

CLASSIC DRIVER

Modern Classics: Porsche 911 turbo



Everybody knows the Porsche 911 turbo, or thinks they do. It's one of those rare cars which has attracted a fanatical cult following. An early 3-litre is now very much a collectors' item, something to be cosseted and preserved. Oddly enough, only a very small production run of 500 cars was planned when it was launched at the 1974 Paris motor show. Porsche aimed only to homologate it for racing but, to everybody's surprise, the car stole the show.

With its spoilers and the wheelarches widened by nearly five inches on the familiar 911 body, the first **911 turbo** looked very sexy. Then there was the performance: with a top speed of around 155mph and 0-60mph in 6.0 seconds, it was most impressive and, for overtaking, unquestionably the fastest accelerating road car available back then.

But what really clinched the sales rush was the decision of somebody in the marketing department to deck it out lavishly, complete with electric windows, air-conditioning, leather interior, four-speaker stereo and much more. Everybody wanted one and the order book was filled immediately. The plan to produce only 500 cars had to be rapidly revised. By the time it was replaced by the (much quicker) **3.3-litre turbo** for the 1977 Model Year, no fewer than 2850 3-litre Coupés had been built and an icon had been born.



Those in the know tend to call it the **930**, that being its internal factory designation, but for obvious marketing reasons the new 1975 model was sold as the '**911 turbo**' in **Europe** and as the '**turbo Carrera**' in the **United States**. Those early machines have retained a reputation as ferociously quick road cars but it was the next **911 turbos** which really deserve that tag.

With 260bhp from the single-turbo 3-litre engine, the original was not that quick by modern standards. In fact, the sobering truth is that today's entry-level **Boxster** is slightly quicker overall, even in a straight line. The 3-litre, remember, was meant only as an homologation special and the racing model derived from it, the **934**, was the real monster, giving well over 500bhp and presenting its drivers with truly fearsome turbo-lag. However, the **934** was, as planned, a mighty winner in its class in international motorsport.

Although the first **911 turbo** road cars were not quite as fast as people now think they were, there was an excitement about them which has endured ever since. That's one reason why they are so collectable today,

the other being that they marked the start of a long line of sensational road cars of the same name. Much has happened in between but today's sophisticated **911 Turbo**, now with a capital 'T' to its name – not to mention 4wd and 500HP – is still a direct development of the original first seen in 1974.



A **911 turbo** driver, back in the 1970s, needed far greater skill to drive his car well than any modern car demands. There was no traction control and no electronic stability assistance but there was turbo-lag aplenty and the torque came in with a mighty thrust which made the old 3-litre a very exciting car, possibly too exciting at times. It was a thrill, without doubt, but it was all too easy to lose it if you failed to handle it 'by the book'. Without doubt, the best drivers found they were quicker on a twisty road with a contemporary, naturally aspirated 911.

The standard 911 was a bit less powerful than the turbo but it was far more driveable. The **911 turbo** driver just had to wait for the straight bits, when he could surge past almost anything else on the road with ease. The gearboxes in **911 turbos** had only four forward speeds for many years but, with that much torque, there genuinely was no need for more gears.

Then, when it came to braking, absolutely no other car got close to the earliest **911 turbo**. Stopping distances were much shorter than anything known before. Under braking, those cars also felt astonishingly secure thanks to their wide (7j x 15) front wheels and even wider (8j x 15) rears, plus big, ventilated discs and two-piston calipers all round.



Listed at £14,749 including tax, the **911 turbo Coupé** first appeared in UK price lists in February 1975. At such a price, almost exactly twice that of a standard 911 Coupé, it was an expensive and most exclusive car. A new **Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow** cost only £81 more than the top **Porsche** and the **911 turbo** made an **Aston Martin V8** (at a mere £11,349) look a real bargain. I hesitate to suggest a value for a pristine **1975 911 turbo** today as rumour suggests prices have been rising rather rapidly of late.

*Well, you've read the piece and rather fancy one now. Please [CLICK HERE](#) to see the **Porsche 911 (930) turbos** available in the **Classic Driver** car database.*

Text: Tony Dron

Photos: Porsche

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