

# A TURBOCHARGED VINTAGE

Phill Tromans spends time with a rare, sought-after version of Porsche's iconic 911, which boasts a royal history

Porsche is a global, iconic brand, a byword for sports car excellence. Its flagship model, the 911, is a machine honed over 50 years of revisions by engineers searching for motoring nirvana. The 911 is the holy grail for petrolheads across the world.

But not all Porsche 911s are equal. Since its introduction in 1963, the German company's icon has gone through many iterations and some are loved more than others. Broadly speaking, they can be split into two categories – those with engines that are cooled by air and after 1998, those cooled by water. The purists among Porsche fans argue that air-cooled engines are part of the 911's heritage, along with the location of the engine behind

the rear axle. The decision to do away with it verged on sacrilege.

Consequently, air-cooled cars have retained much more affection in the hearts of collectors than the later 911s and command a premium. Classic cars generally have skyrocketed in value over recent years and Porsches are always near the top of collectors' wishlists.

Within the pantheon of air-cooled 911s, there are a few favourites. Racing cars with heritage in major races fetch seriously big money, well into millions of dollars. But among the road cars, rarity and low mileage counts for a lot – as well as being of a vintage generally considered technically desirable.

So, we come to the car you see pictured here. This is a 911





from 1993, a generation known as the 964. The 964s are very well regarded and heralded as the most advanced model that best retains the classic qualities of the original 911s, before they became too modern and sophisticated, too insulating from the outside world.

But this is not just any 964. It's a Turbo S model – the most powerful of the generation – and it boasts the smaller-production 3.6-litre, six-cylinder engine, which had more power than the 3.3 version that went before it. Most noticeably, it has a different front end to the majority of 964s, the result of a secret option from the factory called Flachbau, known in English as Flat Nose. Only those in the know and close to Porsche knew of the Flachbau option, as it didn't feature on any dealer extras lists. It was for exclusive, well-connected (and well-heeled) customers and so just 76 cars were made that featured the unusual smoothed face and pop-up headlights. Of these, just seven were made in righthand drive, like this one. Add in the fact that this one features the X84 performance package, which made the engine more powerful than standard, and you have a rare beast indeed.

Oh, and it has just 1,014 miles (1,632km) on the clock. It was formerly owned by the Brunei royal family but now belongs to British Porsche specialists Hexagon Classics and is expected to fetch upwards of \$550,000. Chairman Paul Michaels suspects it was barely touched by the former owners, such was the scale

of their collection. But that makes it only more desirable. "This is absolutely at the top for a Porsche collector. It's as good as it gets," he says.

It is understandable then that my time behind the wheel is restricted – more miles means less money. The originality of the car is remarkable. For something touching a quarter of a century in age, it almost looks in factory condition. The driver's seat is snug and some adjustment is needed to get used to the pedals, which are offset to the left. The engine fires up first time with a civilised throb and during the brief moment I am able to open up the throttle, it wows with its acceleration once the turbocharger kicks in. With 385 horsepower, it is fast even by modern standards and the amount of feedback and feel through the car's wheel and seat make it seem every inch the supercar. Modern cars' advances in comfort and insulation mean one rarely feels this in tune with the surface under the tyres.

Despite the car's rarity, Michaels does not expect a quick sale. Buyers of cars this rare and expensive don't usually leap into quick decisions, even if they have the money required.

"Very rarely will a car like this fly out of the showroom," he says. "It will likely take months to sell because people are very careful. And this is one of the most important Porsches we have ever bought."