

997.1 GT3

The 996 generation introduced buyers to the GT3 tag, but how did its successor stack up? Total 911 turns the spotlight on the first 997 version introduced in 2006

Written by **Chris Randall** Photography by **Phil Steinhart**



The rear bi-plane wing with 'Gurney flap' was mildly adjustable, despite appearing to be fixed in position

First 997 GT3 had bigger air intakes while new front spoiler was deeper than ever before

A new vent ahead of the luggage compartment fed air to the radiator and dispelled air over the top of the car, aiding downforce

Model Year	997.1 GT3 (2006)
Engine Capacity	3,600cc air-cooled flat six 12:0:1
Compression ratio	12:0:1
Maximum power	415hp@67,600rpm
Maximum torque	405Nm@5,500rpm
Maximum torque	Six-speed manual, rear wheel drive
Suspension	
Front	MacPherson strut; coil springs; antiroll bar
Rear	Multi-link; telescopic dampers; coil springs; antiroll bar
Wheels & tyres	
Front	8.5x19-inch alloys; 235/35/ZR19 tyres
Rear	12x19-inch alloys; 305/30/ZR19 tyres
Dimensions	
Length	4,445mm
Width	1,808mm
Weight	1,395kg
Performance	
0-62mph	4.3 secs
Top speed	192mph

“ IF TURBOCHARGED PERFORMANCE DIDN'T APPEAL, PORSCHE HAD AN ANSWER IN THE FORM OF THE GT3 ”

Five-stud, 19-inch wheels came on the 997.1 GT3. Centre-locking items were used on the facelift

There's no doubt that buyers after the cream of 911s were spoilt for choice when it came to the 997 generation, a range that encompassed the mighty Turbo and the seriously focused GT2 that somehow managed to push more than 500bhp through its overworked back wheels. But if turbocharging didn't appeal when it came to performance then Porsche had an answer in the form of the GT3. The name tag was first seen back in 1999 when it adorned the rump of the 996, a car that would qualify – appropriately enough – for the GT3 endurance racing category. So successful was the formula that the 2006 Geneva Show saw the launch of the latest 997 variant that arrived in the UK in August that year.

Wedge beneath the new bi-plane rear wing was a 3.6-litre motor that had been carried over relatively unchanged from its 996 installation, although power had increased from 381bhp to 415bhp at a howling 7,600rpm, with torque up by 20Nm to a peak of 405Nm. Output was slightly

over 115bhp per litre, and the rev limit was also raised, action not being curtailed, until 8,400rpm was showing on the tachometer. Essentially, the engine was the water-cooled bottom end from the 996, but topped with the latest cylinder head design, featuring four valves per cylinder and 'Variocam' variable valve timing on both inlet camshafts.

Using rotary-type adjusters to tweak the timing according to load and engine speed and controlled by the Bosch Motronic ME7.8 management system, it improved driveability as well as contributing to those hugely impressive headline figures. The engine featured lightweight pistons with titanium con-rods along with specially lightened tappets and hydraulic adjusters, and there were revisions to the lubrication system. The latter was a dry sump arrangement that featured two pumps in the cylinder head, driven from the exhaust camshafts, and two pumps in the crankcase, while an oil/water heat exchanger helped keep temperatures under control. Rounding off the revisions were resonance valves in the inlet plenums (dual units linked by

three separate pipes), larger exhaust tracts for better gas flow, and a lightweight sports exhaust system with two catalytic converters that now exited via centrally mounted pipes.

Driving through a dual-mass flywheel, power was fed to the rear wheels and a limited-slip differential via a six-speed manual gearbox that featured a cable-operated change and a shorter throw to the gearshift. First gear apart, all the other ratios had been shortened for greater straight-line punch, and things were beefed up with steel baulk rings for third to fifth gear and a heat exchanger for the transmission fluid. What this all amounted to were some very impressive performance figures, the GT3 claiming to stop the clock at 4.3 seconds for the 0-62mph sprint and passing 100mph in 8.7 seconds on the way to a 193mph maximum speed. Porsche also added a traction control system for the first time, albeit one that could be switched off by those who had taken their bravery pill. ☺



A variety of gills in the rear of the GT3 helped dissipate heat from the high-revving, dry-sump Mezger engine

GT3

GT3 TIMELINE

1999

Porsche introduce the first GT3 with the 996 generation. Substantially lighter than the Carrera, 1,890 'Gen1' cars are built.

2003

The Gen2 996 facelift version arrives, boasting a revised rear spoiler, 381bhp and optional ceramic brakes.

2006

Once again it's a Geneva Show launch for the 997 GT3. Power is raised to 415bhp helped by the addition of VarioCam.

2009

In Gen2 form, a power hike produces 435bhp, with revised spoilers and better brakes. The lighter RS variant saves 25kg.

2010

Porsche introduces a 997 GT3 RS with nigh-on 500bhp from a 4.0-litre engine and a 0-60 time below four seconds.

2013

The latest 991 gets the GT3 treatment, with power upped to 475bhp from the 3.8-litre DFI engine with PDK.



SPECIALIST VIEW

"There is no point in trying to be cool when talking about GT3s. I love them, and a properly sorted 997 GT3 is a wonderful car, the only one that I would swap my 993 for. The fact that you could now have kit such as satnav on your 'race-ready' 911 didn't detract in any way from what was probably the best Coupe that you could buy. The GT3 was still sensational to drive, only now it was also comfortable. These days, with the special place that the Mezger-engined cars hold in Porsche enthusiasts' hearts, and with their relatively limited numbers, prices for the exceptional examples are very, very strong. They are especially resilient to depreciation, and are tremendous buys. In my view they will become collectable, and if you buy a truly exceptional car now and look to the long term, you won't go wrong."

Jason Shepherd, Paragon Porsche

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As you might expect, Porsche altered the exterior, starting at the front, where you'd find a redesigned bumper with bigger intakes and a deeper front spoiler. Feeding air to an additional central radiator was a new vent just ahead of the luggage compartment lid that then expelled the air over the car to provide added downforce.

Balancing the aero package was the previously mentioned bi-plane rear wing that featured a rubber 'Gurney flap' on the lower section, along with a degree of adjustability despite appearing fixed, while vents in the engine lid helped remove hot air from the engine bay via the rear apron. The bodyshell itself featured improvements to the crash structure compared to the 996, and there was greater use of super high-strength steels and tailored blanks and a larger proportion of

lightweight alloy, with the doors and front bonnet in aluminium. With a claimed curb weight of 1,395 kilograms, it amounted to a power/weight ratio of 297bhp per ton. No wonder it was quick.

The cabin of a 997 was already a fine place to be, with excellent build and material quality, so Porsche saw little reason to mess with the recipe when it came to the GT3. Climate control and a decent stereo were standard along with lightweight, race-derived seats, and most interiors were smothered in Alcantara and leather. Safety was top notch too, with a full complement of airbags, while the dials featured GT3 logos, yellow needles and a change-up light. Where things departed from standard was the chance to equip the car with all the accoutrements needed for an assault on the Nordschleife, the no-cost 'Clubsport' package including a rear roll



GT3 RS



Porsche wasn't going to pass up the opportunity to add the latest GT3 to the rich heritage of RS models. Introduced in autumn 2006, it was now based on the wider C4 bodyshell, adding 44mm across the hips, but it had also lost 20kg in the process thanks to the use of carbon fibre for the seats and rear wing, and a plastic rear window. Power remained the same, the engine now sporting a single-mass

flywheel, and there was a scant 0.1 sec reduction in the 0-62mph time. Porsche claimed the same top speed, although in reality the wider bodywork and more aggressive rear wing would have reduced it a little. It didn't matter though, as the roll cage and six-point harnesses were standard for the full race effect. And the price? A mildly eye-watering £94,000.



The addition of PASM to the factory spec list wasn't the interior's only impressive new feature. PCM with satnav was ideal for finding your way home, the Sport Chrono package great for lap timing, and a blend of leather and Alcantara in Comfort guise ensured the GT3 retained as much class as it did purpose. Note that manual gear shifter, too, with PDK only on 991 GT3 variants, the transmission alone has assured the 997 GT3 of its long-term desirability



GT3s with the Comfort pack had the rear seats deleted, as shown here, while the Clubsport pack went a step further, with a full rear roll cage fitted in place. Sports seats were optional for Comfort GT3s, but a required option for Clubsport variants



BUYING TIPS

Offering epic performance and real track ability, a 997 GT3 is a special machine, but it needs to be treated like one.

- **History:** Buying from a recognised specialist or Porsche-approved seller is advisable for peace of mind. At the very least, get it inspected if you decide to buy privately.
- **Bodywork:** Accept nothing less than perfect when it comes to the body and paintwork. It's worth making sure it hasn't visited a gravel trap or two.
- **Engines:** Essentially bulletproof as long as the maintenance record is unimpeachable. Anything neglected should be avoided at all costs.
- **Gearbox:** Any issues caused by track abuse will be costly, so make sure there are no nasty noises. Clutch replacement is labour intensive too, so watch for signs of slippage.
- **Suspension:** Not known to be problematic, but hard use will take its toll on bushes and joints. It's also worth checking to see if the various settings have been needlessly fiddled with.

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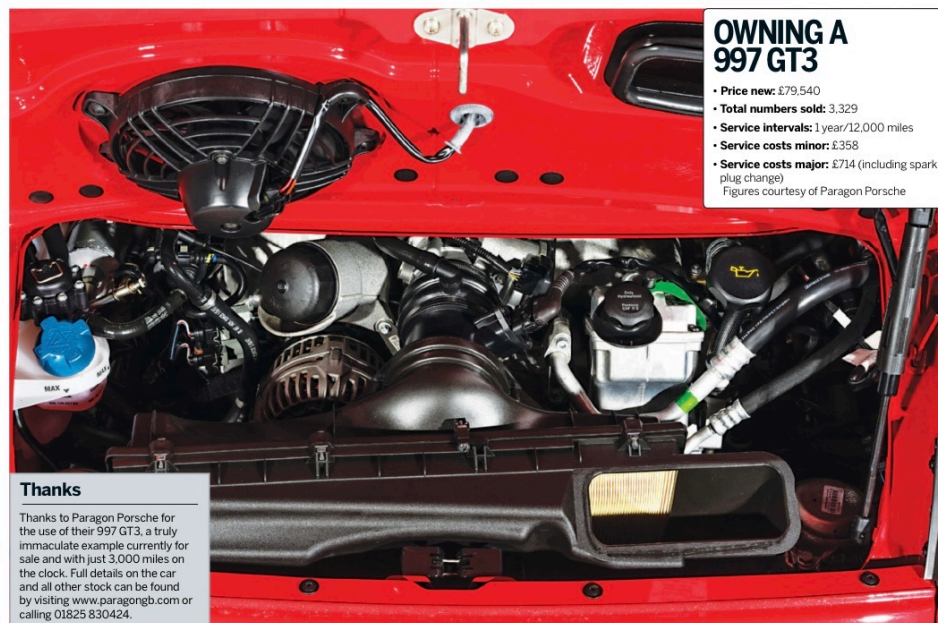
cage, six-point safety harness, fire extinguisher and wiring for a battery master switch. The CS option was only available in conjunction with the lightweight carbon bucket seats based on those fitted to the Carrera GT, weighing ten kilograms each and covered in flame-retardant fabric.

There was no need to be too minimalist when equipping a GT3, with plenty of opportunity to offset the weight savings by raiding the options list. Niceties like bi-xenon lights, electric seats, carbon interior garnishes, an upgraded sound system and tyre pressure monitoring were just a tick of a pen away, as were some particularly lurid exterior hues. Another popular choice was the Porsche Communications Management system, which provided satellite navigation, a high-resolution colour screen and phone prep – necessary if you wanted Sport Chrono Plus, which gave added lap-timing and data storage capability (basic Sport Chrono was effectively little more than a dash-mounted stopwatch).

The fettling didn't stop there, and there were major changes to the suspension compared to 'regular' 997s. Approximately 30mm lower all-round than a Carrera, up front was still the familiar MacPherson strut arrangement, but with rose joints and a range of adjustability that included the ability to tweak camber, ride height and toe angle. If you were after the perfect setup, the GT3 could certainly oblige. Propping up the rear was the subframe-mounted multi-link arrangement that Porsche named 'Lightweight-Stable-Agile' (LSA), first seen on the 993 and still pinning down the rear end. Steel bearings on the front strut mounts and an absence of rubber in the rear subframe mountings helped eliminate movement between suspension and the body for better wheel control.

More interesting still was the use of 'Porsche Active Suspension Management' as standard, in essence a system of continually adjustable dampers. A button on the centre console allowed the driver the pick of 'Normal' or 'Sport' modes depending on preference or road surface, although the harder setting was reckoned to be a bit extreme for anything other than a smooth circuit, while a variety of sensors monitored body movement during cornering, acceleration and braking.

The ECU then adjusted the valving of individual dampers to keep things even. The merits of such a system are still debated, but there is no doubting the effectiveness of the system in reducing body deflection. The stoppers received attention too, the GT3 getting 350mm vented and cross-drilled steel discs as standard squeezed by six-piston Monoblock alloy calipers at the front and four-piston items at the rear, backed by ABS. But for maximum stopping power it was the optional Porsche Ceramic Composite Brake (PCCB) setup



OWNING A 997 GT3

- **Price new:** £79,540
 - **Total numbers sold:** 3,329
 - **Service intervals:** 1 year/12,000 miles
 - **Service costs minor:** £358
 - **Service costs major:** £714 (including spark plug change)
- Figures courtesy of Paragon Porsche

Thanks

Thanks to Paragon Porsche for the use of their 997 GT3, a truly immaculate example currently for sale and with just 3,000 miles on the clock. Full details on the car and all other stock can be found by visiting www.paragonbg.com or calling 01825 830424.

that many buyers coveted, with larger 380mm front discs, yellow calipers instead of red and a claimed 50 per cent weight reduction over the steel items. Like other 997s, the GT3 was fitted with variable-ratio steering with hydraulic assistance, and there were new one-piece, 19-inch wheels wrapped with tyres of a special tread design and compound.

It's a tasty spec, but what's important here is the true purpose of the 997 GT3. It substituted the sledgehammer performance of the Turbo and GT2 for an altogether more subtle blend of road and track ability, and rightly has a reputation for being one of the most thrilling 911s. **911**

"I'VE GOT ONE"

"I've owned my 997 GT3 since February 2011. I was immediately excited when I first set my eyes on the 'for sale' advertisement, which revealed a generous spec: finished in rare Cobalt Blue with PCCB, carbon Cup seats, and an RS-spec rear roll cage.

The first test drive was a little intimidating, but in the end the full Porsche history pushed me into the seat and I bought it.

It's a great car for track use and driving all day. After a stint on track I just put my racing helmet in the boot and drive home with the air conditioning on, so it really is the perfect package. Every time I climb into the GT3, I get excited: you know the drive ahead is going to be fun."

Chris Stewart, Southampton

