

autobuzz

35 years later, beloved East German car still sputters on

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● The last Trabant, a candy pink model, was produced in 1991

AFP | Berlin, Germany

With its boxy design, cramped interior and notorious clouds of blue smoke billowing from its exhaust, the Trabant is often referred to as the worst car ever made.

But somehow the plucky East German vehicle has refused to die out, with a dedicated group of enthusiasts still devoted to keeping refurbished models on the road.

As Germany prepares to celebrate 35 years of reunification on Friday, the number of Trabis on the streets is actually on the rise as the old rattletraps gain a new legion of fans.

There are around 40,800 so-called Trabis registered in Germany today, according to the KBA federal transport authority -- compared with about 33,000 ten years ago.

Glenn Kuschan, 58, counts several Trabant owners among the customers at his car repair

shop south of Berlin.

They include “all sorts”, Kuschan told AFP, from “older people who grew up with (Trabis) to young people who really want an original vehicle”.

Kuschan is the proud owner of 23 Trabis himself, including a white model that once belonged to his father and has clocked up more than 500,000 kilometres (nearly 311,000 miles).

The Trabi has achieved “cult status” because of its association with German reunification and the fall of the Berlin Wall, he said.

The first Trabis were produced in 1957, three years after the communist East German regime decided to create a car for

the people.

The bodywork was made of plastic mixed with paper or cotton fibre to save on steel imports.

The backseat windows did not open and the noisy two-stroke engine sent thick clouds of burnt oil and gasoline into the air.

The car’s top speed of 112 kilometres (70 miles) per hour made it a laughing stock in West Germany, where the likes of BMW and Mercedes owned the road.

But the car nonetheless became a beloved symbol of everyday life in East Germany, praised for its quirky design and durability.

‘Indestructible’

East Germans would put their name on a list and wait up to 15 years for their Trabant to come off the assembly line in one of three colours -- ivory, sky blue or peppermint green.

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, many East Germans drove to the border and sat in long queues in their Trabis with the engines spewing out fumes as they waited to cross.

After reunification, many East Germans sold the cars in favour of more sophisticated models, while thousands simply gave them away or abandoned them at the border.

The last Trabant, a candy pink

model, was produced in 1991.

Today, visitors to the Trabi Museum in Berlin can browse a collection of 20 of the little cars and even take a Trabant tour through the city.

Participants get to feel the thrill of driving a Trabi themselves as they are guided past some of Berlin’s most famous communist landmarks.

Thomas Schmidt, 49, who works at the museum and as a driver on the tours, said he “practically grew up in a Trabi” and now sees the car as “part of my identity”.

“It’s like a little endurance runner, it can do anything, it’s indestructible,” he said.

“And if it does break, the nice

YOU
KNOW WHAT

The Trabant, produced in East Germany, was famously made with a body of Duroplast – a plastic material reinforced with cotton waste, not metal. Despite its humble 26-horsepower engine and smoky exhaust, it became a symbol of freedom when thousands of East Germans drove their Trabants across the border after the Berlin Wall fell in 1989.

thing is that you can repair everything yourself”, he said, due to the “simple technology”. “People used to say: if you have a hammer, pliers and some wire, you can get to Leningrad.”

Kia unveils PV5, its first all-electric modular vehicle redefining sustainable mobility

TDT | agencies

Kia Corporation is redefining sustainable mobility with the launch of its first dedicated Platform Beyond Vehicle (PBV), the all-electric Kia PV5. Debuting in Korea before expanding to Europe and global markets by 2026, the PV5 sets a new benchmark for modular, flexible and connected business and personal transport.

Built on Hyundai Motor Group’s Electric-Global Modular Platform for Service (E-GMP.S), the PV5 integrates advanced software, low-floor design, and scalable configurations. Available in Passenger, Cargo, and Chassis Cab variants, it combines practicality, safety and innovation.

Developed with global customer feedback and partner-



ships with Uber, DHL Korea, and Kakao Mobility, the PV5 features modular interiors, removable seats, stain-resistant materials, and flexible mounting systems for tools and equipment. The Passenger variant doubles as a business shuttle or leisure vehicle, while the Cargo mod-



el offers up to 5.2 m³ capacity and accommodates two Euro pallets.

Power options include 43.3 kWh to 71.2 kWh batteries with up to 416 km WLTP range and 30-minute fast charging. Smart regenerative braking, advanced driver-assistance systems

(ADAS), and Vehicle-to-Load (V2L) power up to 3.68 kW enhance performance and usability.

A dedicated PBV infotainment system, Android Automotive OS integration, and fleet management tools enable connected mobility. Kia’s Flexible Body

System allows up to 16 model variants, while factory-certified conversions ensure seamless customization for professional use.

Kia also offers a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) version, underscoring its commitment to inclusive mobility.

Mass production of the PV5 Passenger and Cargo variants has begun in Korea, with new models -- including the PV7 (2027) and PV9 (2029) -- to follow. Kia aims to sell 250,000 PBVs globally by 2030, establishing a scalable, software-driven mobility ecosystem.

