

The perfect wave

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10/07/2019 The Porsche and surfing festival on the island of Sylt, off the coast of north Germany, sent out a signal far across the sea for the second time – and it was heard as far away as New York and Australia. You don't expect things to be ordinary at Petro-Surf.

The exhausts of the flat six-cylinder engine are mixing things up for the beautiful people in Kampen, the heart of Sylt island. Alongside privately owned 911 and 356 models, as well as two exhibits from the Porsche Museum, Germany's northernmost island is also hosting a few very special sports cars that break all the rules. Some proudly wear the patina of age; some are fitted out with serious racing kit, while others sport a roof rack carrying a surfboard.

Then there's the bright red Bobbycar toy firmly lashed down on the lemon-yellow G-model. A gearshift knob embossed with Y-E-E-E-H-A in place of the usual gear sequence; a tool sitting in a Louis Vuitton pocket; a steam wheel below a car's dashboard that releases 1.2 bar on request; these and other unusual modifications say a lot about their owners – and about the upcoming event.

Everyone who has travelled here has a sports car they love, and they all want to add their own stamp, as a personal signature. However, the first thing everyone does as they get out of their Porsche is to adjust their hair – the wind is blowing hard all weekend. Welcome to the north, to Petro-Surf: a community of surfers and Porsche enthusiasts from all over Germany. For two days, they flock from all points of the compass to this North Sea island – to indulge their passion for Porsche. The evening before the event stars with a relaxed barbecue at the "Porsche auf Sylt" site.

The first meeting took place in 2018. "Participation has tripled for take two," observes Angelo Schmidt, one of the organisers behind Petro-Surf.

Someone in the audience in Kaamp Hüs, the epicentre of Petro-Surf, wants to know what Porsche has to do with surfing. "Well, a great deal," answers Thomas Bexon, gesticulating broadly. "On my board I look for the same perfect line in a wave that a Porsche driver looks for in the next corner. And the kick from being in an accelerating Porsche triggers an adrenaline rush similar to what you feel riding a surfboard," says the 35-year-old Australian.

Bexon is probably one of the most sought-after longboard manufacturers: surfers on all the most famous beaches dream of standing on one of his boards and clients from all over the world fly to Bexon so that he can create the perfect work of art for them. These coveted products are crafted by hand and each bears his first name: Thomas. He heads to South Korea next week but today he sits on a cosy couch in the shade of a reed roof, next to pop artist and Porsche enthusiast Richard Philips, London designer and illustrator Stevie Gee, Porsche factory driver and Le Mans champion Richard Lietz and Uwe Makrutzki, Head of Porsche Classic Factory Restoration.

They are all taking part in the Petro-Surf Experience Talk, having been invited to attend the second Petro-Surf meeting by Ken Hake and Angelo Schmidt. And they all understand each other … Surfing, art and Porsche all go together here. Hake and Schmidt have known each other since childhood and of course they met while surfing. While Schmidt fully devoted himself to his sport, going on to open a surf school on Sylt, Hake was drawn out into the wider world – though not before becoming the German surfing champion.

Eventually Hake returned to Germany from California, created "Marine Machine", his own label in Hamburg, and bought his first Porsche: a 930 model 911 3.2 Carrera. "My passion for Porsche came from my father. He was one of the first people on the island of Sylt to own a Porsche, though it wasn't as a status symbol – he worked hard for it. That was in 1963 and it was a 356 Super, the one with the famous Fuhrmann engine. My own first Porsche moment was actually rather painful. When I was a little boy, I got my fingers jammed in the door of a G-model and I've definitely never forgotten that pain!" Hake laughs.

Memories and moments with a Porsche are absolutely the focus of Petro-Surf. Many attendees wander around the cars on show, talking shop, being inspired by them or revelling in memories. Australian longboard demigod Bexon has a Porsche moment to share as well. "Once, my father came from Sydney to pick me up from school in his white Porsche 944. I lived in Queensland, in a small village. I remember

the colour of the interior so clearly: burgundy red! The next time I was at school, everyone was talking to me about the Porsche," recounts Bexon.

"Someday I'll be able to afford a Porsche too – a 964 generation 911 would be fantastic," he adds, "but I'll have to build a few more boards first though. In the past eleven days I've sanded 81 units. I lost the skin on my fingertips in the end but I only noticed it when the boards started slowly turning red," he says, laughing. This is the kind of guy you only find at Petro-Surf. Hake in particular appreciates how unique his guests are: "Despite rain and storms, everyone has a smile on their faces. Many amazing vehicles have turned up, but I'm most interested in the people behind them. At Petro-Surf, one is always more interesting than the other – and I love that."

Porsche Deutschland is the main sponsor of the event. Marketing director Bastian Schramm can be found among these like-minded souls. "It's exciting to see what's happening on the scene right now. At Petro-Surf we meet an audience that passionately likes to drive air-cooled Porsche cars. At the same time, the cool surf lifestyle is celebrated here. Both worlds embody a common attitude towards life that fits perfectly to Sylt."

Info

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