Luftgekühlt celebrates air-cooled Porsche heritage in Atlanta

12/10/2026 New cars, new stories, new venues: each edition of Luftgekühlt offers a fresh perspective on air-cooled Porsche culture. For Luft 12, Atlanta – home of Porsche Cars North America – provided the backdrop.

Since its first edition – a meet-up in a Los Angeles parking lot in 2014, organised by two-time Le Mans class winner Patrick Long and creative director Howie Idelson – Luftgekühlt has grown to be an event like no other. It lures in thousands of people for every event, with a global fanbase.

It's a car show that's on its own adventure, taking place in a cultural hub, usually in an entirely new location, with different cars, different themes and different stories.

The home of Porsche in America

For this year's event, Luftgekühlt went to the Town at Trilith, a cultural hub south of Atlanta, Georgia –

the city where Porsche Cars North America has been headquartered since 1998.

Despite hurricane warnings forcing the organisers to push the start time back by several hours, 8,000 fans made the journey. With dry weather prevailing, they were rewarded with 300 display cars lining avenues that, for one weekend, became one of the world's greatest Porsche exhibitions.

Like with every edition of Luftgekühlt, the selection of cars – and their stories – was carefully curated. Anyone who wants to display their Porsche has to apply, with a description, history and images, and the Luft team reads them all. "Every event is an evolution on an evolution," says Luft's Jeff Zwart, the creative director whose career has spanned filmmaking, advertising, and racing. "We want to find new stories to tell."

Fifty years of the Porsche 935

This year marked half a century since the creation of the Porsche 935, the ultimate air-cooled racing car. To mark the occasion, the Luft team brought together three yellow examples raced by the Whittington brothers, alongside a 935 from Brumos. Among them was a car that's not only of enormous significance to Porsche, but one directly tied to Atlanta: the 1979 Le Mans-winning Porsche 935-K3, which was raced to victory by brothers Don and Bill Whittington, and German driver Klaus Ludwig. The Whittingtons' link to Atlanta? Around the time they won Le Mans in this car, they bought the Road Atlanta race track.

The K3 was the first rear-engined car to win the 24 Hours of Le Mans outright, and was the rightful hero car of Luft 12.

Opening up the Targa history

It's 70 years since Porsche's first victory at the Targa Florio, the formidable open-road race that ran between 1906 and 1977 in Sicily, Italy. It was part of the equal-part glamorous and high-stakes sportscar racing calendar of the early and mid 20th century.

Porsche took its first victory there in 1956, with Italy's Umberto Maglioli single-handedly piloting a mid-engined, air-cooled Porsche 550 A Spyder. It was the first of 11 victories for Porsche – more than any other manufacturer in the race's 71-year history.

The race gave its name to the 1965 911 Targa – the world's first sports car to combine open-top freedom with a fixed roll bar. And the demand for it came from America, with its distinctive fixed roll bar being Porsche's response to growing concerns about convertible safety in the important US market.

Four cars on display brought that racing history to life, starting with a 1959 Porsche 718 RSK with a tale of triumph narrowly missed. Having set the fastest lap and led for much of the 1959 race, the RSK

was denied victory by a suspension failure on the final lap. Alongside it were the Porsche RS 60 that claimed victory in 1960 and the Porsche 904 (Carrera GTS) that won the 1964 Targa Florio. Completing the quartet was a 1971 Porsche 908/3, a model developed specifically to tackle the demanding circuits of the Targa Florio and Nürburgring.

The story-making Porsche models on display

Part of the joy of Luft 12 is the breadth of stories it tells. "Luft is fascinating visually, it has fascinating stories, and it's fascinating for people who like the mechanical side of the cars. The highlight of each event is always when new cars show up that we haven't shown before," says Zwart.

Luft visitors might well have recognised the Gulf-liveried 917K. Brian Redman set a fastest time in this very car at the 1970 Le Mans test, before it was purchased by Formula One driver Jo Siffert, who rented it out to appear in Steve McQueen's Le Mans film, screened in 1971. It shied away from the limelight for years, before being purchased by the Brumos Collection, and displayed in Atlanta for Luft 12.

By sheer contrast, the 1957 Porsche 356 A Outlaw couldn't have had a tougher life. A Frankenstein creation, its owner found a rusted 356 under rubble in a North Carolina general store's basement. The lower half was rusted, so he took the roof and welded it to a better shell. After years of ill health, the owner sold the unfinished project in 2004. Then, 20 years later, it turned up for sale, less than four kilometres from his home, still with his handwriting on the boxes of parts. At Luft 12, it was there to be seen in all its freshly restored – and patina-preserved – glory.

Air-cooled people make the event

Like some kind of pilgrimage, every Luftgekühlt draws in individuals, families, friends and – for some – convoys. Some caravans are official, like Luft's own Air-Cooled Caravan, others are informal, organised across states. People are as much a part of Luft as the cars.

The event's official host was Tommy Kendall – the youngest IMSA champion in history (he won it while studying), a four-time Trans Am Series winner, as well as two appearances at the 24 Hours of Le Mans.

Kendall was in good racing company, with American racing driver Leh Keen bringing a range of custom-built Porsche 911 examples – created by the Keen Project – to the event. He took inspiration from his upbringing driving through Georgia, his racing career, and Porsche's rally-prepared 911 SC models of the 1970s and '80s.

Luftgekühlt is an event to be explored by anyone, says Zwart. "It's always been approachable for anyone. There are no barricades at the event, stopping you from getting close to the cars. You come through the gate and you explore; you walk into buildings and through rooms, down streets and avenues. You discover the cars, you talk to people, you read and hear about their stories."

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