

# Artisanal allure of Lamborghini marvels of modernity

January 15 2018, by Céline Cornu

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Lamborghini last year delivered a record number of cars, including models such as this Aventador S Roadster.

The Lamborghini factory in Sant'Agata Bolognese feels like an Aladdin's Cave of luxury Italian cars—a winning mix of modernity and craftsmanship which saw the company celebrate record production levels last year.

The supercar manufacturer, founded in 1963, delivered 3,815 vehicles in 2017, boosting its year-on-year sales by 10 percent.

But there is little time for champagne quaffing: this summer will see the company release a Super SUV, dubbed the Urus and designed for all terrains, from road, to off road, on ice but also sand dunes.

Widening horizons also meant widening floor space, and the company doubled the site in size from 80,000 square metres to 160,000 square metres (860,000 to 1.72 million square feet), an expansion that will allow it to double production in 2019.

For now, five new Urus SUVs are being produced here a day—a figure that will top 20 when the plant is running at full capacity.

The new building, inaugurated in May, boasts a new production line and cutting-edge technologies, including "cooperative robots", designed to make life easier for both fellow robots and human operators.

"It's a very modern factory, but some of the production is still done by hand and is essential, it's in the brand's DNA," Matteo Martini from the manufacturing engineering department told AFP.

## **Tractors to treasure**

The historic quarter of the factory, refurbished in 2014, produces the Huracan and Aventador super sports cars, rattling out a dozen of the first and half a dozen of the second per day.

The waiting time for a Huracan can be eight months. The production line is divided into 23 stations, with workers given 37 minutes to perform their tasks as the seconds tick away on digital clocks.

For the Aventador, workers get 75 minutes at 12 stations. There is more work done by hand here, and it takes 44 days to manufacture the car.

Its monocoque, a technological jewel, weighs only 147 kilos (324 pounds) and is moulded of carbon fiber.

The cars cost a pretty penny: the simplest Huracan model will set buyers back some 180,000 euros (\$215,000) and around 337,000 euros for the Aventador, but the price tag on limited series models can top one million euros.

Lamborghini devotees have the son of grape farmers to thank. Ferruccio Lamborghini made a fortune in tractors before turning his hand to the luxury sports sector and setting out to make "the perfect car".

Only 120 copies were ever made of the first commercialised model, the 350 GT, and though production numbers increased, the company is keen to maintain the idea of exclusivity.

Customers can personalise their cars, from wheel rims to seam colours.

## **German perfectionism**

The leather for the interiors is checked extremely carefully for possible imperfections or damage such as mosquito bites.

The cars are not only road tested but are also given the 'waterfall' treatment.

"They are bombarded with 400 litres of water per minute to check for possible seepage", says Attilo Mandetta, head of the finishing department.

Any defects, spotted by eagle-eyed workers armed with lamps, are marked with a small sticker so they can be fixed.

"The whole factory is clinically clean. Everything is done with a very German rigour, established over the years following Lamborghini's 1998 takeover by Volkswagen," Julien Diez, journalist for Sport Auto magazine, told AFP.

The factory boasts 1,600 workers currently, with another 200 to join the team by the end of this year.

Lamborghini, which claims to offer above-average salaries in the automotive sector, recently won the "Top Employer Italia" award for the fourth year in a row thanks to its treatment of staff and its medical care and extra-curricular offers.

And employees such as Claudio Lammana and Simone Occari say they are treated like "family" and "made to feel like people and not just numbers".

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Citation: Artisanal allure of Lamborghini marvels of modernity (2018, January 15) retrieved 12 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-01-artisanal-allure-lamborghini-marvels-modernity.html>

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