



## TRENDING NOW

The Simpsons loses the voice of Ned Flanders, Mr. Burns, and Principal Skinner as Harry Shearer...

34  
NEW ARTICLES



LOG IN | SIGN UP

LONGFORM

REVIEWS

VIDEO

TECH

SCIENCE

ENTERTAINMENT

CARS

DESIGN

US &amp; WORLD

FORUMS



## PREVIOUS STORY

Adam Sandler performs with acoustic guitar, proves he can still be hilarious...

## NEXT STORY

Pixar's co-founder says iPhones and GoPros will change filmmaking

TRANSPORTATION PHOTO ESSAY REPORT

7  
COMMENTS

# The \$100 million playground: inside Porsche's new Experience Center

By [Eric Tegler](#) on May 13, 2015 11:30 am



(Eric Tegler)

[Share on Facebook](#) (1,115) [Tweet](#) (234) [Share](#) (17) [Pin](#) (2)

In a world increasingly informed by virtual experiences, Porsche is doubling down on the power of in-person exposure to its products and brand. The company's cars — like the iconic 911 — are an emotional buy, inspired by sights, sounds, and even a little fear, which no mobile device or online platform can offer.

"We're a visceral brand," Porsche's VP of Marketing, Andre Oosthuizen, acknowledges. "In a sense there's no better way to describe us than 'analog.' To experience what we've put forward, you need to slip behind the wheel."

Last Thursday the automaker opened its new Porsche Experience Center and North American headquarters just south of Atlanta, an impressive 27-acre complex which it hopes will generate passion, spark personal stories, and sell cars. It lies about half a mile from the end of runway 8-26 at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the world's busiest aviation hub by passenger volume. A ceaseless stream of airliners arriving and departing literally buzz the facility all day, bringing some 95 million passengers through Atlanta.



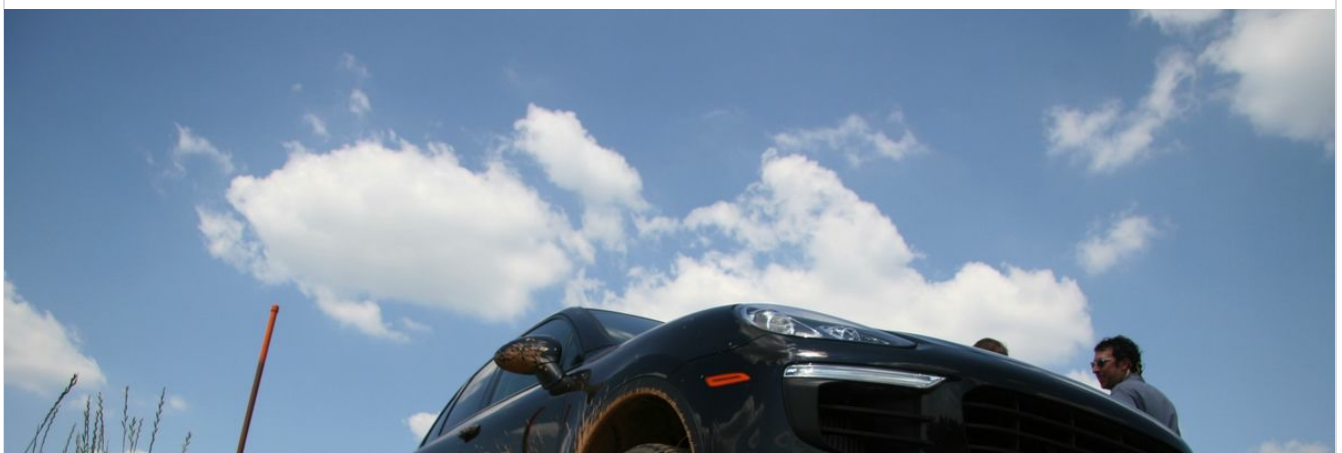
Porsche's \$100 million investment in the combined facility at One Porsche Drive is its largest outside of Germany. The capital sunk into it reflects the importance of the US market to Porsche, one of its two largest along with China. Though it remains a quasi-boutique brand, Porsche sold more cars in America in 2014 (over 48,000) than at any time since entering the US market 65 years ago.

Ironically, the complex actually sits on land previously occupied by Ford's Hapeville Assembly plant, which opened in 1947, and it employs clever reuse of the old plant's elements like wooden power poles and untouched concrete blocks from the 1950s discovered during construction. Designed by Formula 1 architect Tilke Engineering, Porsche's 1.6-mile driver development track — adjacent to the Experience Center and headquarters building — combines a challenging handling circuit, low-friction circle (skidpad), and a low-friction handling circuit with an off-road course.

*"COMING OUT OF THE  
[LAST] CORNER  
ACCELERATING  
TOWARD THE BUILDING  
IS PHENOMENAL."*

Blasting around it at near triple-digit speeds in any of Porsche's cars from the 911 Turbo to the Cayenne SUV is thrilling and a bit intimidating. It's meant to be: no matter how well done, a virtual facsimile can't simulate the risky feeling associated with speed.

"Going through the esses, the side barriers seem close but they're almost psychological barriers," Oosthuizen enthuses. "Coming out of the [last] corner accelerating toward the building is phenomenal."





Porsche has worked to minimize the chances of anyone getting hurt, though the track barriers will undoubtedly meet some sheet metal occasionally. Drivers will always be paired with a coach who'll tailor the experience to their interests, whether that's limit-handling at speed, tackling a 70-degree hill on the off-road course, or simply evaluating the next Porsche they'd like to buy.

And with the installation of in-car cameras in the future, Porsche hopes you'll share video via your social media platform of choice. The same applies inside the adjacent building, where the company is making sharing your tour across services from Periscope to Snapchat as easy as possible.

## *INDIVIDUALS CAN, FOR A SUBSTANTIAL FEE, DISPLAY THEIR OWN CARS THERE*

Situated across the four floors of One Porsche Drive are a classic car gallery and archive, a restoration center, a driving simulator lab, a human performance center, and a fine dining restaurant. The gallery features significant Porsches from private collections and Porsche's own museum. On display are race cars from a 1,100-horsepower 1972 917/30 to a 1986 959 Paris-Dakar Rally Raid racer. Street-going versions of the 911 and 356 are on display as well. Not only will the gallery change periodically, but individuals can, for a substantial fee, display their own cars there.

After perusing the gallery and the restoration center — where historic Porsches are revitalized with vintage German parts — you can try your hand at racing tracks around the world against other drivers in the Center's driving simulator lab with its five sophisticated simulators and instructors. The human performance center comes complete with advanced fitness equipment and personnel to evaluate your physical and psychological performance, critical metrics to have before getting behind the wheel of an actual race car. How many people will routinely use these facilities is up for speculation, but the 356 Restaurant — named after Porsche's first production vehicle — should see a steady flow of business.



Porsche anticipates around 30,000 visitors a year, and anyone is welcome, Porsche owner or not — you just have to pre-register. A visit can be as casual as booking a table at the restaurant, to simple walk-throughs, to guided tours and driving experiences, all the way up to taking delivery of your new Porsche on-premises. Wheel time on Porsche's track starts at \$300 for an hour and a half with a Boxster, and up to \$750 to try both the 911 Turbo and the hardcore GT3. Corporate groups are also welcome to tour, host meetings, and even stage elaborate dinners in the gallery.

*AS A TOOL FOR SELLING  
CARS AND BUILDING  
THE BRAND, PORSCHE  
IS ON TO SOMETHING  
HERE*

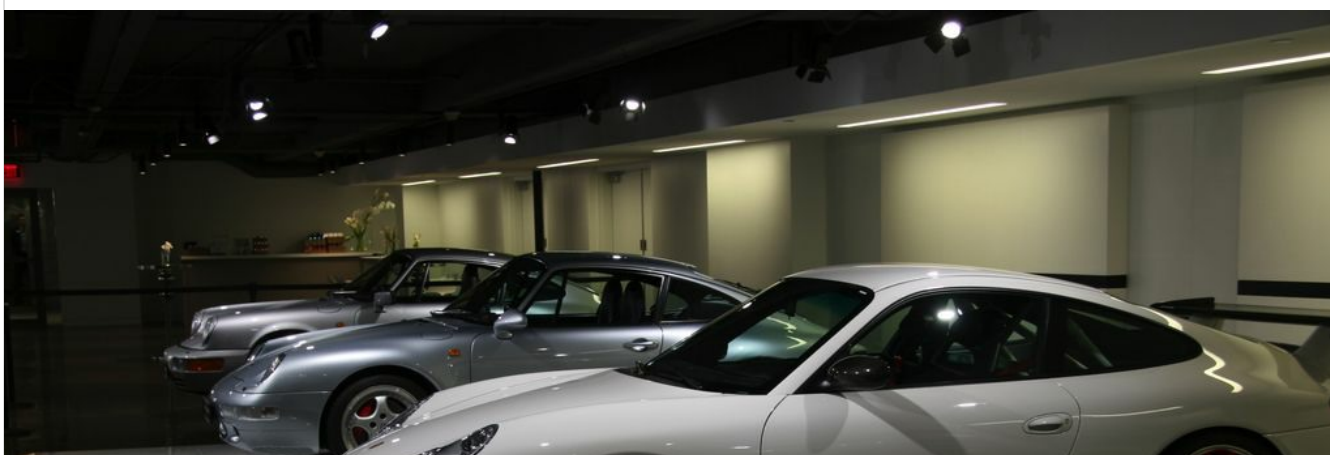
The company could benefit from the unique layout of the facility, too: combining the Experience Center with Porsche's headquarters offices and its consulting and finance arms means employees will literally mingle with visitors daily, potentially gaining useful insights in the process.

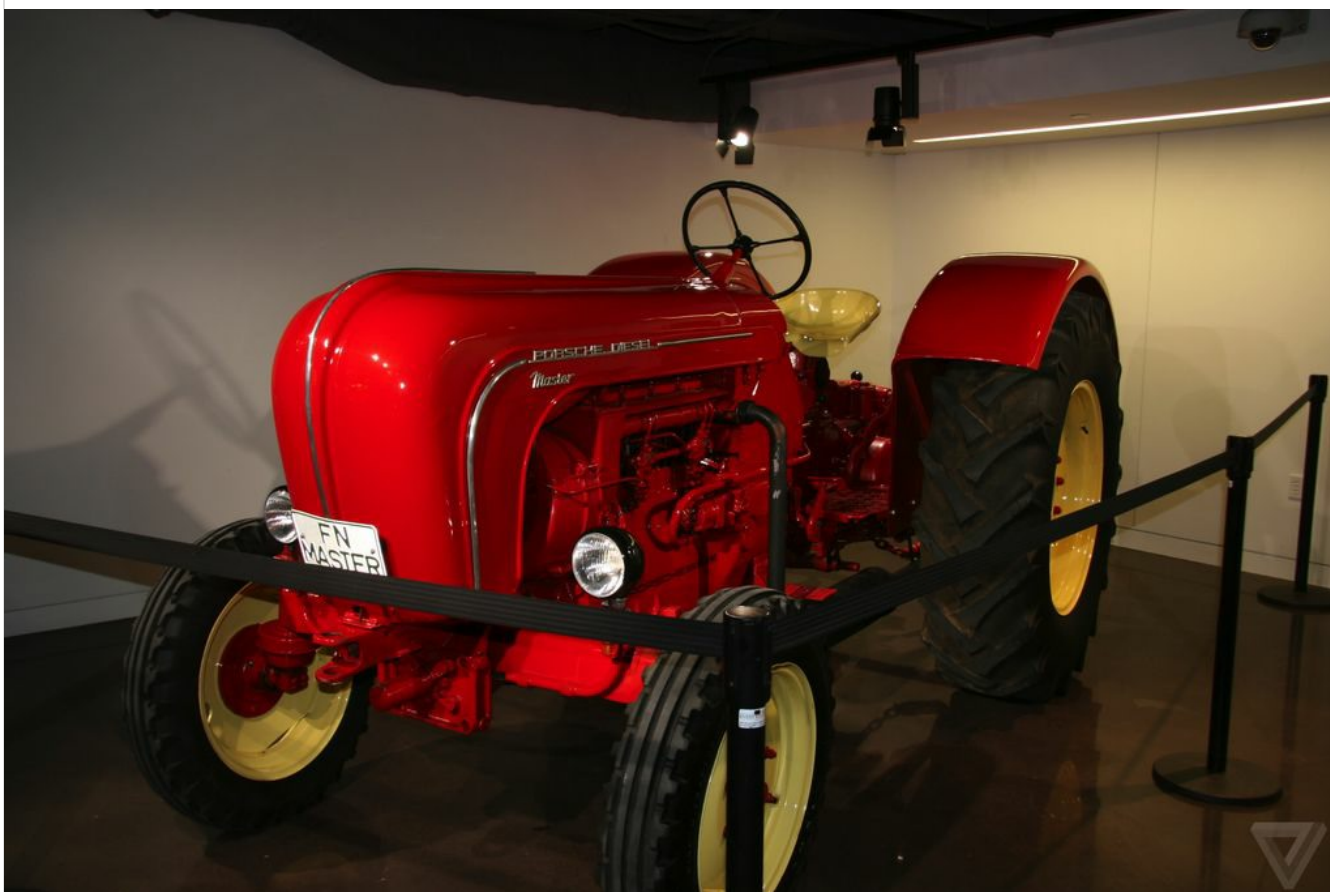
There's honestly nothing else like the newest Porsche Experience Center, though the automaker is building another in Los Angeles set to debut next year. It joins similar Centers in Germany, England, and planned facilities in France, Russia, and Turkey. It's a formula which may soon be copied by competitors like Mercedes, which is relocating to Atlanta itself.

As a tool for selling cars and building the brand, Porsche is on to something here. The scale of the place and myriad details inside from interactive games to historical photos — and of course the cars themselves — will undoubtedly impress. It's not a cliché to say that visitors will come away with a story. That's exactly the benefit Porsche is looking for.

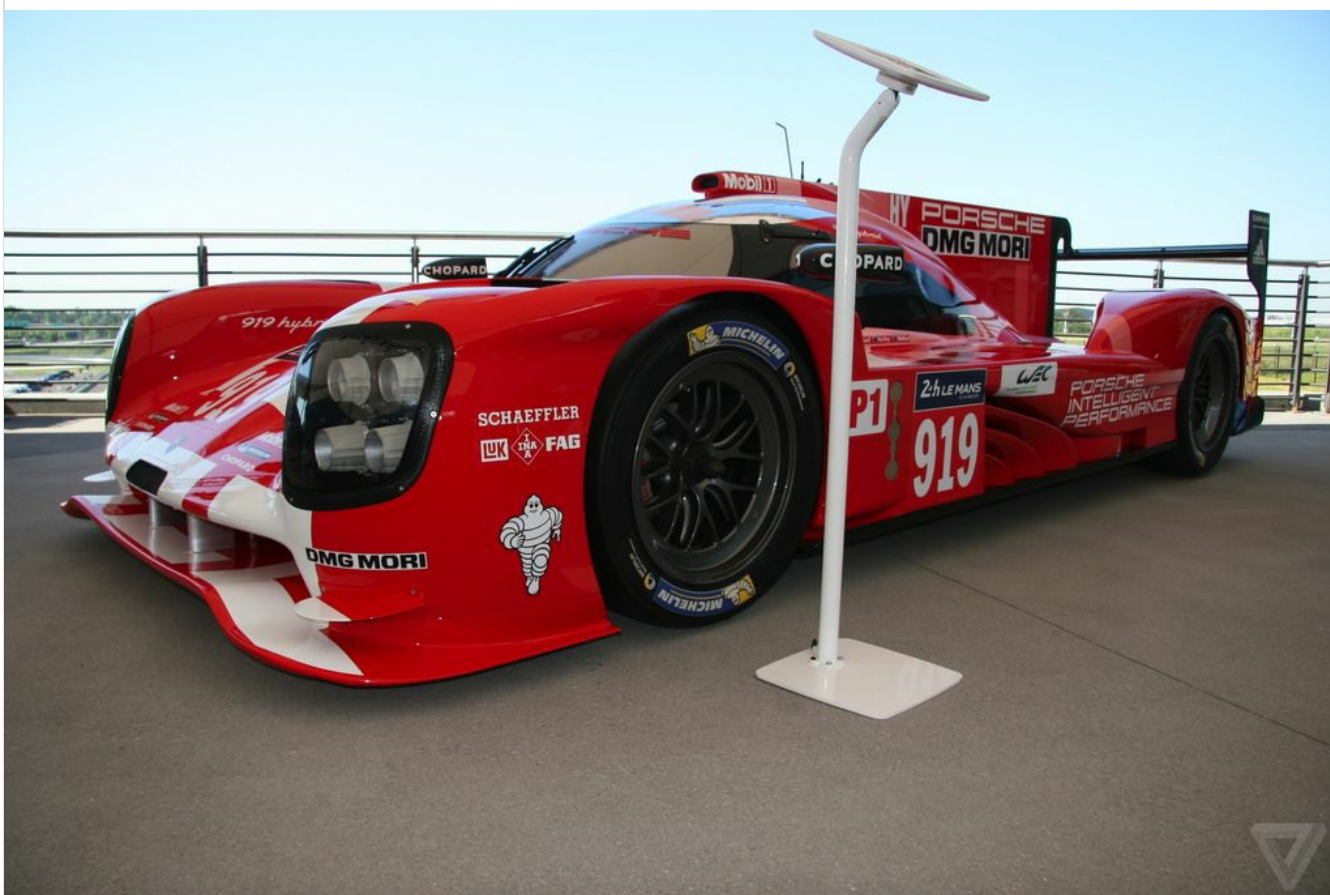
Hint: Use the 's' and 'd' keys to navigate















## MORE FROM *THE VERGE*

[The Simpsons loses Ned Flanders, Mr. Burns, and Principal Skinner as Harry Shearer quits](#)

[The best cheap smartphone you can buy](#)

[Elon Musk almost had to choose between saving SpaceX or Tesla](#)

[Mad Max: Fury Road is the future of pulp](#)

[Microsoft reveals all the editions of Windows 10](#)

[On the front lines of humanity's high-tech, global war on rats](#)

[Large Hadron Collider captures incredibly rare particle decay for the first time](#)

## THE BEST OF *VERGE VIDEO*



### LG Watch Urbane review

DISCUSS AT VERGE VIDEO

	<a href="#">LG Watch Urbane review</a>
	<a href="#">This is the digital age of comics</a>
	<a href="#">How Mad Max breaks down the car chase</a>
	<a href="#">Facebook brings Instant Articles to your newsfeed</a>
	<a href="#">LG G4 Review</a>

THERE ARE **7** COMMENTS. [READ THEM.](#)

[SHOW SPEED READING TIPS AND SETTINGS.](#)

# THE VERGE

### THE SECTIONS

- [Longform](#)
- [Video](#)
- [Reviews](#)
- [Tech](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Culture](#)
- [Cars](#)
- [Design](#)

### THE BASICS

- [Site Status](#)
- [About](#)
- [Contact](#)
- [Tip Us](#)
- [Forums](#)
- [Jobs](#)

### THE ELSEWHERE

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Tumblr](#)
- [YouTube](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Subscribe](#)

