

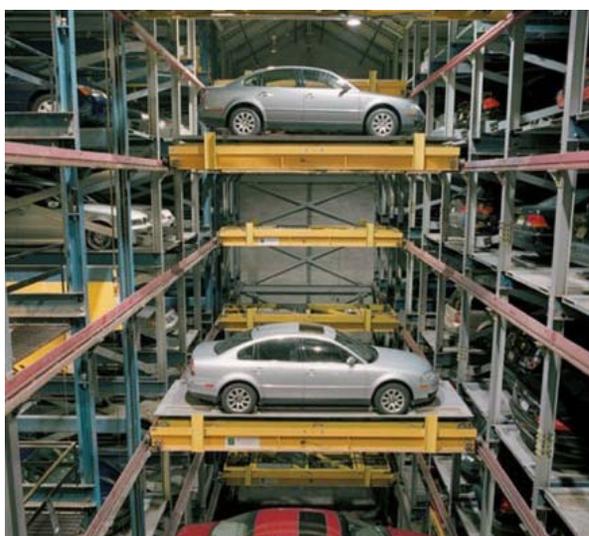


Luxury parking

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Tue, 03/13/2012 - 16:26
Created by: staff

The parkade. Ugly, cramped, threatening gray monsters, parking complexes are, as a rule, pretty far removed from anyone's concept of luxury. That being said, there are exceptions to every rule, including a few architectural works of art that prove that even parking can be luxurious...



An automatic parking system at the Ibn Battuta Mall in Dubai (the world's largest) can sort 250 autos per hour

3 / 10

1 Miami

Construction of a parking complex generally costs around 3-5,000 euro per spot. Two years ago in Miami, Swiss star architects Herzon & Meuron constructed one that features 300 spots at a cost of 70 million US dollars – 230,000 per space. A bit of a change of pace, you might say. The complex features open facades on all sides, a restaurant with an ocean view, and sleek storefronts. Joggers use the stairwells for training and the top floor is so nice that art collectors and wedding planners rent it for celebrations.

2 Dresden

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In Germany in the 1970s, Hannover was the place to be for innovative parking design. Today, most of Germany's parkades are terribly boring (with the exception of the fully-automatic Autopark towers in Wolfsburg), and hardly worth seeing. Dresden on the other hand can consider itself to have one of the world's most stunning parking complex entranceways, the glass Skywalk.

3 Dubai

In metropolises where space is scant and valuable – New York or Tokyo for example – parking space is crammed into every last crevice: automatic parkades stack cars on top of each other. The largest of these is found (despite ample space, ironically) in Dubai. The Robotic Car Park in the Ibn Battuta Mall (the world's largest theme park/shopping center/recreational facility) offers space for 765 vehicles and can rearrange 250 of them within an hour – an automatic parkomat in New York can't even claim a tenth of this capacity. The only problem (and by Dubai standards it's a very real problem) is that the machine can only handle vehicles up to 6 meters in length.

4 Santa Monica

In the daylight, the coloured glass fronts and façade lights of the Santa Monica Civic center are far closer to those of a designer shopping center than they are to a parking complex. But the building really comes into its own at night when the glowing lights make it a skyline highlight. The US's first LEED-certified building can thank its rooftop solar cell array for its minimal power consumption. In the 1950s, parking complexes were often paired with gas stations. The Civic Center Parkade provides charging stations for electric vehicles.

5 Eindhoven

The high-tech Eindhoven campus develops the newest technology. The Parking complex however – at least for the façade – utilizes one of the most archaic building materials: plants. They cover all of the metal bars throughout the complex, and separate the park spaces, making the inside feel a bit like a jungle.

6 Chicago and Hongkong

The spiral ramp is one of the most basic elements of an average parkade, and in Hongkong, designers have returned to this idea. The Mozhao Architecture Studio recently won a competition for an 80-story alternative car park tower. A projected construction timeline has not yet been set. The world's tallest spiral parkade has stood in Chicago since 1964. The first 19 stories of the 180-meter tower are a favourite location for film shoots – the 1980 Steve McQueen film "The Hunter" was filmed here.

7 Moscow

Gosplan Garage at the edge of Moscow is a favourite for architectural lovers. A futuristic masterwork, it was built by Konstantin Melnikov, one of the most famous architects of the 20th century, and the best-known proponent of the Constructivism movement. It's a monument to the importance that was once attached to automobiles. Today, although parking is still possible at the deteriorating institution, it's certainly not much fun anymore.

8 Melbourne

One of the biggest problems with parking complexes: every story is identical. Getting lost is programmed into their construction. An award-winning and idiot-proof system was developed at the Eureka

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Tower Car Park in Melbourne, Australia. Designed by German designer Axel Peemöller, the system features the words "Up", "Down", and "Out". The large colored letters are presented in such a way that they can only be seen from a particular perspective. If you see the word "Up" in front of you, you know you're on the right track.

9 Valencia

The City of Art and Science (Ciudad de las Artes y de las Ciencias) is Valencia, a showroom for scientific progress. Much of the architecture here looks a bit futuristic, and parking complexes are certainly not excluded from the fun. "L'Umbracle" is a two-story open colonnade. Vehicles park underneath, with a view over an artificial lake, and above, you can wander through a garden landscape decorated with sculptures – it's almost enough nature to sting your conscience a bit for having arrived by car.

10 Amsterdam

Why do we automatically think of cars when we talk about parking? There are also parking lots for bicycles, for example – something that hardly comes as a surprise in pedal-happy Amsterdam. The biggest difference between these and your average car park: Vehicle owners have to accept that parking here is kind of a contact-friendly experience for their machines – its best to close one's eyes and forget about the dings and paint chips that are inevitable here.

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