

RENAULT'S TANK UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT AT THE RÉTROMOBILE SHOW IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE SAUMUR TANK MUSEUM

Renault has been part of the history of France for more than a century. In 1911 Louis Renault launched a production of vehicles to equip the French army, which marks the beginning of the great adventure "Renault under the flags". Renault is becoming a key player in this new war economy by supplying weapons, ammunition, aircraft engines, trucks and armored cars. This year, Rétromobile, in partnership with the Saumur Tank Museum, will pay tribute to this beautiful alliance and will delight its visitors with the M7 Priest self-propelled gun in a dynamic demonstration in front of the Pavilion 1.

THE RENAULT FT LIGHT TANK

This tank has come to symbolise the First World War and was nicknamed the Victory Tank. It was intended as a replacement for the older Schneider and Saint-Chamond tanks – primarily «breakthrough tanks» which were less manoeuvrable and relatively fragile. In 1916, General Estienne (considered by many in France to be the father of the modern tank) asked to meet Louis Renault to discuss a project to design a revolutionary new tank. Having first turned down his request, Louis Renault eventually told him: «*General, I'm going to build you your tank*». He quickly started work on a prototype. The General had been extremely clear in his request. He wanted a light, rapid tank that was effective in combat, easy to build, inexpensive and well suited to mass production. On 22 December 1916, Louis Renault got behind the controls of his prototype and gave the first official demonstration before France's military authorities. This armoured vehicle was completely modern, light, easy to manoeuvre and highly effective. It featured a turret that could rotate through 360°, oversized tracks and a rear engine separated from the crew compartment. This revolutionary design still features in today's tanks. Renault's light FT tanks had their battlefield debut on 31 May 1918 between Bétheny and Neuville, just north of Reims. 30 of them successfully broke up a German advance on the other side of the river Marne. 20 years later, the Renault FT was still in operation at the start of the Second World War. The FT tank was exported to many other countries and around 700 were also built under licence in the United States.



Renault FT 1917
«Musée des Blindés» Collection

TECHNICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF 1917'S RENAULT FT LIGHT TANK

Crew: 2 men

Weight in combat order 6.7 tonnes

Maximum armour: 22 mm

Armament: One 8-mm machine gun or one 37-mm gun

Engine: Renault 4-cyl, 4.5 L

Power 35 hp

Fuel: Petrol

Fuel consumption: 30 litres per 100 km.

Road speed: 7.5 km/h

THE RENAULT B1 BIS TANK

With its enveloping tracks, its 75-mm gun on the left-hand side of its body and a 47-mm turret gun, this 32-tonne tank was extremely impressive. The powerful 6-cylinder 307 hp Renault engine was derived from an aeroplane engine. The tank's steering, together with the 75-millimetre gun's aim, was managed by a fully-hydraulic Naeder type transmission system. In those days, this was a very modern method. In battles, the B1 Bis was feared by German armoured vehicles. It was powerfully armed and its shielding was so thick that enemy shells could not get through it. But such a monster required a great deal of maintenance, rigorous training was needed to drive it and it was extremely inefficient: the B1 Bis guzzled 330 L of fuel for every 100 km it travelled. Of the 400 B1 and B1 Bis tanks built, only 11 remain, some of which are wrecks.



Renault B1 bis
«Musée des Blindés» Collection

TECHNICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF 1937'S RENAULT B1 BIS TANK

Crew: 4 men
Weight in combat order: 32 tonnes
Armour: 60 mm
Armament: 1 75-mm gun on the right with 74 shells, 1 47-mm gun in the turret with 62 shells, 2 7.5-mm machine guns with 4800 cartridges
Engine: Renault 6-cyl, 16 L engine derived from an aeroplane engine
Power: 307 hp
Fuel: petrol
Operational range: 180 km
Fuel consumption: 330 litres/100 km
Fuel capacity: 400 L
Road speed: 28 km/h

THE RENAULT AMR 33

In 1931, Renault began investigating the feasibility of an armoured machine-gun vehicle on tracks, complete with turret for the cavalry divisions. Thanks to the 8-cylinder engine mounted on Renault Reinastellas, the AMR could reach speeds of 50 km/h and was well suited as a reconnaissance vehicle with excellent all-terrain abilities. This light tank was used up until 1940. The model on show is the only one still in existence of the 123 that were built.



Automitrailleuse Renault AMR
«Musée des Blindés» Collection

TECHNICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF 1933'S RENAULT AMR 33

Crew: 2 men
Combat weight: 5 tonnes
Maximum armour: 13 mm
Armament: 7.5 mm machine gun
Engine: 1 Reinastella engine
Power 84 hp
Fuel: petrol
Fuel consumption: 64 litres per 100 km.
Road speed: 65 km/h

RENAULT R36, THE TANK SUPPLY TRACTOR

This light Renault tractor was designed to refuel tanks during combat and supply them with more ammunition. It would be loaded with 800 kg of shells and cartridges. Its cab was derived from a small civilian truck which lent it an extremely modern appearance. This tracked tractor pulled a 600 kg trailer which carried a 450 L petrol tank, oil cans and water. The vehicle was presented to the military authorities in January 1938.



Tracteur ravitaillement 36 R

TECHNICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF 1936'S RENAULT R36 TANK SUPPLY TRACTOR

Crew: 2
Vehicle weight in running order: 2700 kg
Engine: 4-cylinder 2120 cc
Power 38 hp at 2500 rpm
Maximum speed: 35 km/h
Operational range: 130 km

RENAULT R35 LIGHT INFANTRY TANK

In the early 1930s, the 1917 Renault FT was still in use across most of the French army. But the time had come to design a more powerful tank. The specifications were quite precise: a crew of 2, a minimum weight of 8 tonnes, an engine that could drive it at 20 km/h, irrespective of the slope, 8 hours of autonomous operation and a 37-millimetre semi-automatic gun twinned with a 7.5 mm machine gun. Renault built 1540 R35 tanks between 1935 and 1940. This tank was sufficiently armoured to withstand blasts from small-calibre guns. The crew was made up of a driver at the front, and – at the turret – a commanding officer/shooter who just sat on a leather strap. This tank was also used by the Polish, Romanian, Yugoslav and Turkish armies.



Renault R35
«Musée des Blindés» Collection

TECHNICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF 1935'S RENAULT R35 LIGHT INFANTRY TANK

Crew: 2 men
Weight in combat order: 11 tonnes
Maximum armour: 40 mm
Armament: One 37-mm gun and one 7.5-mm machine gun
Engine: Renault 4-cyl, 10 L
Power 84 hp
Fuel: Petrol
Fuel consumption: 200 litres per 100 km.
Road speed: 20 km/h

DYNAMIC PRESENTATION OF THE TANK MUSEUM'S M7 PRIEST TANK

This year, the team at the Saumur Tank Museum will present the M7 Priest self-propelled artillery vehicle, performing outdoor dynamic demonstrations outside hall 1. This armoured vehicle was designed for the artillery in 1941 and remained in use until the end of the war. The pillbox housed a large 105 mm Howitzer which made it a formidable weapon. This self-propelled artillery vehicle played a key role in winning the Second Desert Battle of El Alamein against the Germans. It was nicknamed the «Priest» by the British Army because it featured a small open turret which bore a curious resemblance to a priest's pulpit. The engine which powered this piece of artillery was just as impressive – a superb Ford V8 (that one might just as easily expect to find in a sports car), built entirely out of aluminium and featuring two cylinder heads with four overhead camshafts, 4 valves per cylinder. Its 18 L developed 500 hp and it guzzled 500 L of petrol per 100 km.



M7 Priest Tank
«Musée des Blindés» Collection

TECHNICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF M7 PRIEST TANK

Crew: 7 men
Weight in combat order 23 tonnes
Armour: 50 mm
Armament: a 105-mm gun – a 12.7-mm machine gun
Engine: Ford V8 18 L engine – four overhead camshafts – 32 valves
Power: 500 hp
Fuel: Petrol
Operational range: 180 km
Fuel consumption: 500 litres/100km
Road speed: 40 km/h

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