

Delage D8 1930-35

There's no doubt that the D8s were the most glamorous of all Delage road cars. Conceived at the end of the 1920s, when any prudent manufacturing concern would have opted for more modest new models to keep it afloat through difficult economic times, the glorious D8 was one of the most desirable high-performance cars to be built anywhere in Europe.

Unlike a Rolls-Royce, or even a Hispano-Suiza, a Delage D8 was not a discreet car. Every example made was intended to appeal to flamboyant customers – the sort of people who wanted to keep reminding the world that they were wealthy, and that they enjoyed spending their money.

The D8 was a car specifically designed for what was truly 'Grand Touring'. The early 1930s was a period when many French main roads had been brought up to good condition, when there were very few speed limits, and at the same time there was very little traffic on the roads.

The typical Delage D8 journey would encompass an early start from Paris, a long-legged cruise down the RN7, lunch along the way, and arrival on the French Riviera at the end of the day. Naturally the car would then be parked outside a glossy Nice or Cannes hotel for a time, among other models of the same type.

The original D8 chassis was a conventional ladder-type layout, with semi-elliptic leaf-spring suspension and with cable-operated brakes. To accommodate the spacious coachwork, it was available with a choice of wheelbases – 130 in or 143 in – and complete cars sometimes weighed 4,400 lb.

The engine, however, was an efficient eight-cylinder four-litre unit with five crankshaft bearings, which produced 120 bhp at the very start of its develop-

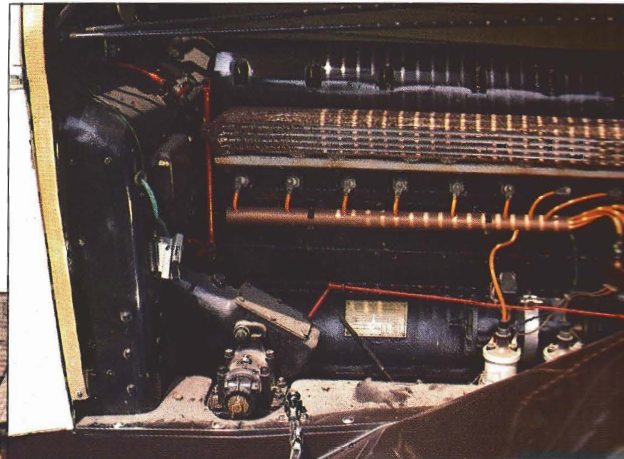
ment. Even with the unaerodynamic coachwork fashionable at the time, the top speed was nearly 100 mph.

Although a sober observer would have concluded that to introduce such an expensive eight-cylinder car after the Depression had already begun was folly, Delage carried on developing the design, with not cheaper, but more and more fanciful derivatives. There were lowered chassis frames, tuned engines, better suspension and more rakish coachwork, the collective result being

cars which rapidly achieved high status, but equally rapidly lost their value when the market collapsed.

Later D8s of all types featured wire wheels, along with gearboxes, hydraulic brakes, and reverse leaf-spring independent suspension. The D8 120 (a Delahaye after the merger with Cotal) featured electromagnetic valves, and were the last of the true Delages, for all the later modified Delahayes.

Below: The D8 was a car of great presence and style, not aimed at a shy or retiring clientele. This is a 1930 Chapron-bodied example.



Above: The D8 was powered by an efficient eight-cylinder four-litre unit with five crankshaft bearings, which produced 120 bhp at the very start of its development. Even with the unaerodynamic coachwork fashionable at the time, the top speed was nearly 100 mph.

Delage D8 variants

Delage D8 Grand Sport

The D8 Grand Sport had a front-engine location, with coachwork on the original chassis. A specially-bodied version could reach 110 mph for 24 hours at 100 mph.

Delage D8S and D8SS

The D8S and D8SS models featured specially-lowered chassis frames, tuned engines tuned to 145 bhp, and higher gearing to guarantee a top speed of more than 100 mph. The D8SS was available with a shorter wheelbase and a two-seater bodywork.

Specification (1930)

Engine: inline eight-cylinder, overhead-valve
Bore × stroke: 77 mm × 86 mm
Capacity: 4050 cc
Maximum power: 120 bhp
Transmission: four-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive
Chassis: separate steel chassis with channel-section side members, tube and pressed cross members
Suspension: non-independent front axle and semi-elliptic leaf springs; live rear axle with semi-elliptic leaf springs
Brakes: drums front and rear
Bodywork: various styles for touring and saloon shells
Maximum speed (approx): 100 mph (153 km/h)

