

Škoda Popular Sport (1936): Outstanding success at the Monte Carlo Rally

- › In January 1936, the Škoda Popular roadster took second place in the Monte Carlo Rally in the under 1,500 cm³ class
- › The team tested their leather overalls, heating and Baťa tyres with off-road tread in the snow-covered Giant Mountains
- › Limited-edition series model Škoda Popular Monte Carlo set standards in both technology and design

Mladá Boleslav, 14 May 2026 –90 years ago, Zdeněk Pohl and Jaroslav Hausman set off from Mladá Boleslav for the famous Monte Carlo Rally in their Škoda Popular Sport. In the principality of Monaco, they drove the roadster to one of the greatest successes in Škoda Auto's motorsport history.

The Monte Carlo Rally, which is as famous as it is demanding, was first held in 1911 to attract tourists even during the cold winter months to the Principality of Monaco. Zdeněk Pohl and Jaroslav Hausman took part in the fifteenth run, which took place from 25 January to 2 February 1936, with the Škoda Popular Sport and impressively held their own against the competition.

Since the length and difficulty of the route from the official starting point were also decisive for success in the Monte Carlo Rally, Pohl and Hausman set off from Athens and travelled via the Riviera to Monaco. Other possible starting points included Bucharest, Palermo, Stavanger or Tallinn. Within 17 hours, the pair had covered 850 kilometres from Prague to the ferry in Trieste in their Škoda Popular Sport. After arriving in the Greek metropolis of Athens, Zdeněk Pohl and Jaroslav Hausman had four days to recover and prepare their vehicle technically for the rally – without the assistance of a mechanic or professionally equipped service vehicle.

The 3,852-kilometre journey via Thessaloniki, Belgrade, Budapest, Vienna, Strasbourg and Avignon to Monaco took four days in total. Pohl later recalled, "I saw strange things along the way. On one occasion, a horse was reversing towards us at full speed; another time, I had to dodge an elephant. The road was clear, of course – we were hallucinating after four nights without sleep. The hum of the engine made us tired, plus it was very foggy."

Out of the 105 teams registered, only 72 vehicles finished the Monte Carlo Rally in 1936. The Škoda Popular Sport reached the finish without any penalty points, and it also passed the technical inspection and did well in the skill test. This secured second place for Pohl and Hausman in the under 1,500 cm³ class.

Their success with the Škoda Popular Sport was the result of careful preparation. For example, the duo tested their leather overalls and off-road Baťa tyres in the snowy Giant Mountains. Since the pair could not agree during the preparation whether a wooden or tin shovel would be better suited to freeing the car from the snow, they ultimately packed both options.

The Škoda Popular Sport was fitted with the modified chassis of the lighter Popular series, but the engine came from the more powerful RAPID. The four-cylinder with a displacement of 1,386 cm³ generated an output of 34 hp, the top speed was around 110 km/h. New Ate-brand hydraulic brakes improved the braking performance. Two fuel tanks with a total capacity of 170 litres guaranteed a range of 1,500 km; consumption was 11.3 litres per 100 km. Its total weight was 790 kilograms, of which the open body accounted for only 250 kilograms. The fully loaded Popular weighed in at around 960 kg, plus 170 kg for the driver and front passenger. During the cold season, Pohl and Hausman benefited from the hot air heating as well as a holder for a thermos flask and the partially heated windscreen. The folding passenger seat also came in handy, allowing the co-pilot to rest during the journey.

The automobile manufacturer from Mladá Boleslav took their great success at the Monte Carlo Rally as an opportunity to expand the model range to include an exclusive series of sports vehicles. The first Škoda Popular Monte Carlo roadster was delivered in July 1936, followed by the first coupé in August 1936. The official presentation was held at the Paris Motor Show on 1 October 1936. By 1939, Škoda had built around 70 roadsters and coupés in the series, and customers included the then fourteen-year-old Yugoslav King Petar II Karađorđević.

One of these vehicles has been part of the Škoda Museum collection since 1968. The black Popular Monte Carlo coupé from 1937 is one of only twenty surviving copies. It was painstakingly restored in the early 2000s and has since been attracting attention at classic car events at home and abroad.

The design of the models with their characteristic headlights and lattice in front of the radiator grille is influenced by the style of the interwar period. With its elegantly curved lines, the Škoda Popular Monte Carlo is still a design icon in the company's history. Today, the 'Monte Carlo' equipment line for the Fabia, Scala and Kamiq model series commemorates Škoda's great motorsport successes at the rally in the Principality of Monaco.

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Media images:



Video: Škoda Popular Sport (1936)

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Source: Škoda Auto



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The car with a folding roof was equipped with, among other things, a heater and a partially electrically heated windscreen. It also had holders for thermos flasks and a map as well as a searchlight.

Source: Škoda Auto



Škoda Popular Sport (1936): Outstanding success at the Monte Carlo Rally

In January 1936, the driver team Hausman and Pohl (from the left) took second place in the Monte Carlo Rally in the under 1,500 cm³ class with the Škoda Popular Sport roadster.

Source: Škoda Auto



Škoda Popular Monte Carlo

Škoda customers also benefited from the motorsport success at the Monte Carlo Rally: the successful Popular was released as the Škoda Popular Monte Carlo with roadster and coupé variants.

Source: Škoda Auto

Škoda Motorsport

- › Škoda celebrates 125 years of Motorsport since the first efforts in 1901, garnering success in rallies as well as in circuit racing.
- › Highlights include winning the 1981 European Touring Car Championship (ETCC) with the Škoda 130 RS.
- › Since 2009, the Škoda Fabia celebrated numerous successes for the Czech manufacturer on rally stages worldwide.
- › Until 2014, the Škoda Fabia S2000 (2.0 naturally aspirated engine, four-wheel drive) secured 50 international titles and national rally championships. The Škoda Fabia S2000 also helped to win the FIA European Rally Championship (ERC) and the Intercontinental Rally Challenge (IRC) three times each.
- › The successor model Škoda Fabia R5 (1.6 turbo engine, four-wheel drive) entered the scene in 2015. Later renamed to Škoda Fabia Rally2 and followed by the further developed Škoda Fabia Rally2 evo, the model collected nearly 2,000 victories in 68 countries until the end of the 2022 season.
- › During this period, Škoda Motorsport factory drivers Jan Kopecký (CZE), Esapekka Lappi (FIN), Pontus Tidemand (SWE) and Kalle Rovanperä (FIN) won the FIA World Rally Championship's support category WRC2/WRC2 Pro. Škoda Motorsport also took the WRC2/WRC2 Pro Manufacturers' title five times in a row from 2015 to 2019.
- › Beginning with the 2020 season, Škoda Motorsport changed its strategy to supporting private teams. The success story continued: Driving a Škoda Fabia Rally2 evo run by Toksport WRT, Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR) und Emil Lindholm (FIN) became WRC2 Champions in 2021 and 2022. Mikkelsen became WRC2 Champion again in 2023 with team Toksport WRT, when the all-new Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 entered the scene. The Škoda Motorsport supported team Toksport WRT also won the WRC2 Teams' title three times in 2020, 2022 and 2023. In 2025 Toksport WRT took another WRC2 Teams' title and Nikolay Gryazin/Konstantin Aleksandrov of Toksport WRT become WRC2 Challenger drivers' and co-drivers' champions respectively.
- › Škoda Motorsport customer teams have also won titles in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC), FIA European Rally Championship (ERC), the FIA African Rally Championship (ARC), the FIA North American and Central American Rally Championship (NACAM), the FIA South American Rally Championship (CODASUR) and the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC).

Škoda Auto

- › is successfully steering through the new decade with the Next Level Škoda Strategy;
- › aims to become one of the top three best-selling brands in Europe by the end of the decade by offering its customers the best of both worlds through a range of attractive BEV, hybrid & ICE products;
- › effectively exploits the potential in important growth markets such as India, Vietnam and the ASEAN region;
- › currently offers customers 12 passenger car model ranges: Fabia, Scala, Octavia, Superb, Kamiq, Karoq, Kodiaq, Elroq, Enyaq, Slavia, Kylaq and Kushaq;
- › delivered more than 1,040,000 vehicles to customers worldwide in 2025;
- › has been part of the Volkswagen Group, one of the world's most successful car manufacturers, for more than 30 years;
- › is part of Brand Group CORE, an organisational merger of the Volkswagen Group's volume brands, with the aim of achieving joint growth and significantly increasing the overall efficiency of all five volume brands;
- › independently develops and produces components such as MEB battery systems, engines and transmissions for other Volkswagen Group brands;
- › operates three production plants in the Czech Republic; has production capacities in Slovakia, Kazakhstan and India, mostly through group partnerships, as well as in Vietnam and Ukraine in cooperation with a local partner;
- › employs around 40,000 people worldwide and is active in almost 100 markets.