

Sunday Drives: Thailand

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07/03/2021 In the latest of Newsroom's Sunday Drives series, film director and organiser of the Das Treffen, Tenn Xoomsai, takes us on a high-altitude loop through the remote forests of northern Thailand.

Where

Nan Province, Thailand

Length

300 kilometres

Type

An unusual mix of alpine passes and tropical jungle, with dramatic views, challenging curves and a reviving lunch stop in the middle.

Sihabutr Xoomsai, or 'Tenn' to his friends, is a Bangkok-based film director with a passion for Porsche and a love of the open road. He has almost single-handedly grown the Thai Porsche community, founding the popular Das Treffen (The Meeting) drive-in events in his native Bangkok, which have brought together a diverse cross section of modern and classic Porsche enthusiasts who now travel across Southeast Asia to be there.

But for Tenn and his friends, nothing is better than escaping the congestion and heat of the south for the remote mountains of Nan province in the north of Thailand, where high and empty mountain passes present the perfect opportunity to open up their air-cooled cars as Porsche intended.

"My absolute favourite driving road is way up in the north," Tenn says. "It's a loop we call the Nan – Bo Kluea, and it's my go-to route these days for a couple of reasons. First, the road is very clear in terms of traffic – there are virtually no cars there at all. And secondly, it's quite new, which means the surface is very good."

Start in the north of the Nan Province

The loop itself starts in the north of Nan and climbs quickly in furious zig-zags along the 1256 into the mountains of the Bo Kluea District, heading east towards the border with Laos. In doing so it also traverses the Doi Phu Kha national park, home to various rare and endangered varieties of trees and plants and whose peaks reach to almost two kilometres above sea level.

"The loop is about 300 km," Tenn says, "so you can do it in a day. Usually we leave at around nine in the morning and have lunch in Bo Kluea three hours later. It's the perfect morning drive." The return route leads you back over the mountains in another spectacular loop on the 1081 that eventually brings you right back to the start in Nan.

"You have very different scenery during the drive," Tenn explains. "There's a part that's typical Southeast Asian forest, very dense and green, but once you drive through that it becomes an open grassland and you can see the mountains in the distance. It's really beautiful."

Despite the remoteness of the region, there are several places you can stop to refuel both car and driver, and the road itself is in rude health. "The area doesn't have a lot of agriculture, so you don't get big trucks going up and down it all the time," says Tenn. "Which means the road has stayed almost perfect over the years. Mostly it's two lanes, like a B-road, and it's not particularly fast, but there a lot of curves to enjoy and beautiful views. There are also little cafés where you can stop for a coffee. It's all

really picturesque. We now refer to it as Thailand's Tuscany!"

The off-season is the best time for road trips in Thailand

Picking your moment is vital when undertaking a long road trip in Thailand, and Tenn recommends doing this one in the off-season. "We tend to go up in the winter when the weather is clear to make the best of the views. I'd suggest going between November and February because the summer months are just too hot and in rainy season it can all get a bit hairy. And of course, the cooler weather is better for an air-cooled Porsche, which is what we usually have up there."

Tenn is the proud owner of a perfect 1966 short wheelbase 911, a car that, despite its age and the heroic distances involved from Bangkok to Bo Kluea, is no stranger to these passes. "It's my favourite car to take and I must have done four or five trips there in it now," he says. "The roads are small and tight, so a manoeuvrable old 911 is perfectly suited to it."

Another unique aspect to Tenn's route is that, despite the altitude, it remains mostly densely wooded, with only occasional distant glimpses between the trees to remind you quite how high you are.

"I didn't even realise myself until we flew a drone up there," Tenn admits, "and we could see that the road is built right on the ridge of the mountain. On the left and right hand sides it's just cliffs. You don't see it because of this thick, tropical forest, but once in a while you come to an opening and see the mountains beyond. And it's absolutely spectacular."

Sunday Drives

With travel restrictions limiting the opportunities for road-trips, Porsche Newsroom's new Sunday Drives series sets out to quench readers' thirst for adventure by discovering the world's most beautiful driving roads through the eyes of Porsche people around the globe.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



Julian B. Hoffmann

Managing Editor Porsche Newsroom
+49 (0) 170 / 911 2771
julian.hoffmann@porsche.de

Consumption data

Taycan Turbo (Predecessor model)

*Further information on the official fuel consumption and the official specific CO_2 emissions of new passenger cars can be found in the "Leitfaden über den Kraftstoffverbrauch, die CO_2-Emissionen und den Stromverbrauch neuer Personenkraftwagen" (Fuel Consumption, CO_2Emissions and Electricity Consumption Guide for New Passenger Cars), which is available free of charge at all sales outlets and from DAT (Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH, Helmuth-Hirth-Str. 1, 73760 Ostfildern-Scharnhausen, www.dat.de).

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Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche Aktiengesellschaft
Porscheplatz 1
70435 Stuttgart