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RUMBLE SEAT

2023 Porsche 911 Carrera T: Last Manual Standing?

While most automakers have phased out manual transmissions, the Porsche 911 Carrera T comes standard with an old-school, bolt-action stick shifter, letting it do things an automatic just can't, writes Dan Neil.

By [Dan Neil](#) [Follow](#)

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GREEN MACHINE The 2023 Porsche Carrera T (\$138,830, as tested) bundles features dear to driving enthusiasts, including a lowered sport suspension, 20/21-inch (front/rear) alloy wheels and mechanical limited-slip differential. The test car included optional rear-axle steering and front-axle lift system. PHOTO: PORSCHE CARS NORTH AMERICA

OUR TEST CAR is not the fastest, quickest or most exotic version of Porsche's 911 Carrera—the T stands for "Touring"—but it's the one to lease if you're leasing only one.

Positioned between the standard 911 Carrera and the S in the lineup, the new-for-2023 911 Carrera T represents Goldilocks' choice—not too soft, not too hard—if Goldilocks were a middle-aged dentist. The T package adds a lower (by 10 mm) sport suspension; 20/21-inch (front/rear) alloy wheels; Porsche's Sport Chrono Package; and mechanical limited-slip differential. The T can weigh up to 100 pounds less (3,254 pounds) than standard, thanks to reduced noise-deadening material in the body, thinner glass, a lightweight battery and two fewer seats (rear seats are optional).

Not to bury the lead: The T also comes with a seven-speed, three-pedal manual transmission as standard equipment. Porsche is among the last sports-car brands to offer an antiquarian, bolt-action stick shifter. Ferrari, Lamborghini, McLaren, Aston Martin and Corvette, among others, now use paddle-shifted, double-clutch gearboxes nested in rear transaxles.



LIGHT SHOW The 2023 Porsche Carrera T can weigh up to 100 pounds less (3,254 pounds) than standard, thanks to reduced noise-deadening material in the body, thinner glass, a lightweight battery and two fewer seats (rear seats are optional). PHOTO: PORSCHE CARS NORTH AMERICA

Why did manual transmissions go away? Performance. Paddle-shifted single or double-clutch gearboxes can change ratios much more quickly than those with human-actuated clutches. When Ferrari first offered paddle shifters in the 1990s, demand for three-pedal cars all but collapsed. The story was the same for Corvette, whose sales of automatic gearboxes historically outsold stick-shifted cars.

Porsche's eight-speed double-clutch (PDK) automatic remains an option in the T. The PDK would have made our test car quicker (0-60 mph in 3.8 seconds v 4.3 for the manual, says Porsche), more athletic and easier to live with, stoplight to stoplight. The short, stubby shifter astir in the T's console pays for charisma in the coin of obsolescence.

I don't like old car dudes (my age) congratulating themselves for stick shift know-how and mocking millennials.

That said, three pedals can do things two simply can't. Examples include low-speed, tire-hazing 180 turns, feathering the clutch and brake pedal and rotating the car in a confined area, like hospital parking. This is not so easy with paddle shifters. Or when people on the

street yell at you to “gun it,” you simply put both feet in, clutch and gas. With a PDK, you have to shift down to Neutral to rev the engine. It’s a whole thing. If the car is stationary—as it might be at a Cars and Coffee event on a Saturday morning—revs are limited to about 4,000 rpm. Disappointed children look up at you as if you stole Christmas.

I don’t like dudes my age congratulating themselves for knowing how to drive a stick shift and mocking millennials for their lack of shifter savvy. For heaven’s sake, Grandpa, a monkey could learn to heel-and-toe downshift (I feel sure somewhere, one has). Unless your name is Oppenheimer, you didn’t split the atom.

Join me now in the driver’s seat, upholstered in taut black leather with neon green stitching. How comfortable you will be in any 911 depends on how far your biometrics deviate from a 42 Long jacket. I was born lucky. This seat fits me like a tailored Brioni. Honestly, if I ever got too fat for a 911 I’d give up the game.



ROW YOUR OWN The 2023 Porsche Carrera T offers a three-pedal, seven-speed manual transmission as standard equipment. An eight-speed automatic transmission is a no-cost option. Cars with the automatic are equipped with a torque-vectoring mechanical rear differential. PHOTO: PORSCHE CARS NORTH AMERICA

As a lefty I have special feelings for the 911. The starter—now a knurled plastic switch—is in its traditional place, down and to the left of the steering wheel. But starting the car requires that the clutch pedal is down. You put your left foot in...

What feels eternal, perennial, perpetual: the linearity of pressure underfoot, the progressive uptake, the throw and leverage of the pedal, the spacing between the pedals themselves—important for effective left-foot braking and heel-and-toe, i.e., holding the brake pedal and revving the engine with the right foot, somehow. Styles vary. I use the side of my right heel, like the great Mark Martin, only dramatically slower.

What feels different? Um, everything else, starting with the shift lever with a handball-sized knob in your right hand. Note the cap illustration showing the H pattern of seven forward gears—not four, not even six. The shift mechanism feels ridiculously stout and unbreakable, an anvil upon which has been dropped a million hammers by some of history’s biggest tools.

In the old days of naturally aspirated flat-fours, drivers had to pedal and row through four forward ratios to keep the engine at or near peak torque while accelerating. In the Carrera T, peak torque is a misnomer. The twin-turboed flat six’s torque output is more of a mesa, ramping up to 331 lb-ft. at just 1,900 rpm and plateauing through 5,000 rpm. Seven ratios are nice but the Carrera T could go back to a four-on-the floor and still be unholy quick/fast.

In the lower right quadrant of the stitched-leather steering wheel is the drive mode control, including Sport and Sport+. Either engages the car’s rev-matching function. Most akin to God Mode in Fortnite, rev-matching blips the engine during downshifts—the foley effect would be something like *huhn-HUHN-HANNNNNN!*—as you brake for a corner, executing a proper, and perfect, heel and toe.

Shout out as well to the turbos. In order to make rev-matching programming deliver, emotionally, the engine has to spool up almost instantly. In the analogue dark ages, turbo lag and inertia were a problem. N’more.

Turbos also restrict exhaust-gas flow, stealing some acoustic energy (volume) and desaturating the engine note. In the Carrera T, the classical score is largely intact: the bright chirring of the idling valves, the tromboning blare at wide-open throttle, the ringing resonance at mid-dial, like a can of angry bees. All that reaches the driver through a body structure purposely light on sound-deadening material.

From the outside, however, the T is notably quiet, almost muted, even with the loud button engaged (the two-stage Sport Exhaust system).

The more things change the more they stay the same. But not that.

2023 Porsche 911 Carrera T



ARROW OF TIME The 2023 Porsche 911 Carrera T (the “T” stands for “touring”) is a branching evolution of the 911 that offers a driving temperament that lands between the company’s track-focused GTs and its mainline sports cars.

PHOTO: PORSCHE CARS NORTH AMERICA

Base price: \$124,900

Price, as tested: \$138,830, including delivery

Powertrain: Twin-turbocharged direct-injection 3.0-liter flat-six cylinder engine with integrated dry-sump oiling; seven-speed manual transmission with automated rev-matching; mechanical limited-slip rear differential.

Output: 379 hp at 6,500 rpm/331 lb-ft from 1,900 rpm-5,000 rpm

0-60 mph: 4.3 seconds

Length/wheelbase/width/height: 178.3/96.5/72.9/50.8 inches

EPA fuel economy: 17/25/20 city/highway/combined

Cargo capacity: 4.6/9.3 cubic feet (front trunk/rear cargo bench)

Curb weight: 3,254 pounds, before options

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