



the PASM suspension, Sports Chrono Package Plus and PDK seven-speed twin-clutch gearbox also reinforced some of our earlier thinking on Porsche's latest technologies, while the new four-wheel-drive system provided interesting lessons about its on-road behaviour. When we tested the system on the Carrera 4S in our September edition, we were largely restricted to the track.

And, frankly, the track is where the Sports Chrono Package Plus-governed PASM should be largely restricted to. It renders the ride too firm and harsh for enjoyable general road use and, although it is possible to switch off the stiffer damper settings independently of the more aggressive engine management strategies (Sport and Sport Plus), it still makes the Targa feel comparatively skittish and out of sorts.

The Targa 4 (with the 3.6-litre engine) as standard has conventional suspension with softer springing than found on the coupé and, unless you're a racer, that's the way to leave it.

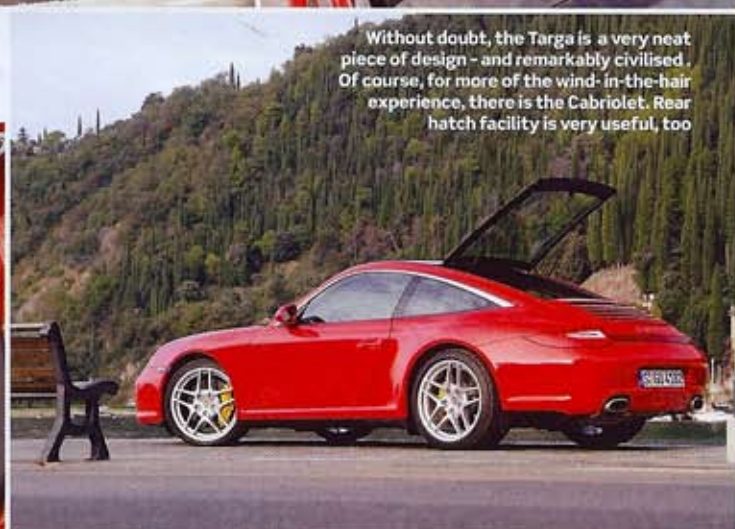
The 3.9-litre 4S is PASM-equipped as standard, but while it also has softer suspension settings than the coupé, it nevertheless thumps and crashes about on rough surfaces.

When we tested the Porsche Traction Management – or PTM – all-wheel-drive system in controlled conditions on a track, it seemed pretty much infallible, the Carrera 4S neither understeering or oversteering. Yet, on the hairpin-stitched hill roads beside Lake Garda, a foible or two emerged. Powering out of tight bends we occasionally experienced the nose edging wide a smidgeon. On a couple of other occasions, PTM deliberated a tad too long, apportioned a huge chunk of available drive to the front wheels, and the Targa literally leapt onto the opposite side of the road.

The Lake Garda hairpins also unravelled a strand or two of the PDK gearbox's normal cloak of excellence. Energetic steering wheel twirling caused accidental operation of the gearshift paddles – they're on the spokes – with the

irritating consequence of selecting a higher gear when seeking a lower one on the approach to and exit from tight corners. And although the 'Sport Plus' setting (available only if you've opted for the Sports Chrono kit) was marvellously on the ball when the road ahead was empty, when we got stuck behind slower traffic it snuck down into first gear and refused to shift up, even when the throttle-pedal action clearly indicated that 'play' was temporarily on hold – but switching over to 'Sport' solved the problem.

To be fair, much of what we've just described is an issue only in extreme circumstances, although you might counter that argument by pointing out that a g11, any g11, is a car that encourages you to go to extremes. We'd hate to put you off the Targa, however, because anyone looking for an everyday, year-round, adaptable g11 will be mightily well served by this car. Just remember on the order form to tick the boxes that say 'Targa 4', 'standard suspension' and 'manual gearbox' and you'll be laughing. **P**



Without doubt, the Targa is a very neat piece of design – and remarkably civilised. Of course, for more of the wind-in-the-hair experience, there is the Cabriolet. Rear hatch facility is very useful, too.