

Delage Automobile Company

Delâge Automobile Company was founded in 1905 by Louis Delâge who was a pioneer automotive engineer starting manufacturing in Levallois-Perret near Paris. Louis borrowed Fr 35,000, giving up a salary of F 600 a month to start the company to build automobiles. The first Delage model was the Type A which emerged in 1906. By 1912 Delage had 350 workers were producing over 1000 cars annually and offered with four- and six-cylinder sidevalve engines. When the First World War broke out its factories were converted to operate in full support for the war effort. Delage produced munitions as production of passenger cars virtually stopped, with the exception of those built for the French Army.

After the war, Delage moved away from small cars and made its reputation with larger cars. Starting with the CO, with a 4,524 cc (276.1 cu in) fixed-head sidevalve six engine producing 20 hp. The CO plans had been drawn up during the war and was its the first passenger car with front brakes. It was joined by the DO with a 3-liter four.

The 1920s were really the first "Golden Age" of Delage as it attempted to compete with Hispano-Suiza with some success while it competed successfully in European races and hill climbs. A new generation of six-cylinder cars designed by engineer Gaultier in 1922 as Delâge engine production changed to an overhead valve twin-plug head, producing 88 hp supplanting the sidevalve four engine production. Every car was manufactured with four-wheel brakes and Delage became a luxury automobile company that earned its status well into the next decade.

The Delage was, during the Classic Era, France's premiere automobile, offering a combination of superlative performance, exquisite engineering and finely produced beauty that was difficult to surpass. The eight-cylinder models with the exclusive D8 S of the early 1930s were based on a shortened chassis to optimize maneuverability and reduce weight. The D8 S was a four-liter, eight-cylinder engine that produced 118 brake horsepower at 3,800 rpm, 20 more horsepower than the standard D8. The D8 S was France's Bentley - it was a fast automobile, engineered for maximum performance - yet it had an magnificent elegance to its design that made it as beautiful as it was powerful. It was one of the definitive chassis of its period. Only 99 examples were produced, almost all of them fitted with exceptional custom coachwork.

Delâge was acquired by Delahaye in 1935 and the D6-75, launched in 1937, one of the most powerful variations in the D6 series. Powered by a 3.0-liter inline six-cylinder engine it delivered a smooth and quiet driving experience that perfectly matched the luxurious nature of the car. The advanced chassis, combined with independent front suspension, provided excellent handling for the period for which Delage was acclaimed. The stylish lines of the Delâge bodywork and its power allowed drivers to enjoy driving in complete freedom.

Delâge ceased operation in 1953.