

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Pure Porsche perfection is a 904 Carrera GTS in the Swabian hills](#)

Lead

Before setting out its stall at Retro Classics in Stuttgart next week, Boxer Motor invited us to Swabia to help stretch the legs of its magnificent Porsche 904 Carrera GTS. And who better to capture the occasion than our very own Porscheophile Rémi Dargegen?

“We’re going to shake down our Porsche 904 Carrera GTS – care to join?” asked the guys at [Boxer Motor & Klassische Automobiles](#) in Dotternhausen, just southwest of Stuttgart. Suffice to say, I didn’t need asking twice. See, I’ve always considered the low-slung 1960s sports car to be the purest and most beautiful Porsche of them all.

Clearly sculpted by the wind, the 904 is tiny, light and efficient – absolutely the logical continuation of the wonderful Porsche prototype bloodline that kindled with the Glöckler Spyder and culminated in the 718 W-RS. It was also the last softly styled racer to emerge from Zuffenhausen; a car that, visually, erred further towards the road than the racetrack, something that couldn’t be said of the 906 Carrera 6 that followed.



A series of trains and bouts of overwhelming anticipation later, and I’m stood in the rafters of an abandoned foundry gazing down at ‘my’ Porsche 904. For today, at least. From this angle, it looks like a giant bar of soap. But even from these lofty heights, the car’s presence is strongly felt. This is the perfect location to shoot such a car – vast, airy, cold and eerily empty, lending the 904 even more visual strength. Not that it needs it.

Highly significant to the bloodline of all subsequent competition Porsches, the endeavours of the 904 are well known – even to those with no more than a passing interest. Conceived by racing baron and spin doctor Huschke von Hanstein in 1963 in a bid to kickstart the factory’s racing efforts again following a disappointing foray into Formula 1, the mid-engined 904 was a true milestone car for its maker.



Designed by Ferdinand ‘Butzi’ Porsche and technical head honcho Dr Hans Tomala for the FIA’s newly formed two-litre GT class, the all-new prototype was put together using cheaper and efficient production methods inspired by the Lotus Elite of Colin Chapman’s Lotus outfit. A short, simple yet incredibly stiff boxed steel ladder chassis was used, for example, and clothed with a streamlined and ultra-light body crafted from glass-fibre. It was Porsche’s original intention to use the six-cylinder from the 911 in the 904, though the reliability of – and widespread availability of parts for – the tried-and-tested Fuhrmann four-pot meant that *it* got the nod for the launch in 1964.

Initially, ‘Butzi’ Porsche and his merry band of engineers had little idea that they were onto a winner. In fact, the uncertainty that they would be able to sell the 100 cars required to homologate the 904 was such that an especially low price of 29,700 Deutsche marks was attached. The doubt was unfounded – the car’s immediate competitiveness, incredible reliability and outstanding versatility meant a further 20 cars were built to satisfy the overwhelming demand.



The Carrera GTS was successful right off the bat. Before it had even been homologated by the FIA, American road-racing legends Briggs Cunningham and Lake Underwood raced a 904 to class victory at the 1964 Sebring 12 Hours. And the wins continued to chalk up from there – the car triumphed at the Targa Florio, Le Mans, the Nürburgring and Reims, among countless other historic venues. And to give you an idea at the breadth of the 904's ability, one very nearly won the Monte-Carlo Rally in 1965!

I'm reminded a little of the twisting Alpine passes high above Monaco as head towards the picturesque Swabian countryside to get some dynamic images. 'My' car is chassis 904-010, which was born in 1964 and began life as one of a series of 'typing' cars retained by the Works. A comprehensive nut-and-bolt restoration carried out by a respected German marque specialist in the 1990s on behalf of its then-new owner means that, today, the car presents beautifully.



Despite having contested many prestigious historic road rallies such as the Tour Auto (questions of eligibility are not something a Porsche 904 owner needs to worry about) in the years since its rebirth, 904-010 still looks as good as it did when it left the factory 56 years ago. From the spartan, strictly-business cabin to the sultry Heinkel-built bodywork, the details – all present and correct – are hypnotic with their charm.

I can't imagine photographing such a car today without getting some dynamic shots in the bag. It's the moment when the car comes alive and gives the imagery an entirely different dimension. You won't be shocked to hear that being followed by a Porsche 904 Carrera GTS on a mountain road is a fantastic experience. The car is so low and nimble and, at these modest speeds, looks like an excited dog on a leash. To be honest, I'd love nothing more than to be in the hotseat. I've been lucky enough to drive a 904 before and the knife-edge precision and entirely 'at-one' connection with the car is something I will never forget.



I'm a Fuhrmann four man, no doubt about it, but the sound of the full-fat flat-six booming from those megaphone pipes, savagely biting away at the crisp winter's air, is enough to give me goosebumps. If I was in the fortunate position of being able to spend a considerable sum of money on a post-War historic racing car, the two cars at the top of my wish list would be the Porsche 904 Carrera GTS and the 906 Carrera 6. Both have their respective charm, beauty and appeal. But in my opinion, the 904 is Zuffenhausen's purest and most sensual design to this day. For that reason, it's 904-010 that I'd happily park in the garage of my dreams. For one discerning enthusiast of the marque, my dream could become a reality. Onwards to Stuttgart!

Gallery

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