

# CLASSIC DRIVER

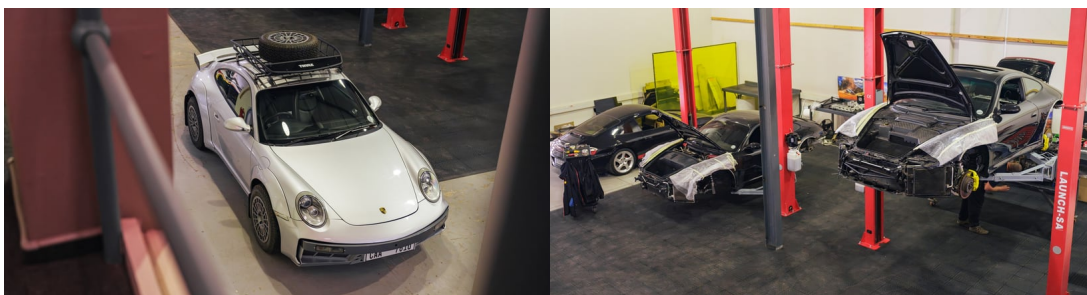
## This safari Porsche 997 is South Africa's ultimate antidote to boredom

### Lead

In the midst of the worldwide COVID-19 lockdown, one man was so bored of sitting at home that he unintentionally came up with one of the coolest Porsche projects we've come across. Meet the SafariProjek 997.



Many automotive projects stem from months or even years of research, dreams, and experience in the industry, but sometimes the best ideas come from a simple idea paired with enough passion and the right people. This is exactly how the SafariProjek off-road Porsche adventure in South Africa started for avid off and on-road racer Johan de Bruyn.



With pretty much everything in the world on hold during 2020, Johan had lots of time to spend at home and ponder about all things in life. Being a petrolhead, though, this meant he was thinking about cars most of the time. He races Porsches on track as well as doing rally-raid racing, so at some point the thought crossed his mind about combining the two.

Johan mentioned the idea of a Safari Porsche 996 build to Philip Visser, an engineer and race car builder with many years' experience in rally car team management and suspension building.





After enough research, or so they thought, they started with their first car, a 2003 Porsche 996 Carrera 4S. They were hopeful about being able to acquire most of the parts for the build off the shelf, but of course they were surprised to learn that there was almost nothing available.

This led them on the journey of plenty more research and eventually developing and building the majority of their own parts, and with 996s becoming harder and harder to find, their horizons eventually broadened to include 997s too.



To allow the exterior to accommodate larger wheels and more ground clearance — while adding one extra visual oomph — they created a custom wide body kit, including wide arches and custom front and rear bumpers. Along with this, each car also gets a specially made aluminium skid plate to protect the underside during off-roading. You can even spec your car with either a stack of 4 rally lights mounted on the hood or a set of individual ones mounted to the front bumper, handy for a night expedition into the unlit dirt roads around the Kruger National Park.

For increased wheel travel, the front track was widened by 120mm, while the rear was also widened to fit the same size wheel as used in the front. The rear suspension



geometry was also altered to enable better weight transfer to the front axle under braking, improving the SafariProjek 911's handling and agility on gravel roads.



The suspension received a comprehensive overall too. The top mounts for the McPherson struts were moved out by 60mm by way of a specially designed mount for the bespoke Reiger shock absorbers. Custom suspension components were manufactured from 7075 aircraft grade aluminium and fitted with chromoly rod end bearings on all pivot points. Combine the Reiger shock absorbers with the suspension changes, and you get a car with around 200mm of wheel travel front and rear.



Naturally, they needed wheels that matched the look of the car's bodacious exterior, and currently offer either 17- or 18-inch Evo Corse or OZ Racing rally wheels, both to complete the rally look and because they're strong enough to cope with jumps and extreme off-road driving. However, for those clinging to the OEM look, you can also choose from more contemporary 18-inch Fuchs replica wheels. These wheels are paired with BFGoodrich all-terrain tyres in 225/55/R18 profiles, giving the cars a crazy 280mm ground clearance, more than enough to have all the fun possible on any gravel or sand road you can find. To complete the adventurous look, Thule roof racks are fitted to each car, with a fifth wheel mounted on top, in-case you ever manage to destroy one of those tyres.





Porsche engines are known to be quite reliable and already offer great performance, so it's one of the few parts of the cars that Johan and Philip barely touched, albeit for a set of performance headers and de-cat exhaust, with SafariProjek's signature centre exit tips. Gearboxes are also fitted with Quaife Limited Slip Differentials to help get the tail out when the desire arises.



When it comes to interiors, SafariProjek offers a range of options, ranging from sedate to all-out. You can opt for a complete standard interior, or a full custom one, with a range of patterns and materials available as well as a range of steering wheels, with the Momo Prototipo being my absolute favourite.

Finally, no SafariProjek car is complete without a shiny new paintjob or wrap. Clients have full choice when it comes to the paintwork of their dream ride, and the team will do everything to make their wildest wishes come true. Some customers have chosen to go for simple colours, while builds like the Rothmans or Gulf inspired liveries are simply sublime.





I've had the opportunity to drive these cars more than once and I can honestly say it's some of the best fun I've had on dirt and even on tar. It boggles the mind that you can do 100 km/h on a tar surface and jump straight onto a dirt or gravel road and it's just as comfortable. SafariProjek's creation simply eats up all the bumps and ditches with ease, thanks in large to that highly advanced Reiger suspension setup. If you're lucky enough to find some corners or some wet patches, your smile will only widen, as these things are more than willing to slide.



What started as a singular build just over 3 years ago, has now turned into a flourishing business with over 14 builds already completed and many more on order already. And for our UK-based readers, you can now even buy a SafariProjek 911 of your own in Great Britain via Roughroads Engineering. It goes to show that following a simple passion and getting the right people to be part of that journey can turn out better than you could've ever expected.

The Porsche 911 has always been one of the best drivers' sports cars in the world, and being able to continue the driving thrills on any surface imaginable simple takes the experience to the next level. I certainly wouldn't mind one of these, speaking of which, I wonder how a Pink Pig livery would suit a SafariProjek build...

*Photos by Stefan Kotze*

**Gallery**













































































