



# Mercedes-Benz Classic Center

## A World-Class Preservation Facility for a World-Class Marque

The heart of any automobile brand is its reputation, a reputation built on quality, durability, safety, success in motorsports and, of course, styling. But reputation is also built on heritage, which incorporates all of the above features.

And so, of course, the world-class reputation and respect for Mercedes-Benz vehicles is well-deserved, and built on all of the above attributes.

But while car companies have come and gone over the last century, Mercedes-Benz has remained at the pinnacle of automotive technology and reliability for more than 130 years. And there is no greater evidence of this than the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center in Irvine, California.

Opened in June of 2006, the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center is dedicated to the preservation of classic Mercedes-Benz vehicles. The Center considers a Mercedes-Benz to be a “classic” when a particular chassis has been out of production for fifteen years or more.

The scope of their products and services is far-reaching and staggering:

- Complete restoration services for every classic Mercedes-Benz vehicle – from mechanical maintenance and repair to complete mechanical overhaul to frame-up nut-and-bolt restorations.
- Full structural and cosmetic repair, including fabrication of NLA components.
- Total upholstery refurbishing, including duplication of OE fabric patterns and materials.

The Mercedes-Benz Classic Center spans more than 28,000 square feet, all dedicated to the preservation, repair, restoration, and maintenance of classic Mercedes-Benz vehicles. It incorporates separate work stations for various services – metalworking, paint

prep, spray booth, mechanical service bays, alignment, and final assembly.

There are also an extensive parts department, a storage area, a machine shop, and even a showroom where selected customer cars are exhibited, along with the occasional classic Mercedes-Benz available for sale.

The facility features a team of some twenty two specialists, including craftsmen, parts specialists, and management. Each craftsman has a specialty talent perfectly suited to the tasks at hand. Some are auto body craftsmen, some are specialists in engine systems like early fuel injection, some are painters, some are upholsterers. Most are multi-





same detailed inspection and evaluation. Dialogue with the owner or consigner begins the process, with discussion of services desired.

The vehicle is examined in detail, assessing visually apparent mechanical and cosmetic needs, along with documentation of any existing flaws or damage. An initial outline plan is developed based on these discussions and observations.

with the car owner, discussing recommended repairs and other services, along with expected costs and an estimated timetable for completion.

In the case of a total restoration of a pre-war car, for instance, the process may span as much as two to three years. This time frame is representative of the attention to detail required to restore one of these priceless cars to as-new condition.

3. Repair and refinish. This is where the craftsmanship at the Center becomes most apparent. The Center has a vast library of documentation on almost every classic and vintage Mercedes-Benz vehicle. And they also are in direct communication with their counterparts in Germany, who can provide detailed specifications, drawings, and technical and refinishing information on nearly any Mercedes-Benz vehicle ever built. Such data can include frame alignment specifications, internal engine clearances and other assembly specifications, and even such information as to original fabric patterns and materials when restoration involves re-upholstering interior components.
4. Reassembly and final inspection. Meticulous attention is paid to

talented craftsmen with certain individual specialty talents, and all are artisans in their own right.

The facility accepts assignments spanning the full scope of maintenance and repair. They can service, calibrate, and tune the mechanical fuel injection used in the legendary gull-wing 300SL, or perform a complete frame-up restoration on a pre-war model.

Every restoration project, large or small, is subject to the same meticulous four-step process:

1. Arrival and initial inspection. Every car brought in for any kind of service receives the

2. Disassembly and documentation. Those areas to be serviced are carefully disassembled, and the conditions of various components are recorded in written form as well as photographically. All disassembled components are carefully packaged, labeled, and inventoried to assure authentic reassembly, down to nuts, bolts, and washers. This, along with the vast data base available at the Center, assures complete authenticity of the finished product.

Once disassembly and documentation are complete, consultants from the Center engage in extensive dialogue





detail during the reassembly process, and each component is individually inspected and tested in the process. In addition, once a restoration is complete, every system in the vehicle, including mechanical systems and cosmetic accoutrements are afforded a white glove inspection and evaluation to assure that every aspect of the restoration meets the extraordinarily high standards of this operation. Upon completion and careful evaluation, items such as suspension parts receive the same color painted inspection markings as they would have received during original production.

Any anomalies are noted and corrected, and a detailed written report is provided to the owner.

It is not uncommon for the Center to have as many as thirty cars at a time in various stages of repair and restoration. This allows for the most efficient use of the craftsmen's time when parts need to be sourced or fabricated.

As you would expect, the Center has a vast parts department of

the most commonly-needed parts, including those that may be correct for various models or model years. And they also have direct access to parts

specifications, blueprints, and parts inventories at Mercedes-Benz headquarters in Germany. While work is never rushed at the Center, when necessary, needed parts can be air-freighted to the Center, and most common parts can arrive in just one or two business days.

Happily, the parts inventories at the Center, and from Germany, are available to independent repair

and restoration shops that may be servicing classic Mercedes-Benz vehicles. While the Center does not offer technical repair assistance to shops or vehicle owners, parts professionals at the Center are intimately familiar with Mercedes-Benz vehicles of all vintages, and work with technicians and restorers to meet their parts needs.

While tours of the facility are not offered to the public, the resources of the Center are a great asset to owners seeking the ultimate in restoration services, and to those in independent repair and restoration shops in need of authentic parts for vintage Mercedes-Benz vehicles. |

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