

# Open all hours

The relentless pace of new 997 derivatives continues with the launch of the Targa – the open-top car for people who prefer a light breeze rather than the wind blowing in their hair. Yes, there really is a 911 for everyone these days

Words and photography: Brett Fraser



Porsche claims that the swap from 996 to 997 is the company's fastest ever generation change. Certainly, it seems that a week can't pass without another 997 derivative springing energetically from the factory gates. This week, it's the turn of Porsche's greenhouse-capped curiosity, the Targa, a car the merry men of Stuttgart are keen to proclaim as a 'design icon'. Or perhaps they were talking of the original 911 Targa, with the inference being that the latest model to wear the nameplate will continue to be revered by design gurus everywhere...

Icon or not, the new Targa receives the same all-round revamp enjoyed by the rest of the 911 range over the last couple of years. And, because it's the last of the range for the changes, surely, it gets them all at once: the fuel-injected 3.6-litre and 3.8-litre engines; Porsche Active Suspension Management (PASM); the updated Porsche Communication Management (PCM) system; the option of the

PDK seven-speed twin-clutch gearbox. And, following on from the recent launch of the Carrera 4 and 4S coupés, the Targa also benefits from Porsche Traction Management (PTM), which uses an electromagnetically-controlled multiple-plate clutch in place of the previous hydraulically-controlled four-wheel-drive system.

Whether it's eccentricity or perversity that sees Porsche persist in only offering the Targa with an all-wheel-drive powertrain is hard to determine, because the whole premise of the car – more grand tourer than hardcore sports car – suggests that it's one of the least likely 911s to need such a thing. Still, it means that the Targa is the owner of rear wheelarches 44mm wider than (normally-aspirated) rear-drive 911s, extensions that lend the back of the car an imposing, hunkered-down stance. And, as with the other four-wheel-drive versions of the 911, the Targa has a distinctive red translucent trim strip running the width of the tail between the lights.

Like the previous generation car, and unique to the Targa derivative, the new model also features a high-gloss polished and epoxy-plated design flourish that runs from the A-pillar, along the top of the side windows and flares into the C-pillar. As signatures go, it's a neat touch.

Of course, the main visual tell-tale to the Targa's identity is its glass roof, Porsche's publicity material makes bold proclamations of how it looks as though there's a seamless stream of glass all the way from the base of the windscreen to the top of the tailgate. Oh yes, the Targa is once again a hatchback – but the truth is that, seen low from the front, it's hard to tell it apart from a coupé. Mainstream hatchbacks, such as the Vauxhall Astra, now have 'panorama roof' options that really do create the effect of which Porsche talks, but the Targa's windscreen header rail is too clearly visible to pull off the deceit convincingly.

Walk rearwards, though, and the Targa does look distinctly special, tailgate glass and roof