

CLASSIC DRIVER

Driven: Porsche 911 Carrera GTS



How many more micro-niches can a Porsche 911 fill? asks *John Simister*. Well, after the company revealed its intriguing and expensive 911 Sport Classic last year (and sold all 250 examples almost immediately), one particular potential combination of Porsche pieces did prove tantalising by its absence. That Sport Classic looked very covetable, in a retro way, with its Fuchs-like wheels, its early-RS ducktail spoiler, its leathery woven interior features and its double-bubble roof, but these were mere cake decorations. What mattered more was the cake itself.

The ingredients, fundamentally, were two-wheel-drive Carrera S mechanicals in the wide-tracked Carrera 4S body, plus an engine whose breathing was freed-up by having an individual tuning flap for each cylinder instead of one to handle all six, along with a freer-flowing sports exhaust system. These tuning flaps alter the intake geometry to favour either low-end torque or high-end power, while the sports exhaust bypasses a silencer at high revs – or all the time, if you press the 'noisy' button.

Thus improved, the engine generated an extra 23bhp to make a total of 408 at a heady 7300rpm, while the 310lb ft torque peak arrived at 4200rpm instead of 4400. The result was perhaps the most pleasing of all 911s to drive on a regular basis, less explosive than the Turbo, giving less of a sensory battering than the wonderful-but-hardcore GT3, massively more usable than the stratospheric-pace GT2. It possessed a crispness, precision and enthusiasm in everything it did, which made the regular 911 Carrera S feel a touch, well, ordinary (in relative terms, that is).



What we needed, then, was a 911 with these enhanced mechanical bits but in a sensibly priced, unadorned package. The 911 Carrera GTS you see here is exactly that car, and probably the closest we've encountered in feel (as opposed to market positioning) to the original RS Carrera 2.7 since, well, the 1988 Carrera Clubsport.

Except, of course, that it's a whole lot faster.

In white, with a near-black interior, black wheels, red brake calipers and Carrera GTS signage on the otherwise unadorned flanks, the GTS looks the proper purist's Porsche for 2011. The seats are manually adjusted, you turn a key to start the engine (great idea – it should be copied). And off you go, revelling in a gearchange so smooth and precise you wonder just why a 911's gearchange had to be so clunky and loose back in those 2.7 RS days. Of course, you could have your GTS with a PDK gearbox, but you wouldn't. Would you?



Of course not, when there is such pleasure to be gained from micro-precise matching of engine speed and gear lever movement by your own feet and hands. And regardless of clever stability systems and other technical art-stating, it's a joy that this GTS still feels correctly 911-like when you start to try a bit harder. The wide rear track heightens the impression that it all hinges on the rear wheels, their traction pushing the nose wide in tight corners, the power they transmit making the steering go light as the rear tyres think about transmitting no more. The steering still does that writhing thing over camber changes, too. This car talks to you.

Or rather it shouts at you, if you let rip with the engine. At lower crankshaft speeds it's keen enough but relatively mild. Get past 5000rpm or so and its note hardens into a properly crisp 911 howl, and you can't get enough of it. Use all that revvability and you'll reach 62mph 4.6 seconds after clutch-drop, and 190mph will soon be yours given the chance. Overtaking happens in a trice; it's one of those cars in which if you think you can do it, you can.





Our test car had the optional 10mm-lower, yet-firmer Sports suspension, which hardly seems necessary given that standard fare is already 10mm lower than a regular 911's and there's a Sport button to firm the damping. The Sports package has the Sport button, too, making it a sort of Sport-squared, in which mode it's really too firm to use anywhere other than a smooth racetrack. Some buyers will no doubt do exactly that, but for road use the regular GTS suspension is preferable. I have driven the Sport Classic thus equipped; its ride was entirely acceptable and the road noise, bordering on the unacceptable in the test GTS, was less intrusive.

Choose the right suspension, though, and if you're a proper 911 enthusiast and you want to use your car every day, the Carrera GTS is your perfect Porsche. If I had the required £78,371, it would certainly be mine.

Text: [John Simister](#)

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