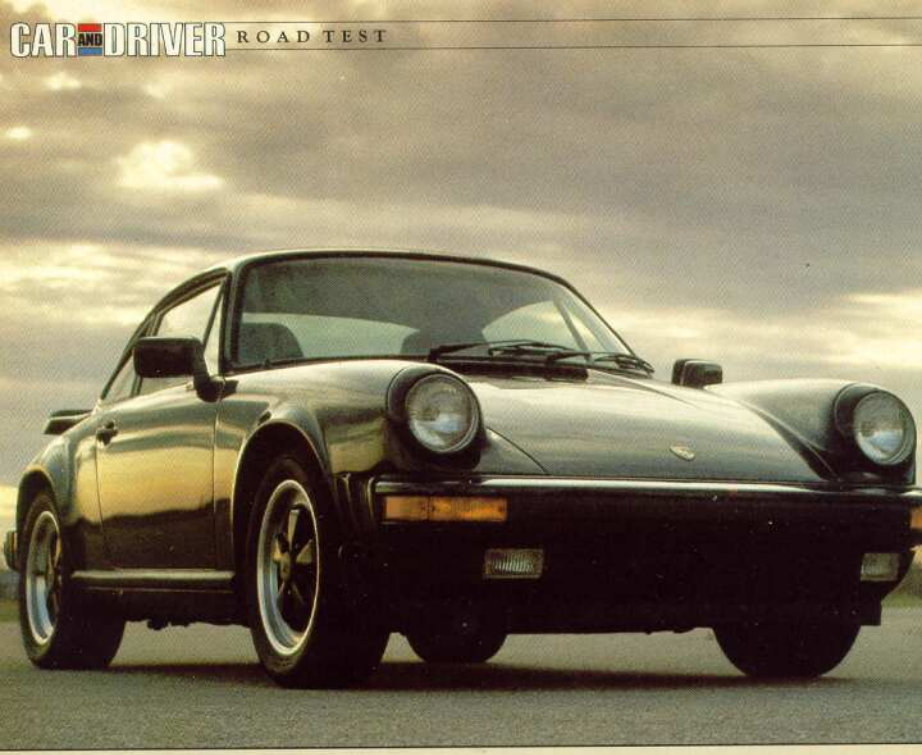


Porsche 911 Carrera

Germany's holy roller, the fastest factory-fresh, finger-in-the-socket, load-and-cock-it full-time pocket rocket. Amen.

• It is the evil weevil, the rock-solid, steely-eyed grim reaper of sporting cars, the paragon of knife-edged incisiveness and buttoned-down insanity. More than any other factory-fresh passenger car available here today, the Porsche 911 Carrera is the absolute embodiment of clench-jawed, tight-fisted, slit-eyed enthusiasm run amok, a car for making the landscape pass with explosive fluidity. Strange that a car so serious can bring such unadulterated joy, but there you are, sporting an enormous, cheek-splitting leer when you unstrap and step out. You devil, you.

The former 911SC thrilled the hardcore, adrenalin-addicted, pop-eyed performance toadies among us, offering a truly startling mix of performance and practicality, but it is no more. The Carrera replaces the 911SC, and it embodies all the same simultaneously outrageous and sensible qualities and more. The 911SC was fast, but the Carrera is a bullet. Firing from 0 to 60 mph in 5.3 seconds, an improvement of more than a full second, "shot out of a gun" covers it. And, although the 911SC returned a resolute 16 mpg on the EPA city cycle, the Carrera offers no less than a whopping 20 mpg.

Livability has even been improved somewhat in Porsche's sporting but anachronistic interior. The car also goes down the road better, feeling more civil and less likely to bolt—all due to the Porsche penchant for constant improvement. The term "running changes" carries a double meaning in Porsche's corner of West Germany.

This tough act to follow is located mostly under the rear deck lid, which carries the inspirational Carrera nameplate, earlier versions also having possessed well-deserved reputations for rocketry. Porsche offers no fewer than three choices of shell configurations for the 911 Carrera: coupe, Targa, and Cabriolet. In response to the growing hue and cry among its customers for greater individuality, the fully enclosed shell is available not only with the same relatively subdued lower bodywork worn by its airier brothers (which share a new front spoiler housing the fog lamps), but also with a larger air dam and the most instantly recognizable passenger-car aerodynamic device of all time, the Stuttgart whale tail.

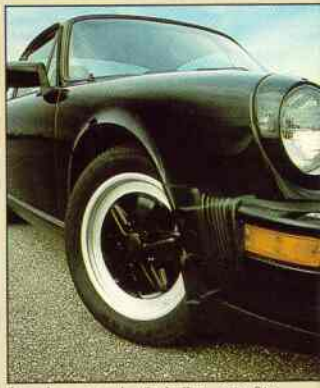
PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON KILEY

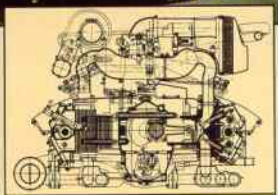
And, finally, the killer European Turbo treatment, meaning full-house bodywork and running gear, is available for everything but the engine.

Given the Carrera's rousing performance, the current lack of a turbocharged offering is not really very disappointing, particularly in light of the accompanying fuel-economy boost. Newly stuffed into the 911's rump are two additional tenths of a liter of displacement, bumping the single-overhead-cam flat six to 3.2 liters. At 95.0 millimeters, its bore remains the same, but its stroke has been elongated from 70.4 to 74.4 millimeters, matching the Turbo engine's. Although Porsche is perpetually searching for improved mechanical efficiency, it is nonetheless a surprise that the Carrera's engine is 80 percent new.

Reshaped pistons and combustion chambers within the air-cooled aluminum block and heads bring a modest compression-ratio increase, from 9.3:1 to 9.5:1. New tuned intake manifolding and Bosch Motronic fuel injection (very similar in principle to Porsche's version on the four-cylinder 944) are fitted. The all-electronic Motronic system is replacing Bosch's well-known mechanical K-Jetronic injection for a number of manufacturers because it produces extremely accurate operational tolerances for fuel mixture and ignition timing, prime contributors to efficiency. An overrun fuel shut-off minimizes unnecessary waste when the throttle is closed, although this may have been the cause of the part-throttle on-off power surges we noticed during testing. The new idle-speed regulator that is a part of the Motronic system also had a hard time keeping the engine running stably at no load, particularly when cold.

When it comes to pure "go," however, the changes have pumped up an already healthy 172 bhp at 5500 rpm to a righteously distended 200 bhp at 5900 rpm. Maximum torque has risen from 175 pounds-feet at 4200 rpm to 185 pounds-feet at a lofty 4800 rpm, and the growling, thrumming flat six remains in the forefront of the world's grunt-and-git, instant-forward rushers.





The world's only air-cooled flat six is back for 1984 with 200 horsepower, thanks to a longer stroke and new fuel injection.

One of the reasons, of course, for the Carrera's monumental acceleration capability is its out-back engine, which presses the 225/50VR-16 Goodyear NCTs into the pavement with all the vengeance that almost 60 percent of the Carrera's 2760 pounds can provide. Handling lesser duties up front, 205/55VR-16 NCTs are fitted to 6.0-inch-wide alloys, which are an inch narrower than those at the rear.

The inequality of the Carrera's front and rear footprints shows that Porsche is still heavily involved in offsetting the rear-engine layout's inherent behavioral imbalance (read, strong trailing-throttle oversteer). The Carrera can and does demonstrate a will of its own, but its big-tired sense of right and wrong has produced a pretty remarkable taming of a once thoroughly unpredictable device.

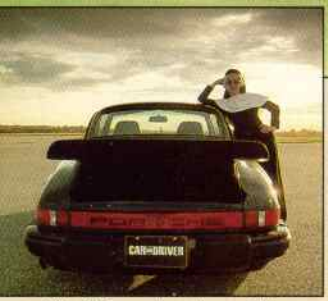
The shifter seems paradoxically notchy and vague to some drivers, but familiarity smooths its potential glitches. Half the *C/D* staff loved it at first touch, the other half begrudgingly accepted it later. Nobody has any such problem with the brakes. The Carrera's four-wheel discs and rear weight bias have produced over the years what we roundly consider the best passenger-car braking to be found. For 1984, virtually the whole stopping system has been overhauled to handle the newfound horsepower. Front and rear rotors are seventeen percent thicker, there are wider-mouthed calipers to match, the vacuum booster is one inch larger in diameter, and a brake-effort proportioning valve has been added. This last item is particularly effective because it has allowed the engineers to reset the system's basic balance. Low-speed, low-coefficient-of-friction front lockup has been a problem for years in the 911, but finally, Porsche has adjusted the balance toward the rear brakes. To keep them from locking prematurely during high-g, good-traction stops, the proportioning valve comes into play, automatically limiting rear brake-line pressure, shifting the balance back toward the front brakes. In our 70-to-0 stopping tests, we found that the right rear wheel was prone to lock first but that there was no loss of stability. Braking distances, at 184 feet, were as short as those of any other car available in America.

The steering garners good marks for precision and speed of response. It loses points for stout kickback over bumps, though this Carrera's wheel palsy did feel a bit more damped in our hands than the old 911's. There is less wriggle than before and cleaner tracking. The independent suspension is still all firm resilience, and even without the add-on aero aids, the Carrera sports noticeably improved high-speed stability and resistance to crosswinds. With the aids, stability is further improved. The really wide Turbo bodywork would undoubtedly cost some top speed.

Despite claimed improvements, the climatological outlook in the Carrera is something of a joke in this day and age. The airflow system is hard to understand, slow to respond, and riddled with gaps in coverage. The windshield-wiper control stalk offers three speeds (including one fast enough to maim slow-moving pump jockeys); a separate dash knoblet must be activated for intermittent wiping. Instrumentation is one of the Carrera's long suits. It is formally dressed—everything in black and white—clean, handsome, and very complete; this part of the ergonomics has been a high priority at Porsche for many years. The most recently added fittings, however, have been tacked here and there wherever their plumbing would fit, the result being a hassle of ill-marked, often concealed impedimenta. Not even such standard accouterments as air, leather seats, and power windows take the edge off the interior's confusion beneath its businesslike façade. The optional automatic heat control and electrically heatable windshield would help (the two-position rear-defogger switch works well enough to get a barbecue going, but the front defroster is for laughs). Cruise control, an electric sunroof, and a factory-installed burglar-alarm system are some consolation, and the widely adjustable electronic Blaupunkt AM/FM/cassette stereo issues forth good sound.

But those who buy a Carrera because they looked at its features instead of actually driving one of these headlong, head-strong, drum-tight motorcars may be in for a big shock. And what could be finer?

Here is a car that humps from nothing to 30 mph in 1.9 seconds, to 100 in just 13.9 seconds (exactly a quarter-mile's worth), to



130 in 29.7 seconds, and very quickly up to a true, redline-limited terminal velocity of 149 mph—all of which makes entire parking lots' worth of formerly all-heroic performance luminaries look positively puny. The Carrera is simply the fastest factory-offered car for sale in the United States, no contest. (The Lamborghini factory is not yet delivering Countaches, as far as we know.) In addition, the Carrera is a Porsche. Surveying the world from its snug-fitting sport seats and feeling its every powerful pulse of communication, you'll feel that the Carrera possesses indestructibility.

Once upon a time, not so long ago, 911s were beginning to feel like somebody's idea of a bad joke that had run much too long in the telling. Over the past five years, Porsche has turned the tables, girding the cars' loins further still for extremely heavy duties in the lists of passionate motoring.

The Carrera is a car to get down and wrestle with. In exchange you will come away winded, exhilarated, and probably laughing aloud, sure of why it was that you first came to love the evil weevil, and sure that you still do. —*Larry Griffin*

COUNTERPOINT

• Despite the recent resurgence of performance cars, most manufacturers are still loath to bring really serious speed to market in America. BMW has kept its best motors at home for years. General Motors just canceled the turbo Fiero because it was too fast. Mercedes, though shamed into importing its big-block V-8, has seriously emasculated it. They all bray the same lame excuses—the 55-mph speed limit, emissions and CAFE regulations, even the unfavorable legal climate. Soon they'll be blaming sunspots.

Now along comes Porsche with the new Carrera, blowing them all out of the water—with a twenty-year-old design, no less. It's a car that can do accelerative battle with the seven-liter muscle cars that were popular in its infancy, yet it still meets 1984 emissions regulations. It's a car that can cover 2.5 miles per minute yet achieves 20 mpg on the EPA's city cycle. A car that coddles two adults, handles capably, stops on a dime, and is built like a tank. I'm sorry, gentlemen, but your excuses just don't cut it anymore. —*Csaba Csere*

I just came in from driving the Carrera. Should I go and kiss the publisher's feet in thanks for hiring me, or should I throw myself on the floor and have a tantrum, knowing that I'll probably never be able to afford one?

If you're looking for an objective comment from me about this car, I'll tell you that the heater controls are medieval and that the shifter is heavy in city traffic. Don't push me beyond that; this is my car. The optional sport seat is perfect and the driving position is excellent, both imperative for the hard driving that the Carrera prefers. You couldn't ask for a better set of performance gauges; the brakes are well balanced, linear, and exceptionally effective; and the new engine feels spectacular.

I want this car.

Now back to my financial situation. I can run a pretty clean bead, I do windows, and I am very good with children. Available on an occasional Saturday. Write in care of this magazine.

—*Jean Lindamood*

In Germany, they say the old girl has another ten or twenty years of life in her, and I sincerely hope that's true. The Carrera is easy to love largely because it's so hard to drive. Decoding the heater is a chore. Your left hand must be trained to operate the ignition key. The gas- and brake-pedal locations make heeling-and-toeing a ten on the index of difficulty. The steering kicks in your hands, the shifter's rubbery, and it's taboo to lift off the gas at the wrong time.

But really, who said running up to this car's limits had to be easy? The harder it is to do, the better it feels when you get it right, right? So over the years the 911 has become the professional driver's car. Every time you start the engine, it screams, "Don't try me unless you're good." A trip to the 7-Eleven is a challenge, and every smoothly executed sweeper or well-coordinated run through the gears is its own reward. You may practice your Fangio moves all you want on a Toyota; but to perfect your craft behind the wheel, nothing beats a 911. —*Don Sherman*

Vehicle type: rear-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 2 + 2-passenger, 2-door coupe

Price as tested: $37,075

Options on test car: base Porsche 911 Carrera, $31,950; 16-inch wheels and tires, $1560; front and rear spoilers, $1325; electric sunroof, $940; AM/FM-stereo radio/cassette, $600; cruise control, $320; sport seats, $250; black headliner, $70; extended steering-wheel hub, $40.

Sound system: Blaupunkt Monterey AM/FM-stereo radio/cassette, 4 speakers, 8 watts per channel

ENGINE

Type	flat 6, aluminum block and heads
Bore x stroke	3.74 x 2.93 in, 95.0 x 74.4mm
Displacement	193 cu in, 3164cc
Compression ratio	9.5:1
Engine-control system	Bosch Motronic
Emissions controls	3-way catalytic converter, feedback fuel-air-ratio control
Valve gear	chain-driven single overhead cam
Power (SAE net)	200 bhp @ 5900 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	185 lbs-ft @ 4800 rpm
Redline	6300 rpm

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission	5-speed
Final-drive ratio	3.88:1

Gear	Ratio	Mph/1000 rpm	Max. test speed
I	3.18	5.8	37 mph (6300 rpm)
II	1.78	10.4	66 mph (6300 rpm)
III	1.26	14.7	93 mph (6300 rpm)
IV	1.00	18.5	117 mph (6300 rpm)
V	0.79	23.6	149 mph (6300 rpm)

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Wheelbase	89.4 in
Track, F/R	54.0/54.3 in
Length	168.9 in
Width	65.0 in
Height	52.0 in
Frontal area	19.1 sq ft
Curb weight	2760 lbs
Weight distribution, F/R	41.3/58.7%

CHASSIS/BODY

Type	unit construction
Body material	welded steel stampings

INTERIOR

SAE volume, front seat	43 cu ft
rear seat	13 cu ft
trunk space	5 cu ft
Front seats	bucket
Recliner type	infinitely adjustable
General comfort	poor fair good **excellent**
Fore-and-aft support	poor fair good **excellent**
Lateral support	poor fair good **excellent**

SUSPENSION

F:	ind, MacPherson strut, torsion bars, anti-sway bar
R:	ind, semi-trailing arms, torsion bars, anti-sway bar

STEERING

Type	rack-and-pinion
Turns lock-to-lock	2.9
Turning circle curb-to-curb	34.0 ft

BRAKES

F:	11.1 x 0.9-in vented disc
R:	11.4 x 0.9-in vented disc
Power assist	vacuum

WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size	F: 6.0 x 16 in; R: 7.0 x 16 in
Wheel type	forged aluminum
Tire make and size	Goodyear NCT, F: 205/55VR-16; R: 225/50VR-16

CAR AND DRIVER TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION

	Seconds
Zero to 30 mph	1.9
40 mph	2.9
50 mph	4.1
60 mph	5.3
70 mph	7.2
80 mph	9.0
90 mph	10.9
100 mph	13.9
110 mph	17.1
120 mph	23.1
130 mph	29.7
Top-gear passing time, 30–50 mph	7.4
50–70 mph	7.9
Standing ¼-mile	13.9 sec @ 100 mph
Top speed	149 mph

BRAKING

70–0 mph @ impending lockup	184 ft
Modulation	poor fair good **excellent**
Fade	**none** moderate heavy
Front-rear balance	poor fair **good**

HANDLING

Roadholding, 282-ft-dia skidpad	0.80 g
Understeer	**minimal** moderate excessive

COAST-DOWN MEASUREMENTS

Road horsepower @ 50 mph	13.0 hp
Friction and tire losses @ 50 mph	5.5 hp
Aerodynamic drag @ 50 mph	7.5 hp

FUEL ECONOMY

EPA city driving	**20 mpg**
EPA highway driving	32 mpg
EPA combined driving	24 mpg
C/D observed fuel economy	**17 mpg**

INTERIOR SOUND LEVEL

Idle	59 dBA
Full-throttle acceleration	83 dBA
70-mph cruising	75 dBA
70-mph coasting	74 dBA