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[thumb|Karmann buildings in Osnabrück](/wiki/File:Karmann_Osnabrück.jpg) **Wilhelm Karmann GmbH**, known commonly as **Karmann**, in [Osnabrück](/wiki/Osnabrück), [Germany](/wiki/Germany), was until 2009 the largest independent [motor vehicle](/wiki/Motor_vehicle) manufacturing company in Germany. From 1901 the company fulfilled roles from design to production and assembly of components for various [automobile manufacturers](/wiki/Automotive_industry); including [Chrysler](/wiki/Chrysler), [Porsche](/wiki/Porsche) and [Volkswagen Group](/wiki/Volkswagen_Group).

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## Origin[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

The company was established in 1901, when Wilhelm Karmann purchased Klases, a [coachbuilder](/wiki/Coachbuilder) since 1874, and renamed the business.[[1]](#cite_note-1) The company then grew together with the expanding automobile industry.[[1]](#cite_note-1)

## Notable programmes[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

Widely known cars produced by Karmann include the [Volkswagen Beetle](/wiki/Volkswagen_Beetle) Cabriolet (1949–1980) as well as the [Volkswagen Karmann Ghia](/wiki/Volkswagen_Karmann_Ghia). Between 1955 and 1974, a total of 443,482 VW Karmann Ghias were manufactured, placing their own [sports car](/wiki/Sports_car)-style body on the chassis of the Volkswagen Beetle. Subsequently, Karmann assembled the [Scirocco](/wiki/Volkswagen_Scirocco), [Corrado](/wiki/Volkswagen_Corrado), and [Golf Cabriolet](/wiki/Volkswagen_Golf_Cabriolet) for [Volkswagen](/wiki/Volkswagen); the [Ford Sierra](/wiki/Ford_Sierra) for the American market (as the [Merkur](/wiki/Merkur) brand by Lincoln/[Mercury](/wiki/Mercury_(automobile)) dealers); and Crossfire coupe and convertible for Chrysler, at the time Daimler-Chrysler. Many Karmann models feature a small wagon wheel emblem, the coat of arms of [Osnabrück](/wiki/Osnabrück), where the company was founded.

Karmann assembled [complete knock down](/wiki/Complete_knock_down) (CKD) kits in an agreement with [American Motors](/wiki/American_Motors) (AMC).[[2]](#cite_note-2) In 1968, AMC introduced the [Javelin](/wiki/AMC_Javelin), a new competitor in the U.S. "[pony car](/wiki/Pony_car)" segment. AMC did not have a manufacturing [subsidiary](/wiki/Subsidiary) in [Europe](/wiki/Europe), therefore, Karmann assembled the American-designed car for distribution in Europe.[[3]](#cite_note-3) Karmann built the cars in Rheine with [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) V8 engines.[[4]](#cite_note-4) About 90% of the necessary components were shipped by boat from the U.S.[[5]](#cite_note-5) All were SST trim versions and their name, **Javelin 79-K** stood for AMC's "79" model number and the "K" for Karmann.

Karmann is widely known for its work on [convertibles](/wiki/Convertible_(car))/cabriolets, providing roof components for convertibles including the [Mercedes-Benz CLK](/wiki/Mercedes-Benz_CLK-Class), the [Renault Mégane](/wiki/Renault_Mégane) CC, and the [Volkswagen New Beetle](/wiki/Volkswagen_New_Beetle) Cabriolet.

Both the [headquarters](/wiki/Headquarters) in Osnabrück and the additional facility in [Rheine](/wiki/Rheine) also construct complete vehicles, such as the former [Volkswagen Golf Cabriolet](/wiki/Volkswagen_Golf_Cabriolet), the former [Audi A4](/wiki/Audi_A4) Cabriolet, the [Mercedes-Benz CLK](/wiki/Mercedes-Benz_CLK-Class), and the [Chrysler Crossfire](/wiki/Chrysler_Crossfire). A small number of vehicles are also produced in Brazil [São Bernardo do Campo](/wiki/São_Bernardo_do_Campo). The Osnabrück facility also produces the chassis and body panels of the [Spyker](/wiki/Spyker_Cars) C8 [Spyder](/wiki/Roadster_(automobile)).

Other facilities at [Sunderland](/wiki/City_of_Sunderland) UK, [Puebla](/wiki/Puebla) Mexico, and [Plymouth Township](/wiki/Plymouth_Township,_Michigan) U.S. manufacture roof systems for the [Nissan Micra C+C](/wiki/Nissan_March), [Volkswagen New Beetle](/wiki/Volkswagen_New_Beetle) Cabriolet, and [Pontiac G6](/wiki/Pontiac_G6), respectively.

A large part of the development of the [Chrysler Crossfire](/wiki/Chrysler_Crossfire) was done independently by Karmann, and the vehicle was produced at their Osnabrück facility. Karmann U.S. also supplied the top sub-assemblies for the third-generation [Chrysler Sebring (convertible)](/wiki/Chrysler_Sebring_(convertible)) and Ford Mustang convertible.

## Karmann total car production[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

[thumb|Volkswagen Karmann Ghia Type 34 (1961–1966)](/wiki/File:Volkswagen_Karmann_Ghia_Typ_34_Jul_1969_1584_cc.JPG) [thumb|Karmann Cheetah Concept 1970.](/wiki/File:Karmann_Cheetah_1970.jpg) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Chrysler_Crossfire_convertible_black-autotop.jpg)[Chrysler Crossfire](/wiki/Chrysler_Crossfire) convertible top in operation

Since its beginning in 1901, Karmann has built more than three million complete vehicles of the models as follows,[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) exceptions as indicated:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **car make / type** | **years** | **number of cars** | **comments** |
| [AMC Javelin](/wiki/AMC_Javelin) 79-K [coupé](/wiki/Coupé) | 1968 | 281 |  |
| [Audi 80](/wiki/Audi_80) [convertible](/wiki/Convertible_(car)) | 1997–2000 | 12,112 |  |
| [Audi A4](/wiki/Audi_A4) cabriolet & [Audi S4](/wiki/Audi_S4) cabriolet | 2002–2008 | 81,959 | base: end 2004 |
| [BMW](/wiki/BMW) 2000 C/CS | 1965–1970 | 13,696 | only [body in white](/wiki/Body_in_white) |
| [BMW 3.0 CS](/wiki/BMW_E9) | 1971–1975 | 21,147 |  |
| [BMW 635 CSI](/wiki/BMW_E24) | 1976–1989 | 86,314 |  |
| [Chrysler Crossfire](/wiki/Chrysler_Crossfire) coupé | 2003–2008 | 37,896 |  |
| Chrysler Crossfire convertible | 2003–2008 | 16,269 |  |
| [Ford Escort](/wiki/Ford_Escort_(Europe)) FEC convertible | 1983–1990 | 104,237 |  |
| Ford Escort convertible | 1990–1997 | 80,620 |  |
| [Ford Escort RS Cosworth](/wiki/Ford_Escort_RS_Cosworth) | 1992–1996 | 8,082 |  |
| [Merkur XR4Ti](/wiki/Merkur_XR4Ti) | 1985-1989 | 42,000 | U.S. version of the [Ford Sierra XR4i](/wiki/Ford_Sierra) |
| [Land Rover Defender](/wiki/Land_Rover_Defender) | 2002–2005 | 2,777 | in [Brazil](/wiki/Brazil) |
| [Mercedes CLK](/wiki/Mercedes-Benz_CLK-Class) [A208](/wiki/Mercedes-Benz_W208) convertible | 1998–2003 | 115,264 |  |
| Mercedes CLK [C208](/wiki/Mercedes-Benz_W208) coupé | 2000–2002 | 28,706 |  |
| Mercedes CLK [A209](/wiki/Mercedes-Benz_W209) convertible | 2003–2008 |  |  |
| [Nissan Micra C+C](/wiki/Nissan_March) | 2006-2010 |  |  |
| [Porsche 356](/wiki/Porsche_356) |  |  |  |
| [Porsche 911](/wiki/Porsche_911) | 1966–1971 |  | 911, 911T, and 911E coupes only |
| [Porsche 912](/wiki/Porsche_912) | 1966–1969 |  | coupe only |
| [Porsche 914](/wiki/Porsche_914) | 1969–1976 | 118,949 |  |
| [Porsche 968](/wiki/Porsche_968) | 1991–1994 | 11,803 | only Body in White |
| [Renault 19](/wiki/Renault_19) convertible | 1990–1996 | 29,222 | Body in White and soft tops |
| [Renault Mégane](/wiki/Renault_Mégane) I convertible | 1996–2003 | 74,096 | [body in white](/wiki/Body_in_white) and soft tops |
| [Renault Mégane CC](/wiki/Renault_Mégane_CC) | 2004-2010 |  | only [retractable hardtops](/wiki/Retractable_hardtop) |
| [Triumph TR6](/wiki/Triumph_TR6) | 1969–1976 |  |  |
| [Volkswagen Beetle](/wiki/Volkswagen_Beetle) convertible | 1949–1980 | 331,847 |  |
| [Volkswagen Karmann Ghia](/wiki/Volkswagen_Karmann_Ghia) coupé | 1955–1974 | 362,601 |  |
| Volkswagen Karmann Ghia convertible | 1957–1974 | 80,881 |  |
| Volkswagen Karmann Ghia Type 34 | 1961–1969 | 42,505 |  |
| [Volkswagen Golf Mk1](/wiki/Volkswagen_Golf_Mk1) convertible | 1979–1993 | 388,522 |  |
| [Volkswagen Corrado](/wiki/Volkswagen_Corrado) | 1988–1995 | 97,521 |  |
| [Volkswagen Golf Mk3](/wiki/Volkswagen_Golf_Mk3) convertible | 1993–1997 | 129,475 |  |
| Volkswagen Golf Mk3 [Variant](/wiki/Volkswagen_Variant) | 1997–1999 | 80,928 |  |
| [Volkswagen Golf Mk4](/wiki/Volkswagen_Golf_Mk4) convertible | 1997–2001 | 82,588 | base Golf Mk3 |
| [Volkswagen Scirocco](/wiki/Volkswagen_Scirocco) I | 1974–1981 | 504,153 |  |
| Volkswagen Scirocco II | 1981–1992 | 291,497 |  |

## Coachbuilt Motorhomes[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

The first Karmann [motorhomes](/wiki/Motorhome) (called coachbuilts to use their proper and correct name) were launched in 1974 based on the [Volkswagen Type 2](/wiki/Volkswagen_Type_2) 'Bay Window' chassis. The bodies were of a sandwich structure. These motorhomes had two beds, kitchen, shower, waste water tank, rear body supports, leisure battery, toilet, hot water heater and gas heating. Optional extra's included the luggage rack over the driver's cab. Approximately 1,000 units were produced through 1979.

With the introduction of the Volkswagen T2/3 - also known as the (T3/Vanagon/Transporter/T25) in 1979, the motorhomes received a permanent overhead area with a bed for two people. Called Karmann Gipsy, 741 were made between 1980 and 1992. This number excludes 30 or more Type 3 [Syncro](/wiki/4motion) models made between 1986 and 1989, and 7 Syncro 16" models made between 1991 and 1992. In addition 113 Cheetah T2/3's were manufactured between 1986 and 1990 to make a total 891 Volkswagen T3 Karmann Coachbuilt Motorhomes - all produced in Karmann Rheine factory and not at Osnabruck as commonly believed.

From 1978 to 1996, a total of 3,103 [Volkswagen LT](/wiki/Volkswagen_LT) based models were produced. These included the LT "M", LT "L 1", LT "L 2", LT "L Distance Wide", LT "L Distance-Wide Gold", LT "H Distance-Wide", LT "H Distance-Wide Gold", LT "S Distance-Wide" and the top-of-the-line LT "Distance-Wide Autovilla".

In 1991, the Karmann motorhome design was updated and based on the [Volkswagen T4](/wiki/Volkswagen_Transporter_(T4)). The Gipsy and Cheetah models names were retained in the form of the Gipsy I (SWB) and Cheetah (LWB). In 1996 two new models were introduced namely the Colorado and Missouri. The [Volkswagen Transporter (T5)](/wiki/Volkswagen_Transporter_(T5)) based versions were introduced in 2003.[[6]](#cite_note-6)

## Production of car modules[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

* [Chassis](/wiki/Chassis)
  + [Chrysler Crossfire](/wiki/Chrysler_Crossfire) [Coupé](/wiki/Coupé) 2001–2007
  + Chrysler Crossfire [Roadster](/wiki/Roadster_(automobile)) 2003–2007
  + [Mercedes-Benz SLK](/wiki/Mercedes-Benz_SLK)
  + [Spyker](/wiki/Spyker_Cars) C8 [Spyder](/wiki/Roadster_(automobile))
* [Roof modules](/wiki/Roof_module)
  + [Audi A4](/wiki/Audi_A4) and [Audi S4](/wiki/Audi_S4) [Cabriolet](/wiki/Convertible_(car)), 2001
  + [Bentley Continental GTC](/wiki/Bentley_Continental_GT) convertible, 2006
  + [BMW](/wiki/BMW) [1 Series](/wiki/1_Series) convertible
  + [Mercedes CLK](/wiki/Mercedes_CLK) convertible
  + [Nissan Micra C+C](/wiki/Nissan_March) [retractable hardtop](/wiki/Retractable_hardtop), 2005
  + [Renault Mégane CC](/wiki/Renault_Mégane_CC) retractable hardtop, 2002
  + [Volkswagen New Beetle](/wiki/Volkswagen_New_Beetle) Cabriolet
  + [Pontiac G6](/wiki/Pontiac_G6) retractable hardtop, 2007
  + [Chrysler Sebring](/wiki/Chrysler_Sebring_(convertible)) retractable hardtop and convertible softtop, 2007
  + [Ford Mustang](/wiki/Ford_Mustang) convertible, 2007

## Bankruptcy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

Family strains of the third generation of Karmanns contributed to bankruptcy of the company.[[7]](#cite_note-7) Falling demand along with other financially connected businesses forced the company to file for protective insolvency on 8 April 2009. Insolvency practitioner Ottmar Hermann followed some of the approach seen with the earlier insolvency of [Woolworths' German business](/wiki/Woolworth_GmbH), and the Karmann business is emerging with little independence, but supported by significant cash investment from long-standing customer [Volkswagen](/wiki/Volkswagen).[[8]](#cite_note-8)[[9]](#cite_note-9) On 8 April 2009, Karmann filed for [bankruptcy protection](/wiki/Bankruptcy_protection) due to the sharp decline in demand for cars, and the company's financial obligations.[[10]](#cite_note-10) [Volkswagen](/wiki/Volkswagen_Group) revealed on 24 October 2009, that it had made an offer to acquire long-time partner Karmann.[[11]](#cite_note-11) On 20 November 2009 [Volkswagen](/wiki/Volkswagen_Group) said that it would buy Karmann's site at Osnabrück, to produce a new vehicle. On 4 November 2010 [Valmet Automotive](/wiki/Valmet_Automotive) signed an agreement to buy Karmann's roof-component sections in Osnabrück, Germany, and [Żary](/wiki/Żary), Poland.[[12]](#cite_note-12) Karmann's North American operations were sold August 2010 to [Webasto Group](/wiki/Webasto).[[13]](#cite_note-13)

## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:Reflist](/wiki/Template:Reflist)

## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

[Template:Commons category](/wiki/Template:Commons_category)

[Category:Karmann](/wiki/Category:Karmann) [Category:Car manufacturers of Germany](/wiki/Category:Car_manufacturers_of_Germany) [Category:Coachbuilders of Germany](/wiki/Category:Coachbuilders_of_Germany) [Category:Convertible top suppliers](/wiki/Category:Convertible_top_suppliers) [Category:Electric vehicle manufacturers](/wiki/Category:Electric_vehicle_manufacturers) [Category:Companies based in Lower Saxony](/wiki/Category:Companies_based_in_Lower_Saxony) [Category:Osnabrück](/wiki/Category:Osnabrück) [Category:Vehicle manufacturing companies established in 1901](/wiki/Category:Vehicle_manufacturing_companies_established_in_1901) [Category:1901 establishments in Germany](/wiki/Category:1901_establishments_in_Germany)