

The Porsche Experience C



Disneyland is the happiest place on earth. If you're 5. If you're an adult, you may find happiness 25 miles to the west at the Porsche Experience Center. We've been in anticipation of the new facility since it was announced in 2011, and we're glad it's finally

Center Los Angeles



Article Kevin Ehrlich | photos Mary Fischer

here. The new Porsche Experience Center (PEC LA) sits on 53 acres in Carson, California and officially opened to the public in mid-November. As one of only five such sites world-wide, it is an indication of the importance of the Southern California market to Porsche.

Visitors will see display areas, a look into the working area for Porsche Motorsport North America (PMNA), a bistro with sandwiches and pastries called the Speedster Cafe, a more formal restaurant in the second level called Restaurant 917, and a shopping boutique. For potential buyers, the Fitting Lounge offers a look at the wide range of Porsche options, custom colors and anything else

personalized your checkbook can support. In addition to conference and meeting rooms, the facility also has a Human Performance Center which will be used to test and train drivers who pilot the Porsche race cars in competition.



The main event, however, is the patchwork of tracks, roads, and driving features that really have our attention. The many tracks include a course that mimics a country road, an ice hill with a 7% slope and water jets, a low friction circle made of polished concrete and when wet induces oversteer at all speeds, an off-road course with 40 degree declines and ascents, and what's sure to be a favorite – the acceleration straight. The acceleration straight affords an environment where Porsche launch control can be fully explored, but there's added twist: at the end of the ¾ mile straight is a replica of the Kaurussell – the famous banked curve on the North Loop of the Nürburgring.

On our visit, there were about 25 road cars either being used or awaiting use for the various customer experiences. The approach is to let the customer combine the car of their choice with the experience of their choice. As you might imagine, the price tag varies and you won't be taking the 911 on the off-road course, but there are some interesting alternatives.



Want to compare the 911 in two and four-wheel drive formats? How about contrast the 911 Turbo with the 911 GT3? How about sampling the mid-engine Cayman back-to-back with the rear-engine 911? Want to focus on the Cayman GT4 or the Panamera four door sedan? There is even a program for those without prior manual transmission experience. The website currently offers 16 experiences with more to come.



The rear of the facility includes an outdoor patio with a variety of couches and tables. The setting is a perfect place to watch people tentatively get into their mounts, depart, and then return with a big smile on their face. Porsche driving instructors are there to either provide coaching or take the wheel themselves. There were plenty of photos being taken of happy customers next to the cars that took them for their experience.

Look on the website for the full variety of experiences, but you'll be doing it in Porsche's cars rather than your own. Sadly, you cannot bring your own car. The various tracks are also strictly for experiences and driver education. There are no autocross or actual racing events at the facility.

Porsche Motorsport North America has been located in Santa Ana for decades, so the ability to move into a larger and newer facility should be a positive change. Notably, PMNA does a lot more than just support current racing efforts. They have the technical expertise to support older racecars as well – both those owned by the Porsche factory via the Museum and those owned by private clients.

On our visit, the Porsche Experience Center displayed a selection of current road cars including the low-production purist 911R. That wasn't all though. Across from the 911R was a prototype of the mid-1980s 959 supercar, a 1970 Porsche 917 in famous blue and orange Gulf Racing colors, and a 919 LeMans racer showcar. The Porsche Museum in Stuttgart clearly has generously lent

several gems to the Center which will undoubtedly be used for a base to support future historic events as well.

Immense glass windows provide a portal into the PMNA workshops. While the workshops are an active work area so spectators can't walk amongst the cars, the workshop helpfully lined up all of its current residents for easy viewing. What current residents? Among others, a Penske RS Spyder, a 1994 LeMans winning Dauer Porsche prototype, a Lowenbrau sponsored 962 - the most famous racing Porsche in the United States in the mid-1980s, and a 959 rally car (complete with damage incurred in competition and a cautionary sign warning against cleaning the car and losing the original dirt). Any one of those is the stuff of Porsche racing legend.



Unlike Disneyland, there is no charge to visit the Porsche Experience Center. Stop by anytime to check out the cars on display and watch the activity from the rear patio. You don't need to be a Porsche owner. The boutique and café are there but no purchase is necessary. The location will likely become a common spot for events and is available for rent to private parties as well.

The Porsche Experience Center is located in Carson within sight of the intersection of the 405 and 110 freeways and just 14 miles south of Los Angeles International Airport (LAX).