

CLASSIC DRIVER

Porsche 911 GT3 RS & Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera



Two extremes, each from the boundary regions of the civilised sports car world, meet here and they couldn't be more different. The fighting bull of the dusty plains takes on the lithe wolf from the deep forest in the hills. This is the Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera versus Porsche's 911 GT3 RS.



It could be love at first sight with the beautiful Lamborghini. It looks the part and settling into the sports seat,

it feels it. You need a long arm to reach the starter but the reward is a Heavy Metal overture from the depths of the engine compartment, reflecting the lack of soundproofing and the relatively low weight of the Superleggera: 1330kg is low by modern supercar standards. This 10-cylinder model has lost 100kg against the standard Gallardo, by lightweight construction and the omission of non-essential parts. Air-conditioning and electric windows are retained as they're considered basic essentials by American customers.



The Porsche, by contrast, reflects the pure theory of racing but is less Spartan than you might think. There's a deceptively elegant simplicity to its stylish interior, with subtle hints of its Rallyesport heritage. This is not the *ultraschnellen* 911 – the fastest of the range being the Turbo, of course – but the RS plays in a rougher league. It's at home flat out on the autobahn but this car is all about pure driving and the race circuit is its real hunting ground. Porsche has been playing the homologation game since 1972, and this feels exactly in that mould. In its new form the GT3 has grown 44mm broader and has acquired the sturdier bodyshell of the Carrera 4. As with the Lamborghini, the lightweight components inside and out reflect its purpose: it takes the scales to some 1375kg, lighter than the normal GT3 by 20kg.



The subtle mix of greys emphasise the beauty of the sharp-edged Gallardo Superleggera, conjuring up images of a stone axe one moment and a stealth bomber the next. By contrast, the appropriately silver GT3 seems almost conservative, despite those attractive bright signal-green touches. Starting the Porsche's engine is just as thrilling as with the Gallardo. It lacks that 10-cylinder roar but there's a special quality to that mighty flat six which always stirs the soul. It sounds so willing and businesslike, a wonderful noise. The Gallardo roars and howls like some big, wild animal as one grasps the steering wheel, flicking the paddle changes on cue but the GT3 RS, a little less dramatic, stays close, its steering wheel giving unsurpassed feedback as the boxer engine sings its beautiful music.



The Lamborghini is the more powerful of the two, its mid-mounted 5-litre V10 producing 530HP, with maximum torque of 510Nm at 4250rpm. It feels built for endless straights which it can consume with stunning ease. From rest, the Superleggera reaches 62mph in 3.8 instead of the standard Gallardo's 4.2 seconds. In just 12.8 seconds the red needle touches the 124mph (200kph) mark. It's governed to 196mph, at which speed you might be very pleased to have the optional and very powerful ceramic brakes. The

Porsche's 3.6 litres produce 415HP at 7600rpm, and max torque of 405Nm at 5500rpm. It does 0-62mph in 4.2sec and top speed is 192mph, stunning enough figures in any company if not quite a match for this astonishing Lamborghini.



It's in corners that the Porsche scores, by agility and a sense of security that Porsche understands so well. It's all in the precise steering and the equally precise throttle response. Both these cars offer levels of grip which put them in a very special league. The Lamborghini seems to stick like glue but you need to be quick and accurate to catch it if the back does step out in a fast bend, despite its 4wd. It's wild and impetuous, for sure, but not impossibly so, and what can match it for the pure thrill of driving? Only, probably, this GT3 RS. Sometimes no decision is a decision. They are utterly different yet they are both utterly fabulous cars in which to express your driving ambitions. This isn't Jekyll and Hyde, it's just Hyde with a split personality. Get a double garage. Write two cheques.

*Text & Photos: [Jan Baedeker](#)
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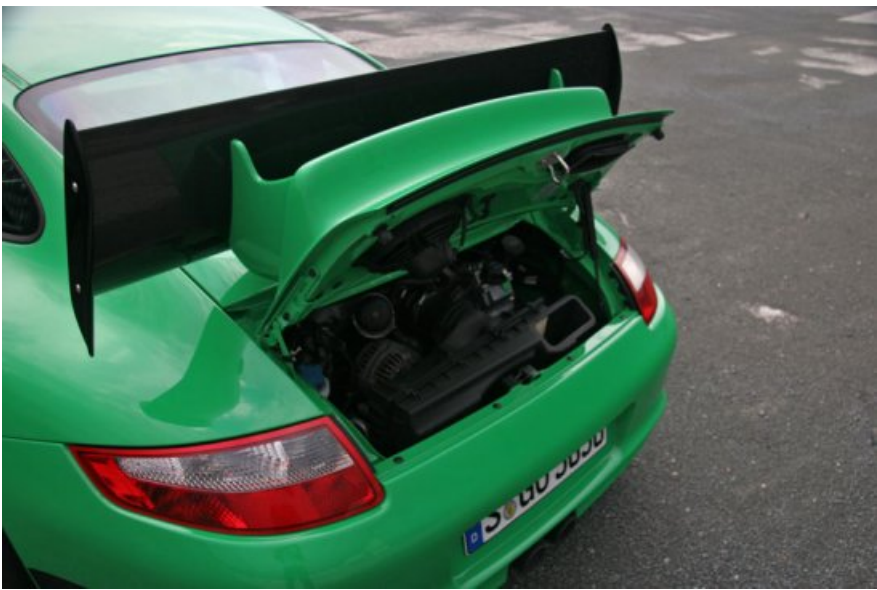














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