

A blast from the past with Datsun

 By [Ilse van den Berg](#)

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In addition to giving the Datsun GO a go on our media trip at Nampo last week, we also stopped over at an unassuming brick building in Bothaville. Parked outside were teasers of the magic and nostalgia we would find inside.



24 hours of Nissan and Datsun in the Free State

[Ilse van den Berg](#) 17 May 2017



This was the Nissan Heritage Garage - most likely the biggest Datsun heritage collection in the Southern Hemisphere. In Bothaville of all places! A tiny town in the middle of the country where, [according to SA Venues](#), things to do include going to the Spur.

A bit of history

To get those of you who don't know up to speed, Datsun originated in 1914 in Japan as DAT-GO (the DAT-car). The word DAT means 'lightning-fast' in Japanese but is also an acronym of the first letter of each name of the three financiers who supported the business initially – Den, Aoyama and Takeuchi. Keeping with the acronym, it was then promoted as durable, attractive, and trustworthy, or DAT for short. Even though long before my time, I'm sure those who've owned a spunky little Datsun can attest to this.



In 1933, Nissan's founding father Yoshisuke Aikawa took over the business with a vision of "mobility for all". The introduction of a light-weight, economical yet resilient car to meet the aspirations of young Japanese people in the early 1930s was named the 'son of DAT' – Datson - which later changed to Datsun. Local engineering and mass-production made the founder's dream a reality.

By 1986, the Datsun brand had been phased out, however, in 2012, Nissan announced the return of the beloved brand.

The collection

The passionate collector in Bothaville, Freek de Kock, was kind enough to let us take the three cars parked outside - a Datsun 140Z, 280ZX, as well as a Skyline GT-R - for a spin. It was dreamy, to say the least.

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I felt like I was back in the 80s – would Doc Brown be sitting in the backseat if I looked in the rearview mirror? Would David Hasselhoff come spinning around the corner in his Firebird Trans Am? Let me tell you, anything feels possible when you're behind the wheel of one of these classic beauties.





Datsun has a special place in many people's hearts - I think it'd be safe to 'guesstimate' that at least 80% of South African men over the age of 55 were once Datsun owners. And that's just men. Needless to say, it was a popular, go-to brand.



Sales in South Africa started again in 2014 and Datsun is now once again becoming part of many South African families.

For more, see the [Nissan Heritage Garage in pictures](#).

ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out Passing Stories). She is also the editor of Go & Travel, a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work [here](#) and [here](#). Contact Ilse through her website [here](#).

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