

Journey to the Land of Giant Trees

01/11/2021 As one of the originators of the American television series Backseat Drivers, John Chuldenko created the first car show for kids. Now he and his wife are visiting Yosemite National Park with their daughters and the Porsche Taycan 4 Cross Turismo, making memories.

What was it? The poster of the Porsche 930 Turbo taped to your childhood bedroom wall? An uncle with a 911 project car in the barn? The day you saw the Boxster in a dealer window? There are moments and experiences – some small, others indelible – that cement our love for cars. And then we really only want one thing: to set forth.

As a young boy, I learned to write by reading the dozens of car brochures I'd collect at the auto show every year. As I started writing and directing for film and television, I always searched for a way to tap into the wild enthusiasm kids have for cars. In developing Backseat Drivers, we wanted to make a car show that feels like it's made just for kids. We wanted them to interact with the cars as much as possible, to have fun and form a real connection with cars. After all, today's kids will become tomorrow's drivers.

Family road trip in the Porsche Taycan 4 Cross Turismo

As my wife Mirabai and our daughters load their bags into the trunk and the kids marvel at the retracting door handles, it becomes clear that this trip – perhaps the world's first family road trip in the Porsche Taycan 4 Cross Turismo – could very well become one of those profound moments. Even Cha-Cha, my six-year-old's stuffed bunny, seems to have a special twinkle in her eye as we close the hatch and set out for our adventure in the wilds of California.

With a battery full of charge and a cupholder full of coffee, I hammer the accelerator onto the 5 Freeway. The car flies off with a squeal – not from the tires, but from the two girls in the back seat. They are delighted, beaming. In those short seconds, they understand everything this car is about and everything this trip is about: to explore California via the open road, to experience this special car in a special place. And as the Taycan settles into its cruising speed, I delight in the fact that we're experiencing this getaway as a family – and that even so, no one is complaining about my playlist.

Something happens when you ascend the winding road that leads into the Sequoia National Forest. Everything goes quiet. The wind, the kids, the world – everything. We all fall strangely silent as we glide peacefully through the majestic three-thousand-year-old trees. The electric whisper of the car seems almost reverent, as though it, too, understands the significance of the moment.

Stopping to picnic on an ancient fallen tree, we're greeted by a gigantic, nightmare-inducing insect clinging defiantly to the cherry paint. Adeline, my oldest, jumps for cover behind the rear door, while Charlotte, my youngest, asks if we can bring it along with us. I marvel at how different the two are, then check twice to make sure Charlotte hasn't hidden the bug in the glove box.

As the sun sets, we arrive at our lodge near the entrance to Yosemite. Like a crime-show detective, I search the car for any misplaced snacks that might entice a bear to turn the Taycan into a picnic basket; then plug in to charge for the night. Clinging to my phone flashlight, I follow the footpath to our cottage, with a heartfelt hope I don't run into anything with claws.

If you think bears are scary, try waking up two kids at 5:15 a.m. But if you want to experience nature, there's no choice: adventure is not going to wait. So we load our bleary-eyed kids into the back seat and set off for Yosemite. Dawn is now breaking over this majestic landscape. It's almost surreal – like a scenic painting hung far off in the distance. An Ansel Adams print brought to life in glorious, breathing color. Yosemite is humbling – the kind of place that gently, but firmly, reminds us that we are merely a blip in the timeline of nature. The kind of place where almost everything we see will outlive us.

View of the Half Dome

Winding around a tight twisting road, Adeline exclaims, "I love this car!" Bingo. Seconds later, the trees part to reveal a magnificent view: Half Dome, a rock formation rising 2,700 meters above the massive

trees below. A waterfall cascades in the distance as we stop to climb on the nearby rocks. I can't help but think of the first indigenous people to settle in this area and the passionate individuals who fought to keep it preserved. Not to mention the blissful fact that at this moment, neither of my children needs to use the restroom.

Before leaving the park, we bound from the car and into the forest one more time. Wandering through the trees, Charlotte befriends another insect. This time a caterpillar she names “Fuzzy,” whom she thankfully decides to tuck in the cozy bark of a nearby tree and not in her pocket.

The following morning we meander back toward Los Angeles through California's seemingly endless golden fields. And while we successfully manage to keep the woodland critters from coming home with us, we do return with a new member of the family: a slightly overpriced chainsaw-carved wooden bear whom the girls name “Gunther.”

The soul of any road trip is its spontaneity, the freedom to roam on a whim and stop at will. Here, the Cross Turismo is in its element. I switch into Gravel Mode and aim for a picturesque river, where Mirabai and I produce a spread of berries, cheese, salami, and cucumbers. Adeline peppers our photographer with questions about life in Germany, and Charlotte – of course – digs up an insect from the muddy bank of the river. Yes, we've learned to travel with plenty of hand wipes.

Later, cruising on a wide-open freeway, Mirabai remarks on how fortunate we have been to share this experience. I glance in the rearview mirror and see Gunther buckled into the middle seat between our daughters. He returns my gaze with his wooden eyes. We understand each other, too – we're both glad to be free, glad to be on the road.

With its extra room, the Cross Turismo doesn't just offer convenience and capacity but opportunity. An opportunity to inspire the next generation of passionate enthusiasts who will drive their own cars through places like this one day. For my girls, these miles will become memories. Indelible and important. For as much as I appreciate the Porsche's speed, I know our children are growing up faster.

Info

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Consumption data

Taycan 4 Cross Turismo (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).

Image Sublines

Path: media/Images/img_1.jpg
Title: Yosemite National Park, 2021, Porsche AG
Subline: Imposing: Yosemite National Park, with its natural wonders both large and small, extends some 3,000 square kilometers along California's Sierra Nevada range.

Path: media/Images/img_3.jpg
Title: Taycan 4 Cross Turismo, 2021, Porsche AG
Subline: Stupendous: A giant sequoia can have a circumference of over thirty meters.

Path: media/Images/img_4.jpg
Title: John Chuldenko and his family, Sequoia National Forest, 2021, Porsche AG
Subline: Deeply rooted: John, Adeline, Charlotte, and Mirabai Chuldenko enjoy their time together in the Sequoia National Forest.

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