

Everyone had a favorite stuffed toy as a child and fond nostalgia makes some adults become collectors, especially in the case of Steiff stuffed animals. The original animals can demand high prices at auctions and fairs these days, particularly the bears. The story begins in the German town of Giengen an der Brenz in 1880. A wheelchair bound seamstress called Margarete Steiff started a hobby and made toy animals from her own designs. They were mostly of dogs, cats, pigs and elephants.

The company, as we know it today, began when Margarete's nephew Richard Steiff invented the first bear with jointed limbs in 1902. The bear quickly became popular in the United States and then, across the world, winning the first prize at the World Exhibition in St.Louis in 1904. It became known as a teddy bear, as in honour of President Teddy Roosevelt. The company is known for its high quality Steiff stuffed animals, which are still made in the town of Giengen. Giengen is a mecca for admirers of the products as there is an Adventure Museum as well as the factory. The museum tells the history of the products and a gift shop sells bears, replicas of past animal products, historic catalogues and porcelain.

The Steiff Classic range is the top end of the product line, with hand made Steiff stuffed animals of wild animals, farm animals and the famous bears. Some designs date back to teddy bears from 1906, 1909 and 1920. There is also a bear with a stitched on Valentine's heart, which makes a romantic gift. The range also includes characters from the Beatrix Potter stories, including Peter Rabbit and the Mrs. Tiggy Winkle hedgehog. Another children's favorite is available in Paddington Bear, with his trademark blue hat and red duffle coat.

Steiff Baby animals are designed with babies and toddlers in mind. They are made from durable materials and include teddy bears, kittens and lambs. The Cosy Animal line has machine washable animals and there are also children's clothes, keyrings, bags and gift sets. The Limited Edition Steiff stuffed animals contain pink and gray replica versions of the 1908 teddy bear. There is also a Grizzly Bear, a Moon Bear that has a white stripe and a black and white Pierrot Bear. This range also has a stuffed Rupert Bear, another favorite character from story books. However, the teddy bear will continue to be the toy that is most associated with the Steiff Company.