

# Landy heaven

*Der klassische Land Rover ist eigentlich ein urenglisches Auto.  
Was also macht eine hochspezialisierte Land-Rover Werkstatt draußen im ländlichen  
Baden-Württemberg? Von CLAUDINE WEBER-HOF*

**ADVANCED**



**S**ome adore the rustic charm. Others love how they conquer even the toughest terrain. No wonder classic Land Rovers have such immense cult appeal.

The Rover Company started making them at its Solihull plant near Birmingham, England, in 1948. That same year, King George VI was presented with the 100th production Land Rover. His daughter, later Queen Elizabeth II, loves Landys, too. A passion for these cars comes with the territory in the United Kingdom. But how on earth did they become a hit here in Deutschland?

### Road trip

I take this question for a drive in my Land Rover, a green Defender with a white top. First, I motor through Kempten, a Bavarian city with Roman roots. Then I cross into Baden-Württemberg, where castles top every other hill. Driving this type of Land Rover means going along at about 100 kph, max. It'll be hours until I reach Naturpark Obere Donau.

I see three other Land Rovers on the narrow country roads. Each driver gives me a wave and a smile. Like my Defender, their vehicles belong to Land Rover's utility range. The prototype was first built on the chassis of a Willys US Army jeep in 1947. Its signature boxy body was formed with aluminium left over from the manufacture of British warplanes.

Developed for farm work by Rover engineer Maurice Wilks, the no-frills light-weight jeep soon became a leisure vehicle, too — for horse people, hikers and safari operators. The oldest Land Rovers, Series I, II and III, were made from 1948 to 1985. Then came the Ninety and the One Ten, produced as of the early 1980s. The Defender, which remains a familiar sight on European roads, was launched in 1990. In 2015, though, production of the utility range came to an end. People said the vehicles were out of step with the times.

I shift into fourth gear, and the enormous form of Sigmaringen Castle comes into view. After a few kilometres, white cliffs rise up beside the road. Now I'm in the heart of the Upper Danube Nature Park. Motorcycles race by, hugging the curves of the L277. In one of these bends is Landypoint, a famous restoration specialist for Land Rover vehicles.

### Meet and greet

A man in his late forties with brown hair and sparkling eyes meets me at reception. Urs Stiegler started the business in 1999 by turning a hobby — restoring and selling old Land Rovers — into a commercially viable idea. Over time, his business model changed: instead of buying cars from him, Landy drivers began taking cars to him. Some wanted extensive restoration work, even total rebuilds.

Stiegler says his shop now handles three to four big projects concurrently, jobs that start at €50,000, but can cost three to four times that. Getting the right parts is key: Landypoint sources nearly all of them from well-known UK companies like Britpart and Bearnach.

"In Germany, you have maybe ten shops that sell the parts, but they have no garage," Stiegler points out. "As we have both, we can say relatively quickly if a part is working OK, or if it has a quality problem because we use it in our own workshop."

I look at the Series I Land Rovers parked in the reception area. They're so stately, so British. Queen Elizabeth once toured parts of the Commonwealth in exactly this type of vehicle. As I admire the cars, a Labrador retriever collides with my knee. The brown dog waits for a pat on the head, then wanders off towards a sunny spot by a window. Just outside are classic Landys — more than I can count.

"Ever since I was a child, my family visited Switzerland, especially Graubünden," Stiegler says. "You would see a lot of Land Rovers there, mostly Series IIs and IIIs. They were everywhere. There weren't a lot of other 4x4 cars out there at the time, and the Swiss needed them for the mountains."

The Swiss developed a thing for British cars early on. One reason, Stiegler reckons, is that they had no car factories of their own. It was a mechanic named Emil Frey who got the ball rolling. Stiegler describes

**adore** [ə'dɔː] ► verehren

**boxy body** ['bɒksi ,bɒdi]  
► eckige Karosserie

**collide with sth.**  
[kə'laid wɪð]  
► mit etw. zusammenstoßen; hier: etw. anstupsen

**concurrently**  
[kən'kʌrəntli]  
► gleichzeitig

**gear** [gɪə] ► Gang

**hug** [hʌg]  
► hier: sich hineinlegen

**key** [kiː]  
► hier: entscheidend

**motor** ['məʊtə]  
► (mit dem Auto) fahren

**no-frills** [,nəʊ 'frɪlz]  
► schlicht, schmucklos

**pat** [pæt] ► Täschneln, Streicheln

**reckon** ['rekan] ifml.  
► meinen, glauben

**rustic** ['rʌstɪk]  
► rustikal, urig

**shift** [ʃɪft]  
► hier: schalten

**signature** ['sɪgnətʃə]  
► hier: unverkennbar

**source sth.** [sɔːs]  
► etw. beziehen

**sparkling** ['spɑːklɪŋ]  
► funkelnd

**thing** [θɪŋ]  
► hier: Begeisterung, Schwäche

**viable** ['vaɪəbəl]  
► machbar, durchführbar



British beauties: vintage Land Rovers at the Landypoint workshop



Calling for a wild time: Landys on the Landypoint lot. Behind them, the white cliffs of Naturpark Obere Donau

how, in the 1940s, Frey started to bring the first Rover cars over to mainland Europe. He built up a business selling automobiles and doing the spare-parts distribution. Frey is still a big name: *Automotive News Europe* ranks the car dealer as Europe's third largest. As a result of Frey's work, Switzerland became a hub for all things Land Rover.

"Land Rovers have been seen around Germany for the past 30 years or so, but before that, there was no garage for them — nothing," Stiegler says.

### Show and tell

From reception, we walk into a hall that was once the showroom. Now it houses some of Landypoint's big projects.

"This is a car that we are restoring to the highest standards for a Swiss client," he says, pointing to a vehicle chassis. "This is all new," he says, referring to a set of bare metal panels that will soon form the body of the car.

"The thing is, you can do a nearly similar restoration job for €50,000 for a car that 'just drives'. But the jobs we do are in the area of €150,000 because every little part is specially made. The question is not

how it can be made cheaper, but how it can be made better. Every part you can galvanize is galvanized."

We walk on. Stiegler stops in front of a perfectly restored 1950s' Land Rover.

"Look at this Series I," he says. "It has a 3.9-litre V8 engine, vented disc brakes and power steering from a P38 Range Rover."

The workings of a luxury Land Rover SUV from the 1990s have been built into a vintage vehicle from the no-frills utility range. It's the best of both worlds, especially given that an old Land Rover drives, in Stiegler's words, "like a tractor". I ask him what it cost to restore. "This car was €180,000," he says.

He opens the bonnet. The engine area still looks original, which is quite a feat. Stiegler climbs in to the driver's seat and starts the car. "It drives like a Morgan — really," he says. "It's a sports car."

He revs the motor to a throaty roar. Seeing Stiegler there at the wheel, it occurs to me that I may never have seen a grown man look so happy.

He cuts the engine and motions me over, pointing to the driver's door. When such Land Rovers came from the factory, they typically had gaps between the body

**bare** [beə] ▶ blank

**feat** [fi:t] ▶ Meisterstück

**bonnet** ['bɒnɪt] ▶ Motorhaube

**hub** [hʌb] ▶ Knotenpunkt

**metal panel** [ˌmetl 'pænl] ▶ Metallplatte

**power steering** [ˌpaʊə 'stɪərɪŋ] ▶ Servolenkung

**rev** [rev] ▶ aufheulen lassen

**roar** [rɔː] ▶ Dröhnen

**spare-parts distribution** [ˌspeɪ 'pɑːts dɪstrɪ'bjuːʃən] ▶ Ersatzteilvertrieb

**throaty** ['θrəʊti] ▶ rau, heiser

**vented disc brakes** [ˌventɪd 'dɪsk breɪks] ▶ innenbelüftete Scheibenbremsen

of the car and the door. That's just how they were manufactured. For this workshop, it is one of many areas where improvements can be made on the original.

At Landypoint, they do so by taking the car apart, stripping the rust and paint from the body, then sending parts of it to the coachbuilder for changes if necessary. When the body is back at Landypoint, the team builds the car together again, until it is fully drivable. That way they can see if they've missed anything: a hole for a wire, a bit that needs to be welded on.

After the car has been checked and the adjustments made, they dismantle it again, leaving only the chassis in place. "Then all single parts are painted," Stiegler says. He points at the car door. "When we rebuilt this car the first time, we cut all the frames here," he says, meaning the door, "and welded them while in the car. That's why the gaps are so perfect."

Sure enough, it's a lovely, tight fit — not at all like my 1999 Defender. Sitting in that on the passenger side during a heavy rain, your feet get wet. The owner of this car will have dry shoes. What's more, the driving experience will be superior.

About 70 per cent of Stiegler's clients are German, the rest Swiss. What about the Brits? Stiegler tells me about Philip Bashall, the man behind the Dunsfold Collection, the world's largest assemblage of model Land Rovers, with more than 2,000 vehicles. His father, Brian Bashall, started collecting them in the 1950s. Phil Bashall has a restoration company, too, and is one of the top names when it comes to authenticity in Land Rovers. "And he says to my British friend, 'If I had the money to build up a Range Rover just for me, I would take it to Landypoint.'"

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**adjustment**

[ə'dʒʌstmənt]  
• Einstellung, Anpassung

**assemblage** [ə'sembliːdʒ]

• Sammlung

**coachbuilder**

['kəʊtʃˌbɪldə]  
• Karosseriebauer

**dismantle** [dɪs'mæntəl]

• zerlegen, auseinandernehmen

**strip: ~ from sth.** [stri:p]

• von etw. abziehen; hier: von etw. entfernen

**weld** [weɪld]

• schweißen



In the Landypoint garage: mechanics here strip the vehicles down and then rebuild them, work that involves passion, precision and time



Landypoint owner Urs Stiegler in the driver's seat of the Series I Land Rover that his workshop recently restored using the engine, brakes and steering from a 1990s Range Rover