

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## Road Test: Porsche 911 Carrera 4S



**'Calendar View' clearly shows the increasing pressure - 25/12 is nearly upon us. If braving the queues in the High Street is too much for you, may we suggest an oasis of calm and good service at your local Porsche dealership? We tested the latest 4wd version of the 911 for its suitability gift-wrapped under the Christmas tree.**



The shape would be a familiar one. Any criticisms of the previous (996) model 911 have been left far behind with the current (997) model. Perfect panel fit, jewel-like headlamps, deep, quality paintwork - this is once again a perfect, classic Porsche 911. Give the curvey rear wings a caress, admire the round front lights once more, the original seductive desire of the car has returned. But be careful parking your new pride and joy in front of an admiring crowd, rearwards vision is limited and parking sensors a useful option...





The interior of the car will fit two adults with light luggage. There's a surprising amount of (Alcantara-lined) headroom, and the sports seats give outstanding long-distance comfort with just the right amount of side-bolstering, and infinite adjustment, to suit the most particular of spinal conformations. Minor criticisms would include a desire for a little more speed on the electric seat-adjustment, as well as an easier way of folding the seatbacks forward for access to the rear.



Behind the wheel, the view inside the cockpit is a good one. No expense has been spared with the very high quality trimmings in leather, Alcantara or alloy, and the joining- and shut-lines are millimetre perfect, like a ruler. The carpet is so good it seems a pity not to change shoes when stepping into the car, and the 911 has the most beautifully-designed and finished cup-holders on the planet. The combined navigation and mobile phone unit requires some learning, while the Bose sound option box should be ticked – the standard system is not good enough; unless you only want to listen to traffic reports, that is.



Of course the driving comfort of a sports car is defined by the interaction of the chassis and drivetrain. And although the 'Normal' setting on the PASM adjustable suspension is 'hard' in anyone's language, so composed is the car that it's possible to step out of the car after a long journey as fresh as when you started.



The 'Sport' setting is simply redundant for normal road driving, as in this position the chassis gives the impression of totally lacking any rubber components whatsoever, delivering a ride only suitable for the track.



The fact that the Carrera 4S exhibits such high standards of road holding and grip is due in the main to its 4wd. The 'Visco' multiple-plate clutch feeds at least 5% of drive through to the front wheels, rising to 40% as circumstances demand. Maximum traction is increased by the very broad footprint at the rear, and even on roads completely covered with snow the car exhibits a high degree of grip. But remember please, even with its highly effective brakes the 4wd 911 cannot defeat the powers of nature, and ice and snow have to be treated with respect. In the dry, the Porsche Stability Management (PSM) can be relied upon to give tremendous braking performance, to the point where 'fade' from the four-piston brake callipers is a foreign word.



Leaving the best to last (and it should really be 'the best is right at the back'), let's look at the engine. The 355 PS boxer-motor acts in total harmony with the chassis and transmission. Small pressure on the pedal will

bring extreme acceleration, yet the car is happy to cruise at 60 km/h in 6th gear without disgracing itself and 'bogging down'. Fuel consumption is reasonable (given the performance) working out at around 14 litres/100 km.



On a clear motorway or A-road, accelerate away from 4,800 rpm and the impression is given of the car attracted by a giant magnet. The engine noise is ever-present (but never-annoying) and constitutes such a major part of the fun. Even after a long distance at slowish speeds in heavy traffic just a short spurt is enough to bring a smile to the face and wake the driver up for another few kilometres of pleasure.

Pleasure that's limited on a long trip due to the car's small fuel tank (67 litres) requiring frequent stops for petrol. A larger tank would give a bigger range - and longer opportunities to enjoy the car's performance. And for those city-dwellers stuck in traffic for most of their lives Porsche have the Tiptronic S option, the semi-automatic saving wear and tear on the driver's left leg, albeit at a small reduction in performance.



All in all the Porsche Carrera S earns the sobriquet 'Santa Claus approved', and we don't think it would be one of the gifts returned after Christmas.

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