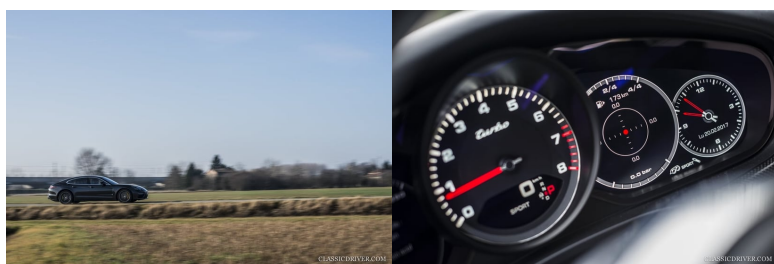


CLASSIC DRIVER

Is the new Porsche Panamera a 'bella macchina'?

Lead
Where could the aesthetic qualities of a new sports car be better assessed than in Italy? And where better to take the new Porsche Panamera Turbo than through the 'Terra dei Motori'?



Spacious, comfortable, family-friendly, fast — the Porsche Panamera is one of the Zuffenhausen's 'greatest hits' of the new millennium. The first generation of the four-seater was not considered a classic beauty. The design proportions and curves in the XXL format, which had been borrowed from the Porsche 911, appeared too voluminous, and the smooth fastback rear was in contrast to the angular mainstream design. Now in its second generation, the Panamera has a much more appealing design. Tired of the "humpback whale" nickname, the design team did a great job of transforming the big four-door model into a real sports car. The Porsche 911, with its sharp edges and muscular flanks, served as the model of inspiration. But the body sits more tightly over the chassis and the narrow, continuous band of light at the rear gives the Panamera a more dynamic look.





From the driver's seat, one quickly forgets that they are piloting a family-friendly sedan, especially when the 550hp four-liter V8 turbo is engaged. In its dark grey paint, the car may not be a looker, but while driving through the curvaceous country roads between Modena and Bologna, the Panamera Turbo's sprint was no less agile than that of a Ferrari or Lamborghini, taking just 3.6 seconds for the speedometer to pass the 100km/h mark. The central — and still analogue — speedometer is an homage to the 1955 Porsche 356 A, which, back in its day, could only dream of the 770Nm of torque that the Panamera can produce.



Even more impressive than the power is the handling. With its rear-axle steering, active roll compensation, and new three-chamber air suspension, the Panamera stuck into the sharpest curves, only to float moments later over each tiny bump in the road. This is especially beneficial if you weren't able to control yourself at lunch while visiting one of the excellent trattorias and the combination of antipasti, primi, secondi, and dolci is sitting a bit heavy in your stomach.





The Emilia Romagna around Modena and Bologna is known as ‘Terra dei Motori’, because of the numerous car companies that are based here, but it also offers other temptations: Parmesan cheese, balsamic vinegar, ham, wine. So, if you are to visit, it’s probably best you have a car with a relatively spacious boot. And if you are traveling to Italy for gourmet shopping on an even grander scale, you should opt for the new Porsche Panamera Sport Turismo, as the boot can easily swallow a small grocery store, if necessary.



Despite the full trunk and food-laden driver, the Panamera Turbo proved itself a true sports car once again at sunset, as it easily handled the fast bends in the mountains south of Modena. And up there, at dusk, the new design finally received its Italian blessing — next to us, from behind the wheel of a dented Piaggio tricycle with a stuttering engine, an old man rolled down the window and called out, through a considerable gapped-tooth smile, a brave “*che bella macchina!*” You couldn’t have wished for more!

Photos: Rémi Dargegen for Classic Driver © 2017

Gallery

