

Motoring Eco New Car Road Test

Porsche's four-wheel-drive electric-powered rocket ship

Best-selling author **Peter James** is well known for his electrifying plots, but he is also a self-confessed car enthusiast and was keen to drive the Porsche Taycan EV

BACK in the 1950s and 60s, car manufacturers often exaggerated their cars' performance figures, even the top marques. Jaguar claimed a world record-breaking 150mph top speed for the E-Type.

For sure, the carefully tweaked one they reportedly lent motoring journalists could hit that magical number, but word has it that subsequent owners found production models ran out of grunt soon after the 140mph mark – back in those days when there was no maximum speed limit in the UK and across much of Europe.

Then it wasn't about economy or safety: it was all about what the top speed was, and how fast the car would go from 0–50mph, with anything less than ten seconds being deemed pretty quick. I remember as a small boy gasping in awe on the front seat of my dad's Standard Vanguard, in the mid 1950s, when a fast-back Bentley Continental swept by in the New Forest, and my dad told me that car could do 100mph.

But has the fibbing stopped? Nope. Porsche have definitely told a little porker about the acceleration figures of their new all-electric Taycan Turbo. They claim it will do 0–60 in three seconds. It won't. I reckon it is quicker than that, way quicker. It is faster than you can think, and faster than you can blink. One moment you're a respectable law-abiding citizen and the next, after a dab of the accelerator and in complete silence, the horizon is in your rear-view mirrors. And probably your licence too.

I've heard people describe its performance as 'mental', and it is, properly, wonderfully mental.

And this four-wheel-drive rocket ship isn't the quickest Taycan in the range – there is Turbo S for the very brave indeed.

The first electric car I drove was an early Prius, on the streets of San Francisco back in 1998. It was like driving a milk float, only less exciting, and for years it put me off the idea of ever owning an electric car. But in less than an hour behind the wheel of this Porsche, I'm almost a convert, and my wife Lara, who like me also has a motor racing licence, is equally impressed, saying it has changed her mind completely about the excitement of electric cars.

But I say 'almost' guardedly, because electric cars have introduced a new phrase into our language: range anxiety.

The Taycan's range between charges is about 225 miles, depending how you drive it. Fast-charging points will give you an 85% charge in 20 minutes – providing you can find one, and there's the rub. It's not a problem a problem here in Jersey – you are always going to be able to get home – but I don't think the infrastructure of charging points is good enough yet across Britain or continental Europe. I know people who've become completely stuck and missed appointments.

My petrol Porsche 911 has a range close to 500 miles and you rarely have to worry about finding a filling station. It will come, I'm sure, and within the next few years.

A lot of people wonder why the electric car has been so long coming in the first place. I was given an insight back in 1964 having tea one Sunday in Sussex with a schoolfriend, whose father was at the time CEO of Chloride Electrical, one of the world's biggest manufacturers of car batteries.

I asked his father why no one was building electric cars and he replied: 'It's because the oil companies buy up every patent for electric cars and bury them. I've heard that claim repeated many times since.'

So what is this beast like to drive and live with? To look at, while some colour schemes work better than others, it is the kind of masterpiece of evolved neo-futuristic design you'd expect from Porsche. Inside it feels reassuringly solid and the cabin is truly spacious, with classy instruments and switchgear, all the toys you'd expect, including the now almost mandatory launch control – for a total white-knuckle take-off.

This Taycan, like all modern Porsches, doesn't feel assembled: it feels hewn out of some granite-strength metal. Its pure class starts to show the moment you glide silently away, when the seat belts gently tighten, as if an invisible butler is whispering, 'You are going to need this...'

And you do, because although the car has an unladen weight of over two tons, and it feels big and chunky, under the skin it is a pure thoroughbred sports car with phenomenal grip and brakes to match. On the move it is as taut as a 911, but hard to position quite as precisely, as from the cabin the front wings look bulbous, making it hard to judge the exact width on some of our very tight and



wall-lined roads and very easy to kerb its handsome wheels.

And being electric, with just one forward gear, you can't drive the car through corners on the gears, as in a petrol car.

That said, it is an utterly exhilarating car to drive, and even sticking rigidly to the speed limits I'd wager there is nothing that would beat this cross-country in Jersey, because the instant you are out of a bend you are back on the limit. And with, of course, the virtuous feeling of knowing you're not polluting the Island. Although quite how badly the manufacturing process and the decommissioning of these batteries does devastate landscapes elsewhere is a matter for a different article...

Silence is golden and it is extraordinary to whisk across our roads without a sound – but that poses a big danger to pedestrians and cyclists. Porsche do have a 'noisy' mode you can switch on, but I tested it on a cyclist grunting up Bouley Bay and he said he could not hear the car.

My one real criticism is the lack of luggage space. Enzo Ferrari, when asked once why his cars had such small boots, responded dismissively: 'Because my cars go so fast, their owners arrive at their destinations so quickly they need less luggage.'

Maybe, back in the day, when the more you paid the faster your car would go, that was fine. But when the humble Nissan Micra can travel legally on most roads in Europe at the same maximum speed as a Bugatti Veyron, motorists' needs have changed.

If you were four-up going anywhere longer than overnight, there's not much

Fast Facts

- Model as tested: Porsche Taycan Turbo
- Price: Starts from £104,000 from Jacksons
- Price (as tested): £128,995
- Engine: Twin electric motors with 270kWh battery
- Power: 625bhp (680bhp with launch control)
- Torque: 850Nm
- Max speed: 161mph
- 0–60mph: 3.0 secs
- Range: 238–281 miles
- Emissions: 0g/km CO₂
- The two-wheel drive Porsche Taycan starts at £64,000 at Jacksons

space for taking much more than a toothbrush each. There's a small boot up front, capable of taking a holdall or a dozen bottles of wine, and another, hardly capacious one at the rear.

But the solution has just been revealed, in the shape of the Taycan Cross Turismo – essentially an estate version but every bit as striking – and with room for the kitchen sink and an entire trousseau.

Would I buy one? Well, when I handed it back after a week and climbed into my two-month-old petrol-engined Porsche, much though I love the 911 it felt like a step back in time. I watched that Taycan disappear in my rear-view mirror and I thought, hasta la vista, baby!



■ Peter James with the electric four-door Porsche Taycan Turbo Picture: DAVID FERGUSON (30323312)

