

Colin's Mercedes Benz 190E

This week marks six years since I bought my Mercedes 190E and overall it has been a great experience. I still love driving the car and it is great to see them getting some recognition.



My car is a 1991 2.0 litre manual in Blue Black [blauschwarz] metallic paint with a cream fabric interior, sunroof, power windows, 8-hole alloy wheels and full timber console.



I am the third owner. The previous owner had the car for 22 years. He bought it while he was working in England and brought it back to Australia in 1997. He put a lot of miles on the car. The odometer was 180,000 miles when I bought it and will click over 200,000 miles [more than 320,000kms] in the next few weeks. There is not a lot of evidence of all this use.

The car is still very original: engine, drive train and interior are all original, as is most of the paint. The gear lever is showing some wear and I should look at maybe replacing that!



Manual 190Es are extremely rare in Australia, but this configuration of the 5 speed manual gearbox and the 2.0 litre fuel injected engine was the most popular in Europe. The gearing is quite high making for a very relaxed and economical touring car.

Why did I buy the 190E? A good question. The car is a retirement project and I was looking for a European car of about this size and vintage. My initial search was for a SAAB 900i or an Audi 80 or 90. Finding a SAAB in the configuration that I wanted, manual and non-turbo, proved difficult. Research on Audis of that era showed that parts support in Australia was non-existent. So I broadened my search and started to see a few 190s. I had always thought they were nice cars and further research showed it was a good candidate, with a reputation for reliability, drivability and good parts backup. They were also surprisingly cheap.

Rough cars could be bought for under a \$1000, good ones for not a lot more.



At LaPouse.

The 190E is a significant model for Mercedes Benz. About 1.8 million were built between 1982 and 1993, all 4 door sedans. It is the origin car for the whole C class. It was the first small car that Mercedes had made in decades and was created as a competitor for the BMW 3 series. It was also the first Mercedes with a proper, multilink, independent rear suspension.

There are many reasons why I like my 190E. The compact size, brilliant ride, road holding and handling are part of it. I also love the styling. By 1991 it was probably looking quite staid as most makes had moved on to more rounded, blob like styling, but the sharp lines have aged well. Now, in 2022 and at 31 years of age, and 40 years since the model debuted, it still looks great. Designer Bruno Sacco has said it was his favourite design.



At the Mad Max Museum.

The car had always been well looked after and kept under cover. It came with detailed service history, but there were things that needed attention when I bought it. In particular, the suspension was untouched in 25 years: new shock absorbers and lots of ball joints and rubber bushes were needed. Subsequently I have also replaced engine and gearbox mounts, the exhaust, heater core, gearshift linkages and clutch master cylinder. The car is now in top mechanical condition and is lovely to drive. And that is the main reason I enjoy it: it is a great car to drive, on the highway, the back roads or the twisty bits.



The 190E has taken me on many road trips to Canberra, the south coast, the Hunter Valley and Mudgee and more. The longest trip was from Sydney to Broken Hill then Mildura, back along the Murray River to Rutherglen and home to Sydney.

I am looking forward to many more adventures.

