

From zero to 1,000,000: Seven generations of the Porsche 911

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11/05/2017 Five decades of evolution: During all seven model generations, the 911 was always modern but never fashionable. A review.

As the successor to the Porsche 356, the 911 won the hearts of sports car enthusiasts from the outset. The prototype was first unveiled at the Frankfurt IAA Motor Show in 1963 as the 901, and was renamed the 911 for its market launch in 1964. Its air-cooled six-cylinder flat engine with two-litre displacement delivered 130 hp, giving it an impressive top speed of 210 km per hour. If you wanted to take things a little slower, you could also opt for the four-cylinder Porsche 912 from 1965. In 1966, Porsche presented the 160 hp 911 S, which was the first to feature forged alloy wheels from Fuchs. The 911 Targa, with its distinctive stainless steel roll-over bar, made its debut in late 1966 as the world's first ever safety cabriolet. The semi-automatic Sportomatic four-speed transmission joined the line-up in 1967. And with the 911 T, and the later E and S variants, Porsche became the first German

manufacturer to comply with strict US exhaust emission control regulations. The Porsche 911 became more and more powerful as displacement increased, initially to 2.2 litres (1969) and later to 2.4 (1971). The 911 Carrera RS 2.7 of 1972 with a 210 hp engine and weighing less than 1000 kg remains the epitome of a dream car to this day. Its characteristic “ducktail” was the world's first rear spoiler on a production vehicle.

Number of vehicles produced: 81,100

A best-seller goes into production: Ten years after its premiere, the engineers at Porsche gave the 911 its first thorough makeover. The “G model” was produced from 1973 to 1989, longer than any other 911 generation. It featured prominent bellows bumpers, an innovation designed to meet the latest crash test standards in the United States. Occupant protection was further improved by three-point safety belts as standard equipment, as well as integrated headrests. One of the most important milestones in the 911 saga was the 1974 unveiling of the first Porsche 911 Turbo with a three-litre 260 hp engine and enormous rear spoiler. With its unique blend of luxury and performance, the Turbo became synonymous with the Porsche mystique. The next performance jump came in 1977 with the 911 Turbo 3.3 equipped with charge-air cooler. At 300 hp it was the best in its class. In 1983, the naturally aspirated 911 Carrera superseded the SC; with a 3.2 litre 231 hp engine, it became a favourite collectors' item. From 1982, lovers of fresh air could also order the 911 as a Cabriolet. The 911 Carrera Speedster, launched in 1989, was evocative of previous legendary Porsche vehicles.

Number of vehicles produced: 198,414

Just when automotive experts were predicting the imminent end of an era, in 1988 Porsche came out with the 911 Carrera 4 (964). After fifteen years of production, the 911 platform was radically revised with 85 per cent new components, giving Porsche a modern and sustainable vehicle. Its air-cooled 3.6 litre flat engine delivered 250 hp. Externally, the 964 differed only slightly from its predecessors – in its aerodynamic polyurethane bumpers and automatically extending rear spoiler – but technically it was almost entirely different. The new model was designed to captivate drivers, not only with sporty performance but also with enhanced comfort. It came with ABS, Tiptronic, power steering and airbags, and rode on a completely redesigned chassis with light alloy control arms and coil springs instead of the previous torsion-bar suspension. A revolutionary member of the new 911 line right from the start was the all-wheel drive Carrera 4 model. The rear-wheel-drive Carrera 2 came on the market just six months later. In addition to the Carrera Coupé, Cabriolet and Targa versions, starting in 1990 customers could also order the 964 Turbo. Initially powered by the proven 3.3 litre flat engine, in 1992 the Turbo was upgraded to include a more powerful 360 hp 3.6 litre power unit. Today, the 911 Carrera RS, 911 Turbo S, and 911 Carrera 2 Speedster are particularly in demand among collectors.

Number of vehicles produced: 74,008

The 911 with the internal design number 993 remains the one true love of many a Porsche driver. The remarkably pleasing design has much to do with this. The integrated bumpers underscore the smooth elegance of its styling. The front section is lower-slung than on the earlier models, made possible by a

switch from round to polyellipsoidal headlights. The 993 quickly gained a reputation for exceptional dependability and reliability. It was also agile, as the first 911 with a newly designed aluminium chassis. The Turbo version was the first to have a biturbo engine, giving it the lowest-emission standard automotive powertrain in the world in 1995. The hollow-spoke aluminium wheels, never before used on any car, were yet another innovation of the all-wheel drive Turbo version. The Porsche 911 GT2 was aimed at the sports car purist who cherished the thrill of high speeds. An electric glass roof that slid under the rear window was one of the innovations of the 911 Targa. But the real reason why dyed-in-the-wool Porsche enthusiasts still revere the 993 is that this model, produced from 1993 to 1998, was the last 911 with an air-cooled engine.

Number of vehicles produced: 67,535

The 996, which rolled off the assembly line from 1997 to 2005, represented a major turning point in the history of the 911. It retained all the character of its classic heritage, but was an entirely new car. This comprehensively redesigned generation was the first to be driven by a water-cooled flat engine. Thanks to its four-valve cylinder heads it achieved 300 hp and broke new ground in terms of reduced emissions, noise, and fuel consumption. The exterior design was a reinterpretation of the 911's classic line, but with a lower drag coefficient (cd value) of 0.30. The lines of the 996 were also a result of component sharing with Porsche's successful Boxster model. Its most obvious exterior feature were the headlights with integrated direction indicators – at first controversial but later copied by many other manufacturers. On the inside, drivers experienced an entirely new cockpit. Driving comfort now also played a greater role alongside the typical sporty characteristics. With the 996, Porsche launched an unprecedented product offensive with a whole series of new variations. The 911 GT3 became one of the highlights of the model range in 1999, keeping the tradition of the Carrera RS alive. The 911 GT2, the first car equipped with ceramic brakes as standard, was marketed as an extreme sports vehicle from the autumn of 2000.

Number of vehicles produced: 179,163

In July 2004, Porsche unveiled the new generation 911 Carrera and 911 Carrera S models, referred to internally as the 997. The clear oval headlights with separate blinkers in the front end were a visual return to older 911 models, but the 997 offered more than just style. It was a high-performance vehicle, with a 3.6 litre flat engine that turned out 325 hp, while the new 3.8 litre engine of the Carrera S managed an incredible 355 hp. The chassis was also substantially reworked, and the Carrera S came with Porsche Active Suspension Management as standard. In 2006, Porsche introduced the 911 Turbo, the first petrol-operated series-produced car to include a turbocharger with variable turbine geometry. Model improvements in the autumn of 2008 made the 997 even more efficient thanks to direct fuel injection and a double-clutch transmission. Never before had the 911 series made such extensive allowances to suit drivers' individual preferences, and with Carrera, Targa, Cabriolet, rear or all-wheel drive, Turbo, GTS, special models, and road versions of GT racing cars, the 911 family ultimately comprised 24 model variants.

Number of vehicles produced: 215,092

Internally known as the 991, this sports car embodied the greatest engineering leap in the history of the 911. For generations the benchmark in its class, this 911 generation set the bar yet another notch higher in terms both of performance and efficiency. A completely new chassis with modified wheelbase, greater track width and beefier tyres, plus an ergonomically optimised interior produced an even sportier and more comfortable driving sensation. In engineering terms this 911 was all about Porsche Intelligent Performance: even lower fuel consumption and even more power – created, for instance, by reducing the engine size to 3.4 litres on the base Carrera model (yet still delivering 5 hp more than the 997/II) and using a hybrid construction method (steel/aluminium), which led to a considerable reduction in weight. Also new: Porsche Dynamic Chassis Control and the manual 7-speed transmission. The design of the 991 likewise met with high critical acclaim. With its low, stretched silhouette, its bristling surfaces and precisely shaped details, the Porsche 911 Carrera – in the seventh generation as before – continued to be unmistakably a 911 and was thus once more setting new standards in automotive design.

In 2013, the new Targa was added to the 911 family. The latest generation of this extravagant 911 variant combined the classic Targa idea with advanced roof convenience. Just like the legendary original Targa, it featured the distinctive wide bar in place of B-pillars, a removable front roof section and a wraparound rear window without a C-pillar. But unlike the classic 911 Targa, the roof segment could open and close at the push of a button. The fully automatic roof system stowed the Targa top behind the rear seat in spectacular fashion.

The new 2015 Porsche 911 cemented its position as the best in its class in terms of performance and efficiency. The development of a turbocharged flat engine gave the world's best-selling sports car a significant boost in power as well as considerably lower fuel consumption. The new 3.0-litre biturbo charged six-cylinder flat engine developed 370 hp (272 kW; Fuel consumption combined 8.3 – 7.4 l/100 km; CO_2-emissions 190 – 169 g/km) in the 911 Carrera and 420 hp (309 kW; Fuel consumption combined 8.7 – 7.7 l/100 km; CO_2-emissions 199 – 174 g/km) in the 911 Carrera S. In both cases, this represented a power boost of 20 hp over the prior model, with just under twelve per cent less fuel consumption. The 911 Carrera represented a quantum leap in innovation, featuring a sharp new look outside and Porsche Communication Management with multi-touch screen inside. Above all, however, the new 911 raised the benchmark considerably in the sports car world: more power, the enhanced Porsche Active Suspension Management (PASM) chassis and optional rear axle steering improved the best time of the 911 on the Nürburgring-Nordschleife to 7.30 minutes. Ten seconds faster than its predecessor and with an even greater lead over the competition.

Number of vehicles produced until the end of the 2016 model year: 152,659

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