

911 GT3 RS (WLTP)*: Fuel consumption combined: 13.2 l/100 km; CO_2 emissions combined: 299 g/km; CO_2 class: G

Driving school 2.0: Master Training in the French Riviera

19/11/2024 Roaring engines, professional video analysis, Le Mans champions as driving teachers: the Porsche Track Experience at Circuit Paul Ricard provides participants with the opportunity to learn how to push their sports car to the limits. Porsche visits the driving events in Le Castellet, France, for a chance to experience the unique racing atmosphere firsthand.

Instructor Phil Bastiaans offers a few helpful tips before pressing the gas pedal and navigating his 911 GT3 RS (992) out of the Circuit Paul Ricard pit lane and onto the course. “Think about what we discussed during analysis,” we hear him say over the radio, which keeps him connected to his students at all times. “Pay attention to the racing line. Remember the braking points. And have fun!” And with that, Bastiaans accelerates the 386 kW (525 PS) engine to 100 kmh in 3.2 seconds and then far beyond.

Centrifugal forces take hold of you in the front passenger seat, and you can feel the vibrations throughout your body when the high-performance sports car touches the red and white curb. But that’s

the idea. And the experienced Porsche instructor's routine creates a sense of safety – even when the GT3 RS reaches a speed of 258 kmh on the one-kilometer-long Mistral Straight, brakes at the last possible moment, and passes through the dreaded Signes corner at around 130 kmh.

Bastiaans, who hails from the Netherlands and has competed in more than 200 races in different classes, expertly maneuvers the vehicle through the hairpin turns of the 5.8-kilometer racecourse in the French Riviera. Unadulterated driving enjoyment, pure adrenaline, maximum performance. It's moments like these that attract motorsport enthusiasts to racecourses around the world, for an opportunity to participate in what others dream of: the Porsche Track Experience.

From level to level

Originally founded as the Porsche motorsport school in 1974, the Porsche Track Experience is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. New name and vehicles, but the same promise: anyone interested in experiencing the full performance of a Porsche sports car can take part and learn.

Anything's possible with the Track Experience, whether it's a one-time racecourse event or training to be a race car driver. There are four different training levels that build on one another: "Discover," which provides first-time experiences on a circular course like those at the international Porsche Experience Centers; "Learn," which focuses on driving safety and vehicle control; "Boost," which is the training format on international GP and Formula 1 racecourses; and "Race," the final training course to become a race car driver at the Rennsport Academy. If you want to make it to the top of the pyramid, you have to start at the first level and work your way up – like in a video game, but with real experiences. From the first driving event to the transition to professional motorsport, the Porsche Track Experience team accompanies customers throughout the entire training pyramid.

Performance behind the scenes

These experiences wouldn't be possible without all the activities that go on in the background. These days, the Porsche Track Experience events are bundled to make the work more efficient. Up to five times a year, the Porsche team spends around 10 days at a time at international GP and Formula 1 courses. During this time, driving events of different levels are offered in collaboration with Manthey Racing. This weekend in mid-June, we're accompanying the two-day Master GT3 RS training course, which is the third level for advanced drivers, specifically tailored to the 911 GT3 RS.

"Our customers are provided with an extensive performance package on-site that doesn't exist anywhere else for Porsche drivers," explains Monika Tigges, Porsche Track Tour Project Manager. "We take care of everything for them, from fireproof clothing to the vehicle, which they can rent in a color of their choice." Tigges' job is to make sure that the infrastructure is in place by the time the event begins, which is a whole lot of work. In fact, 120 sports cars – 90 road vehicles and 30 race cars – had to be transported to southern France by truck, so that some models can be used while the mechanics are

servicing others. “We’re fortunate to have Manthey Racing as our partner. Our colleagues there offer an extraordinary level of vehicle maintenance and work closely with the Porsche motorsport development team,” explains Tigges.

To ensure everything goes according to plan, she and the Manthey team have to deal with one logistical challenge after the other. “We need another four trucks for the spare parts and tires alone,” says Tigges. The tasks are enormous and require meticulous detail. “We tailor the vehicles to the individual customers’ wishes,” adds Florian Kettel, a member of the Manthey Operations team. “Which can also include the desired temperature inside the car.”

By the time the event begins, around 50 people in the background have already done what they can to ensure everything runs smoothly. Here at Circuit Paul Ricard, the legendary Formula 1 track, the pit lanes have been transformed into workshops and offices. The Hospitality – a large event space with lounge furniture, dining areas, and a coffee bar – is ready to welcome guests. The vehicles lined up in the pre-grid next to the main entrance to the racecourse complex are raring to go, while all the other models wait their turn in the background. With the access roads closed, the track, which accommodates up to 180 course configurations, is ready to go – for the next several days, exclusively for Porsche Track Experience participants.

“Like the infrastructure, a few other organizational issues need to be seen to in advance,” explains Frederic Klein, Event Operations Project Manager at Porsche. “What exactly does the training schedule look like? Which vehicles will be used? We’re in charge of the entire customer journey, from booking to the final lap on the course.” As the direct contact for customers, Klein is present the entire time and ensures everything goes according to plan. “But now that we’ve developed a routine, things tend to go smoothly,” he adds. “The products make it unbelievably easy for us to get our customers excited about the brand. And that’s our daily motivation.”

Driving school 2.0

The Master GT3 RS driving program consists of different elements of motorsport: vehicle settings, track inspection, video and data analyses, and racecourse driving. P

articipants spend their personal racing weekend with their instructor, with one instructor for every two participants. The instructor leads analysis sessions and provides valuable tips in real time by radio on the racecourse. “My main goal is to help customers improve their driving quality,” says Constantin Dressler, who has worked as a Porsche instructor for 14 years. His most important advice: “Look far ahead. Actually, that’s something I’d recommend to everyone. If you’re focused on the road right in front of you, you might miss the next curve.” Dressler’s colleague Nico Castrup adds: “You can always work on technical details, but generally speaking you should learn to trust your gut.” Like Dressler, Castrup has been a Porsche instructor since 2010. They both compete privately in smaller racing series and can draw on a wealth of experience when advising their customers. And this is a dream job for both of them.

This weekend they're supported by two Le Mans champions: Timo Bernhard, who has made the trip from Germany, and André Lotterer, who has come from Monaco in the 911 Turbo S Cabriolet (992). The two of them have gained experience in the world's most legendary races, which they want to share with Track Experience participants.

Whether it's for workshops, advice on the racing line and optimal braking points, or free driving with the champions, Porsche sends its works drivers and brand ambassadors to the fast-paced events all over the world. "The course here in Le Castellet has many long curves that require good technique," explains Lotterer. "That's a challenge we can help with." Timo Bernhard, too, is well acquainted with the course and its perils. He was involved in the testing before Porsche clinched the overall win in Le Mans with the 919 Hybrid three years in a row – in 2015, 2016, and 2017.

In 2017, he was a member of the winning team. "One of the cornerstones was laid for future successes at that time," says Bernhard, who has been involved in the Porsche Track Experience for many years. "With its long straights, the course isn't all that different from Le Mans. We've completed countless endurance runs of 30 hours here." The Track Experience has shown him how his expertise can help shave off valuable seconds. "There was once a participant who was having problems with the course. And then it started to rain," the brand ambassador recalls. "We gave it a go anyways – in 45-minute blocks. And by the end, he'd improved his time by ten seconds."

The fascination of the racecourse

Professor Andreas Frohn from Siegen in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia could also fill an evening with stories about learning effects like these. "Unfortunately, I drove my first 911, a Cabriolet, 964 type, pitch black with white seats, into a tree," he says laughing. "Then I returned to the dealership, feeling a little embarrassed. 'It's no problem,' said the salesman. 'But how about our motorsport school?'" That was 29 years ago. Since then, Frohn and his wife have regularly taken part in the driving events of the Porsche Track Experience. "It must be more than 200 by now," says Frohn, a full-time ophthalmologist. "For safety reasons to start with. Then mainly for fun." He continues to learn to this day. "You need to get acquainted with every new model of the GT3 RS." The vehicles, the racecourse, the atmosphere. Once you've participated, you usually come back again and again. Leonardo Fração, who traveled all the way from Porto Alegre, Brazil, to be here, flies to Europe four times a year to take part in the many Porsche Experiences. "It's wonderful. You make so many friends with the same passion from all over the world," says the Brazilian. "And then there's the racing experiences themselves. It's the perfect combination. I've improved my time by four seconds from yesterday to today alone."

Homestretch

When you take a seat next to instructor Phil Bastiaans and spend 20 minutes with him and his two students on the racecourse, it doesn't take long to understand what Leonardo Fração is talking about. There are three 911 GT3 RS cars circling the course: Bastiaans is keeping pace with his two students

and watching their every move. Sometimes he'll take the lead to set the tempo and demonstrate the racing line – before falling back again to gain the best view of the participants. He's constantly providing instructions by radio, helping them improve their performance in real time. While driving his GT3 RS, he not only adjusts the Porsche Active Suspension Management (PASM) system using the control units on the steering wheel, but also changes the Porsche Torque Vectoring Plus (PTV+) settings to improve steering behavior on curves. Valuable knowledge that he shares with his students. In short, Bastiaans has full control.

Then he navigates the GT3 RS back toward the pit lane and onto the area in front of Hospitality. But that's not the end of the session. The team then goes straight to video analysis, always with the goal of shaving off a few seconds the next time.

For the past 50 years, Porsche has been training passionate amateur drivers to be ambitious race car drivers in this way. You can feel the passion for the brand everywhere under the sun in the French Riviera. And in the evening, all of the participants gather once again for the final act of the eventful day. With Stevie Wonder's *Happy Birthday* playing on the speakers, a cake sporting a large 50 in the middle is served. This is a chance to celebrate the special anniversary together, allowing participants to feel like they're part of something extraordinary. What began 50 years ago will continue into the future here – with vehicles and experiences that many people dream about every day.

Porsche Track Experience

Launched 50 years ago with driving and safety training courses, the Porsche Track Experience now offers a variety of training programs all over the world. Customers can gain initial experience at the global Experience Centers or at Track Experiences in local markets. Advanced drivers can visit the Porsche Track Experience operated by Manthey Racing on different GP and Formula 1 racecourses in Europe, where they have the opportunity to complete different experience and training programs in road vehicles and race cars – and, if desired, work their way up to professional racing.

Info

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Consumption data

911 Turbo S Cabriolet (Predecessor model)

911 GT3 RS (WLTP)*: Fuel consumption combined: 13.2 l/100 km; CO_2 emissions combined: 299 g/km; CO_2 class: G

911 GT3 (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: Driving school 2.0: Master Training in the French Riviera/Images/img_1.jpg
Title: 911 GT3 RS, Porsche Track Experience, Le Castellet, France, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: Diversity: A total of 120 Porsche vehicles were brought for the Porsche Track Experience events in Le Castellet, France – here with a focus on the vehicles for the Master GT3 RS training.

Path: Driving school 2.0: Master Training in the French Riviera/Images/img_3.jpg
Title: 911 GT3 RS, Porsche Track Experience, Le Castellet, France, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: Ultra dynamic: The 911 GT3 RS cars reach top speeds of more than 250 kmh on the long homestretch.

Path: Driving school 2.0: Master Training in the French Riviera/Images/img_4.jpg
Title: 911 GT3 RS, Porsche Track Experience, Le Castellet, France, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: Driving together: The dynamism on the track can also be felt throughout the cockpit.

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