

I have a dream "Panamera"



Maybe Porsche had the dream first, but after having had the Panamera under my control and it having bonded to me like my first, aah, I had better not go there!



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After seeing two Panameras, during the International launch, pass me, I immediately called Christo and begged him to invite me to the launch.

This long awaited launch kicked off in the lovely Lanzerac Estate where six Panameras were parked and awaiting our eager journalists. Since I was already in Cape Town I made my way towards Lanzerac early in order to have some quality time with the Porsches.

I must say, the actual Porsche Panamera looks a lot better in the metal than on paper.

It may give the impression of being a certain

American Sports Car from the back, but once that wing folds out and the Panamera squats 25mm lower, it is undeniably a Porsche marque. It has most of the sports car qualities and it definitely has the timeless quality that one expects to be part and parcel of most Porsche models.

The build quality and finishing are superb – even after a careful inspection, I could fault nothing. The Panamera is a luxurious and elegant premium sports car that is focused on giving the ultimate in a sporting, yet luxury segment. Most of the dials are ‘old school’ in that all dials are placed where one expects them to be.

This is a car that you cannot wait to get into and once inside, you do not know what to look at or try out first. Getting into the Panamera is easy – but be careful it is

lower than it looks. Inside you are enveloped by lovely leather and feel pampered in the comfort of excellent seats. Even though most would find the host of switches, dials and a Burmeister sound system daunting, you soon get used to them and working with them is easy and precise. A number of switches are partly obscured by the gear lever but they are placed for optimum use for a left hand drive vehicle.

I was amazed at the space in the Panamera, Russel, my driving partner, measures 7 foot in old language, and he had no problem finding a comfortable and safe driving position. What was even more impressive was when we made him get into the back – he actually had ample leg room and, owing to the ingenious way in which the roof is formed, he had head room too. With Russel in the back there was still adequate leg room upfront for the passenger. The Panamera has boot space of 445 litres and the back seats can fold down to form a flat floor space which amounts to 1250 litres.

Getting down to business, the Panamera shows its true blue blood qualities.

The three models that we tested differed only slightly between the Panamera S, S4 and Turbo. Power delivered by the S and S4 is 294kW with 500Nm @ 3500r/min and the Turbo delivers 368kW with 700Nm @ 2250r/min. The S and S4 both have a top speed of 283km/h and go from 0 to 100km/h in 5 seconds. The Panamera



Turbo's maximum speed is 303km/h and accelerates from 0 to 100km/h in 4 seconds. No slouch for a four door luxury vehicle.

My first experience was in the Panamera S4 where we were given the opportunity of driving it through the beautiful, meandering Franschhoek Pass.

This is where you really appreciate a truly well-manufactured sports car, as you go around corners and accelerate out of them without any qualms or thoughts about capability. The Panamera just bites into the corners and feels like it is glued to the road. Accelerating out of corners pushes you back into your seat. The car stays perfectly balanced and gives you that lovely V8 roar, while the lovely fast change over of the double-clutch PDK gearbox just adds to the adventure. You may use the gear lever itself or the paddle shifts, but I could not do it better than the car itself, so I left it at that. There are three settings for the Panamera, and depending on your driving style you may choose any of them. 'Comfort' is exactly what it says and this is where most of us will remain. Change to 'Sport' or 'Sport Plus' and the ride is much harsher, steering is more direct, response time is faster and the Panamera sits 25mm lower. Although harsher, the air suspension still works its magic to keep you comfortable.

We really had some fun through the pass with fast cornering and even faster driving. It was only when Tobie Venter from Porsche made the comment that I was really

coming through fast in the corners and wanted to know how I enjoyed the 'Sport' setting through the corners, that I realised we were driving in 'Comfort'.

The Panamera V8 Turbo is the real jewel in the crown. Even after the amazing power of the S and S4, the Turbo really amazed with its greater power and acceleration. All in all there is little difference between the S and S4 and because the S4 and the Turbo are both all-wheel drive models they will be the more popular models. The S4 will be a best seller due to its realistic price of R1 065 000.00. The Panamera S sells for R1 040 000.00 and the Panamera V8 Turbo sells for R1 665 000.00.

I was also amazed at the fuel consumption of all three models. It is known that when we test these vehicles, we drive hard and fast. Fuel consumption is the last thing on our minds. The Panamera S achieved 14.3 l/100kms. The Panamera S4 got 14.8 l/100kms and the Panamera Turbo 15.4 l/100kms.

There is also a start/stop function, which switches off at the robot and on again when you lift your foot from the brake pedal. With this and some of the other ingenious technical wizardry Porsche has managed to cut fuel consumption by 3.2 l/100kms.

Well as I have said previously, "I have a dream" and that is to one day have my own Panamera. I have read negative as well as positive reports on the Panamera, but after experiencing it for myself I want to say to those that have negative remarks, "Jealousy makes you nasty!" □

