

CLASSIC DRIVER

Porsche Cayenne GTS



You have to pity those clever boffins working on the Large Hadron Collider at CERN, near Geneva. Just over 350km away, in Stuttgart, Porsche's engineering team has already found the solution to one of the fundamental questions in physics, and it's called the Cayenne GTS.

This is not an SUV. Yes, yes, it's big and tall, with four-wheel drive, a modicum of ground clearance and has the ability to do as much off-road work as most would need. However, announced at the end of 2007, the GTS is the sportiest car in the range of facelifted Cayennes and more RS4 than K2. It slots neatly into a space above the regular V8-engined 'S' and below the range-topping, 171mph Turbo.

The sporty Cayenne's direct-injection engine remains at 4806cc, but clever improvements to the intake system give a further 20bhp (405bhp at 6500rpm), while the old tuner's trick of lowering the final drive allows much brisker acceleration (0-62mph is now 6.1sec) with the same non-Turbo maximum of 157mph.





And even better than that, the GTS is the first Cayenne to be made available with steel springs and PASM (Porsche Active Suspension Management) damping.

The second-generation Cayenne's looks remain 'family friendly' (that's the Porsche family, I must stress...) with the GTS running on standard-fit 21in alloys; and it's wider by 14mm, and lower by 24mm, than the regular cars. You'll be able to spot a GTS from the rear, with its unique double twin exhaust pipes and optional roof spoiler from the Turbo. And the big badge, naturally.

Inside, Alcantara features large, with the roof and door pillars clad in the luxurious faux-suede matching inserts for extra grip in the sports seats. And ours came with a gearlever to shift the six speeds the old-fashioned way. Tiptronic S is, of course, an option, as is air suspension with Porsche Dynamic Chassis Control.



So we may have here, I think, the most driver-oriented 4x4 in the world, built to peerless standards by one of the world's best sportscar makers.

Delivering on paper is one thing, but... no, let's get straight on with it: the car is brilliant. Its 405bhp arrives in typical 'German V8' fashion - that is to say, a whisper-silent idle changing through the rev-range from thrumming roar to the familiar hard-edged drone of the F1 pace car.

By way of comparison, can I mention Aston's 4.7 (420bhp @ 7000rpm/ 470Nm @ 5750rpm), and Audi's RS4 4.2 (420bhp @ 8250rpm/ 430Nm @ 5500rpm) V8s? Fine engines, both, but trumped for torque by the superb Porsche motor, its 500Nm available at a paltry 3500rpm and the free-spinning engine turning all the way to over 6500rpm.



Marry that to the lower diff and, despite its 2300kg (almost 50% more than the Aston), it will blitz just about anything else on the road. It's that fast. Press the 'Sport' button and not only does the suspension instantly sharpen, but a valve opens in the exhaust, the motor immediately picks up, and even more performance is available.

The average buyer probably wouldn't specify the manual and, to inject a note of disappointment, neither it - nor the clutch - was of the best, but this combination did provide a thoroughly satisfying driving experience. The GTS is super-smooth on motorways, its high cockpit allowing an excellent view ahead, and the 'Normal' setting on the PASM is fine for all but the most broken roads.

Set the car up for a curve and it simply amazes; you are in true supercar territory here, from the well-balanced chassis and nicely responsive steering to probably the best fuelled and metered engine I've yet driven. It's that good.





If this is a foretaste of next year's Panamera – I want one.

Enjoyment does, of course, have its price. Returning to our scientific friends, when they've tired of smashing protons together round the 27km-long tunnel, can they address another imponderable, and fill up a blackboard with calculations on how to reduce the GTS's fuel consumption?

I averaged around 14mpg on a mixture of mainly motorway, with a little town and country work.

Dark matter and dark energy are all very well, but a credit card in meltdown from a sequence of high-energy collisions at the filling stations is another matter altogether.

The car's UK base price (incl. VAT) is £55,250.00. Options fitted included: GTS Red solid paint £1,561.00; Porsche Communication Management inc. DVD navigation £2,092.00; Telephone module for PCM £523.00; 4-zone climate control system £943.00; ParkAssist £539.00; Floor mats £112.00; Extended roof spoiler No-cost option; Ski Bag No-cost option.

Total price including VAT £61,920.00

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