



THE BUGATTI RAILCAR: ETTORE'S GENIUS ON RAILS

- **A monumental masterpiece, unique in the world**
- **An express train that reached speeds of nearly 200 km/h in the 1930s**
- **Rétromobile Paris from January 28 to February 1st 2026 - Pavilion 7.1**

Paris, October 30 2025. For its 50th anniversary, Rétromobile is returning to its roots: collectors' passion for exceptional machines, particularly the world of Bugatti, to which its founders were deeply attached. This anniversary edition is thus in line with the major monumental exhibitions that have marked the history of the show, such as the spectacular arrival of the Berliet T100 a few years ago.

This year, Rétromobile is dedicating one of its flagship exhibitions to a masterpiece of mechanical ingenuity: the Bugatti Autorail. Measuring 23 metres long, weighing nearly 40 tonnes with its transport convoy, and powered by four engines from the legendary Bugatti Royale, it remains the last surviving example of the 88 produced.

A true national treasure, kept at the Cité du Train in Mulhouse, it will travel to Paris in a special convoy over several days, which will be relayed in real time to allow enthusiasts to follow its journey. Its arrival is already considered an event in itself.

[Discover the exhibition teaser here](#)

When excess Bugatti reinvents the railways

Bugatti didn't just want to build cars: he dreamed of unrivalled performance. It was through his research into the Royale's 8-cylinder engine that he imagined a new generation of express trains. In just nine months, the plans were drawn up, the prototype was built, and the first models were put into service.

For Raoul Dautry, director of the French State Railway Network, Ettore Bugatti was responding to a strategic need: to modernise France's high-speed rail connections. His train reached 140 km/h on the line and set a



© Bugatti

speed record of 194 km/h, an incredible exploit at a time when the country was still crawling along behind steam locomotives. Witnesses described it as "a real oddity" crossing the French countryside.

The train that saved Bugatti

The fate of the railcar was sealed in the shadow of the legendary Bugatti Royale. Manufactured in the hope of appealing to royalty, the most prestigious of cars was hit by the Great Depression: its price, equivalent to five or six Rolls-Royces, scared off the wealthy. Bugatti was left with engines in stock and his company in grave danger.

By adapting these extraordinary engines to rail, he turned failure into opportunity. Parisian aristocrats and bourgeoisie flocked to board this futuristic vehicle to travel to Deauville, Le Havre or Cherbourg. On 30 July 1933, President Albert Lebrun also took a Bugatti railcar to attend the inauguration of the Cherbourg ferry terminal, travelling 372 km in just 3 hours and 15 minutes.

As the Cité du Train sums it up: "It was thanks to this vehicle that Bugatti saved his company."

An icon of luxury: "Nothing is too expensive, nothing is too beautiful"

On board, the experience was as innovative as the performance. Reversible seats allowed passengers to choose the direction of travel or to gather in a square, creating veritable rolling salons. The driver, seated in a central booth high above, could instantly set off in either direction without turning the vehicle around: a revolution that demonstrated Bugatti's practical and aesthetic vision.



© Arthur Chambre

Although intended for commercial use, its finish naturally destines it for the elite. Some will even see this layout as a precursor to "first class business" on the railways.

Other Bugatti treasures to discover

Alongside the Bugatti railcar, the exhibition will also feature seven unique prototypes, created between 1928 and 1956, illustrating the brand's audacity and creativity, from sporting luxury to the most ambitious innovations.

Brought together with the support of the National Automobile Museum in Mulhouse, in partnership with Eiffage Rail and the Cité du Train, this exceptional selection will offer the public a rare insight into the history of a great French house of engineers, designers and aesthetes.

Rétromobile, 50 years of history and mechanical passion

Since 1976, Rétromobile has been the unmissable event for enthusiasts of mechanical heritage. In 2026, the show will celebrate half a century of discoveries and excitement, continuing to reveal the most surprising episodes in the history of transport.

The Bugatti Autorail exhibition promises to be one of the highlights of this anniversary edition, paying tribute to the audacity of a manufacturer who wanted to push all boundaries, whether in the automotive or railway fields.

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Rétromobile 2026

FROM JANUARY 28 TO FEBRUARY 1 2026 - PARIS EXPO PORTE DE VERSAILLES

Press contacts Peter & Associés - +33 1 42 59 73 40

Solène Bouchut - sbouchut@peter.fr - +33 6 31 60 44 24

Pauline Broustal - pbroustal@peter.fr - + 33 6 25 42 84 86

About Rétromobile

Created in 1976, Rétromobile is now one of the most prestigious classic car shows in Europe. Its prestige enables it to bring together all the key players in the classic car industry and offer unique and exclusive exhibitions and events. It is also recognised by its visitors as the world's largest temporary art gallery dedicated to the automobile. A true leader in the classic car world, Rétromobile is the annual event for all car enthusiasts.

About Comexposium

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