

Top Gear ranks the greatest 911s of all time

21/07/2026 During a three-day investigation on the stunning roads of the Black Forest, Top Gear's Jethro Bovingdon sets out to determine which 911 is worthy of the title of 'greatest ever'. This is how it went – from his perspective.

Like anything in life, it's all in the planning. And, boy, do I hate planning. However, on this occasion I was diligent. I agonised over the contenders list. Attended 'Zzzzzzoom' calls. Spent an unhealthy amount of time on Google maps and then – the horror! – looked for affirmation of promising routes on motorcycling forums.

These didn't feel like wasted hours or anything even approaching 'work', because the reward at the end would be dreamily, extraordinarily and unforgettably perfect: three days in the Black Forest with six of the most thrilling and entertaining cars the world has ever seen. Our mission? To crown the greatest 911 ever and proclaim it to the whole world through the Top Gear YouTube channel and an extensive magazine cover feature.

Why certain icons missed the cut

The list ebbed and flowed over a few weeks but we quickly settled on what direction this momentous test would take. Our 'Greatest' would be the 911 distilled down to its core ingredients. There would be no care for everyday usability and practicality, instead we'd focus on response, excitement, entertainment and the simple joy of a compact, lightweight, stripped-to-the-bone drivers' car on the perfect piece of road.

Fantasyland, but for the Porsche 911 also highly appropriate. For more than 60 years, this iconic sportscar has cut through the superfluous to deliver motorsport glory and road car nirvana. So, we'd be just as ruthless.

It was bound to upset many people. There would be no representation for the 911 Turbo. The simple delights of standard Carrera models would be ignored. And, painful though it felt, we even had to cut some truly mouth-watering contenders that met our strict criteria: the sublime 3.2 Clubsport. Ouch. We'd have to pass on the hardcore terror of the 993 GT (also known as the GT2), the purity of the 996 GT3 RS and so the list goes on. Honestly, I'd have happily taken 20 cars to the Black Forest, but common sense had to prevail.

The finalists: Pure driving machines from six decades

Let's not be too upset about those we left behind though, because our finalists are revered and remarkable. We had to take the Carrera RS 2.7. No arguments. The 964 RS was another no-brainer. Tiny, light, created alongside the new Cup race series and so pure it even ditched power steering, how could we resist?

My heart wanted the 993 GT but, in reality, its normally-aspirated sibling would better suit the relentless challenge of the Black Forest roads and, besides, the 993 Carrera RS Clubsport is always in the conversation for 'best ever'.

Such is the proliferation of models in the water-cooled era that from here it got even tougher. The 996 GT3 RS was highly tempting, but ultimately the sheer brilliance of the 997 4.0 RS made it impossible to overlook. Perhaps controversially, our next hero is the 991 GT2 RS. It beat various GT3s and even the 911 R for its spot and we stand by the decision. What a monster.

Finally, we wanted something to reflect the new branch of GT cars that still reflect motorsport practice but have gently refocused away from lap times and towards driver engagement at road speeds. The 992 S/T launched as an instant classic. The best? We'd soon find out.

Full credit should go to Porsche Cars Great Britain's press office and the Porsche Museum for supporting this endeavour. It was a huge logistical challenge, required delivery trucks, mechanics on the

ground (they were never needed, of course) and for access to be granted to a top-secret storage facility somewhere in or around Stuttgart for us to hand pick the cars.

It's an extraordinary place and I'd urge you to watch the video just to get a glimpse inside. From Le Mans-winning 956s to weird prototypes (928 Shooting Brake, anyone?), incredible concept cars to the rarest and most sought-after road cars, it's literally heaven for anybody with even a passing interest in Porsche.

Perfect conditions in the Black Forest

Speaking of heaven ... The weather was perfect, the roads delivered everything we could have wanted and the cars were simply breathtaking. Even better was that former Le Mans class winner and current Porsche test driver Jörg Bergmeister joined us to experience the cars and help with photography and video.

No ego, unbelievable enthusiasm, he was just happy to be there and immerse himself in the 911 models we'd assembled. So much so that he left his house at 05:00 to be with us for breakfast at 07:30. That evening, he had to drive a further 500 kilometres to another appointment.

Yet when he saw all the cars together in the hotel's covered garage, I'm not sure I've ever seen such a wide smile. "This is really cool," he said. "I can't believe we're going to drive them all back-to-back. This is perfect."

Which is the Greatest Porsche 911 of All Time?

And it was. For me, the real joy was rediscovering all those core qualities that make the 911 unique and understanding how Porsche has recognised and cultivated them over decades of development. Performance just keeps on levelling-up, the cars get bigger and more complex, but the innate rightness of the 911 and Porsche's ability to evolve it so completely without losing its identity is motoring's greatest story.

Which one is The One? The Greatest Ever? Well, you'll have to watch the video below to find out.

Info

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