

PRESS RELEASE

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The motorhome and caravanning industry is booming

Mobile travel is in vogue – from families and senior citizens to adventurers, an increasing number of Europeans are now travelling by caravan or motorhome. Here’s a fact not many people know: the first “camper car” was invented by a ski-pole manufacturer from the edge of the Alps in Germany – out of love for his family.

Almost 100 years ago, the concept of travelling purely for pleasure was still completely unheard of. The term “leisure time”, as we use it today, simply did not exist. Europeans only travelled long distances to visit relatives or for business. The German entrepreneur Arist Dethleffs was one of them. As a manufacturer of ski poles and whips, he invented Germany’s first caravan – largely motivated by pure self-interest and, above all, love. In fact, all he really wanted was for his family to join him on his long business trips, which took him all the way to deepest Russia and even as far as Egypt. Today, his invention is regarded as the origin of an entire industry. His “camper car”, as he called it back then, was one of the first mobile travel vehicles in Europe and heralded the start of a whole new era.

A lot has happened since the first prototype – today’s caravans and motorhomes are brimming with luxurious equipment and technical refinements. Sophisticated ventilation systems, innovative insulation materials and state-of-the-art heating systems make camping a pleasure, even in winter. Thanks to its flexibility, the mobile holiday has been rapidly gaining in popularity for many years and, having initially peaked during Germany’s post-war “economic miracle”, has experienced another strong boom in recent years. The reasons for this resurgence are manifold: low interest rates, political unrest in previous tourism hotspots, and also the desire for freedom and an eco-friendly way to experience nature,

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as well as flexibility – all of these factors are creating a new golden age for the caravanning industry. “Middle-aged people today are highly active; they want to visit new places and experience something new. At the same time, they enjoy their home comforts and prefer their own bed and bath in their leisure vehicle to a strange hotel room,” explains Anita Lorenscheit from the Dethleffs marketing team. “Younger families with children, on the other hand, like to be flexible and value an unconventional holiday without pre-booked meal times or dress codes. Motorhome owners appreciate above all the spontaneity that their leisure vehicle offers. Bad weather? Simply pack up and move on. If the first holiday destination is a far cry from the promises made in the brochure, simply choose another destination. Heading to the amusement park or thermal baths for the weekend? Just load your vehicle the evening before, hit the road and spend the night in a camping space nearby. This is the ideal way to ensure a relaxed start to your day out.

In 2019, the European caravanning industry enjoyed the second most successful year in its history. For the first time since 1980, the high-water mark of 210,000 newly registered vehicles in Europe was surpassed again. This represents significant growth of 4.1 per cent compared to the previous year. Germany was once again the major growth driver in Europe last year – Dethleffs also clearly felt the effects of this. Caravans have been developed, designed and produced in Isny im Allgäu for 90 years – and motorhomes for almost 40 years. “Our global dealer network has been registering strong interest for years and continues to grow. With a few exceptions, demand has increased in all European countries in recent years,” confirms Lorenscheit. Only individual markets are weakening, however this is mostly due to special situations.

By the way, whichever country they hail from, people who like to holiday in caravans and motorhomes share a similar background: “Studies show that camping and caravanning holidaymakers have a good school education, are younger than

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the population's average age and have an above-average net household income," says Anita Lorenscheit, adding that these target groups have high standards and expectations. "Our customers attach great importance to quality. We have the advantage of being able to draw on 90 years of experience, and have always been considered industry pioneers thanks to our numerous innovations." Furthermore, the company's popularity does not stop at Germany's borders. On the contrary, Dethleffs frequently wins international awards for its fairness, safety, sustainability, innovative vehicle concepts and new products.

In 1931, Arist Dethleffs could not possibly have known what his invention would set in motion – and how he would significantly shape the future of travel. Nowadays, camping is an established and hugely popular pastime for us Europeans, and one that will surely find many more fans in the future. After all, no form of holiday is better suited to our growing longing for flexibility and freedom, which encompasses all areas of our lives including our leisure time – and, of course, it is also ideal for a holiday experience surrounded by nature.

About Dethleffs

"Not without my family!" This decision taken by Arist Dethleffs in 1931 inspired him to design Germany's first ever caravan, which he called the "Wohnauto" (camper car) – all because the ski pole and horsewhip maker wanted to have his family by his side when he went on long business trips. Very few people were familiar with the word "leisure" back then; family holidays were a privilege and tourism was still in its infancy. The invention of the Dethleffs caravan marked the beginning of a new era – especially for the company, which eventually devoted itself entirely to the production of caravans, followed by motorhomes.

The pioneering spirit of Arist Dethleffs can still be felt throughout the company to this day. It can be found in the ongoing development of model ranges, in the countless innovations and, needless to say, at the heart of the Dethleffs camping

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story – the family. The company has had close ties with Isny im Allgäu since the very beginning and, with its position as a “Friend of the family”, has its sights firmly set on the core values of the brand.

In addition to motorhomes and caravans of the Dethleffs brand, camper vans and urban vehicles for the Pössl and Crosscamp brands are also developed and produced in Isny.

Erwin Hymer Group

The Erwin Hymer Group is a 100 per cent subsidiary of Thor Industries, the world’s leading manufacturer of recreational vehicles with more than 25,000 employees worldwide. The Erwin Hymer Group unites motorhome and caravan manufacturers as well as motorhome and caravan accessory specialists, hire and financing services under one roof. The motorhome and caravan brands Buccaneer, Bürstner, Carado, Crosscamp, Compass, Dethleffs, Elddis, Eriba, Etrusco, Hymer, Niesmann+Bischoff, Laika, LMC, Roadtrek, Sunlight and Xplore, the motorhome rental companies McRent and rent easy, and also the chassis specialist Goldschmitt, the accessories specialist Movera and the touring portal freeontour all belong to the Erwin Hymer Group.