

1952 Porsche 356 America Roadster

Owner
Luay Allawi



TIM SCOTT

THE PORSCHE TYPE 540 ISN'T TECHNICALLY A Speedster, but it did kickstart the idea. The more precisely known Typ 540 K/9-1 – commonly called the America Roadster – sported an air-cooled 1.5-litre flat-four producing 70bhp. That may not sound like much until you realise that in 1953 the regular 356 kicked out a mere 40 ponies.

The 356 Speedster that came later cost two-thirds of the price, and its predecessor wasn't a commercial success. But boy oh boy, did the America Roadster have the right formula. It came about after US importer Max Hoffman convinced Porsche the brand needed a lightweight convertible to compete with the best from Jaguar and Austin-Healey. The America Roadster had only an emergency folding roof, and it could keep up with rather larger sports cars of the era. Unfortunately, the production methods used to create the model's aluminium body proved to be too costly, and in 1952 Porsche built only 16 units before the car's discontinuation in 1953. All but one of these were sold in the US, and they were successfully raced by wealthy amateurs.

This particular America Roadster was built in 1952. It has the unusual feature of a fuel filler protruding through the front bonnet, as well as wire-mesh headlight covers; these were obviously specified with long-distance races in mind. The car competed extensively during its early life, and is now believed to be the only example in Europe. It was expertly restored by DK Engineering in 2001, since when it has rarely been seen in public.

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| ENGINE | 1.5-litre, flat-four, air-cooled, overhead valve, 70bhp, twin carbs |
| CONFIGURATION | Rear-engine, four-speed manual transmission, rear-wheel drive, unitary body and chassis, torsion bar suspension front and rear, drum brakes all-round |



OPPOSITE Forerunner to the Porsche 356 Speedster, the America Roadster had the right formula.

ABOVE Prominent fuel filler and wire-mesh headlight covers specified with long-distance races in mind.