

CLASSIC DRIVER

Porsche Panamera S E-Hybrid: Energy regeneration without compromise

Lead

For most of us, 'hybrid' means a list of awkward compromises that ultimately detract from the pure driving experience a car can offer. The Porsche Panamera S E-Hybrid finally addresses this problem, drawing benefits from its eco-technology while retaining its stunning performance credentials...

It's no wonder cars are so frequently cursed in city centres around the world. While crawling through the congestion, stifled by exhaust fumes and the pungent smell of overheating engines, electric drive seems to make a lot of sense. At the push of a button, Porsche's second-generation Panamera S E-Hybrid will creep around in electric mode, completely emission-free and in utter silence.



Green technology, elegantly packaged

The Panamera's divisive styling has been subtly tweaked with new front and rear headlights – an upgrade that will carry over to the rest of the Panamera range. Neon green brake calipers and badge highlights are the only tell-tale sign that this Panamera is hiding some rather impressive eco-friendly technology. It's hard to believe that electric power alone can propel this two-tonne (2095kg) car for a mightily impressive 22 miles before being plugged in again (a first for the Panamera). And, if you're caught short and run out of power before you're home, it's not a problem – the biturbo V6 can kick in and recharge those empty batteries right away. Rather than complaining about the decline of petrol-powered motoring culture, we relished the E-Hybrid's zippy electric performance.

Power on demand

In electric mode, the saloon silently surges up to 135km/h (about 84mph) quite happily before the V6 petrol engine automatically takes over, swiftly putting its 330bhp into action to reach your desired speed. The change of modes is almost imperceptible to the driver; only a trick viewer on the speedo tells you exactly where and when the energy is going.



Elsewhere, the Panamera's signature dynamic characteristics shine through, offering pure driving pleasure in abundance. Despite its weight, every bend in the road is tackled with remarkable poise, aided by the on-tap power and torque (410bhp and 590Nm) served up via the superb eight-speed automatic gearbox. When an eco-car offers thrills like these, we've nothing against the technology. Even if we couldn't reach the ambitious 91mpg that Porsche claims, we were thrilled by the almost freakish way the car covers the ground.

All this fun comes at a price, though – £89,000 to be exact. While that's not exactly cheap, the consolation comes when you start to save fuel and money right from the off. Whether the investment pays off for you personally is open to question; but for the environment, it's a win-win situation.

Photos: Classic Driver

Gallery

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