Need to Know

Klassikstadt is open everyday from 10am until 8pm (6pm on Sundays) and admission for visitors is free of charge.

Events take place between spring and autumn, usually on Sundays, with a big end of season meetup taking place each October.

Klasskikstadt can be found at: Orber Straße 4a, D-60386, Frankfurt

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There’s much to see in Frankfurt… this is an attactive part of the nearby city centre.