

## **About Air-Cooled Automobiles**

From the earliest days of motoring, air-cooling was a viable choice for automobile engines. Franklin was the first automaker to offer an air-cooled engine in 1902, and they stuck with it until the Great Depression forced them out of business in 1934.

Using a large engine-driven fan, ductwork, and finned cylinder blocks, air-cooled cars force high-speed air over the hot engine components to keep them cool. Air-cooling was so effective that it was used by automakers like Porsche for some of their fastest and most powerful race vehicles, and many motorcycles are still air-cooled today. Franklin demonstrated the effectiveness of air-cooling by driving one of their cars through Death Valley BACKWARDS without incident—a feat that no water-cooled car could match.

Today, there are few air-cooled cars on the market, but the reason isn't because air-cooling is not effective. Instead, emissions standards and aerodynamic improvements made air-cooling less than optimal for today's world. Liquid-cooled vehicles warm up faster (which is critical for emissions), radiators can be packaged in smaller spaces, and hot coolant provides superior heat for passenger comfort (if you've ever driven a VW Beetle in the winter, you know air-cooling works so well that there's not much heat for the interior).

Air-cooled cars like the Franklin were favorites of early aviators like Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart, thanks to their obvious similarity to aircraft.

The Father's Day Car Show display at Stan Hywet of air-cooled vehicles showcases the many manufacturers who embraced air-cooling and the wide variety of shapes, styles, and sizes of cars that used it. Air-cooling offers many virtues that were clearly attractive to automakers throughout the 20th century, including simplicity, reduced maintenance, and proven reliability.