

Car test

Would You Believe This Is an Electric Car? Classic Porsche Surprises as a Plug-in Vehicle

The roar of Porsche's boxer engine is one of the most iconic soundtracks in the automotive world. But what if it's removed from the equation? We spent a day behind the wheel of an iconic car converted to electric power.



Externally, it looks like an old, well-restored Porsche 911. ARTTU TOIVONEN

[Arttu Toivonen](#)

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To the untrained eye, nothing looks unusual or out of the ordinary. On the outside, the dark gray Porsche from the 1960s—known in factory brochures as Slate Grey—has been completely disassembled, down to the last nut and bolt, meticulously restored, and put back together.



The interior color scheme has been tastefully designed to match the era. The rear seats had to be sacrificed in the process of the modifications. ARTTU TOIVONEN

Porsche, however, did not use 16-inch steel wheels in the 1960s, but they could be attributed to the restomod approach, along with the slightly lowered suspension. An untrained eye is also unlikely to notice the headlights containing modern LED technology. Someone might, however, notice the absence of an exhaust pipe..

What model is it, then?

The Porsche began its life in 1968. In fact, it wasn't originally the better-known 911, but rather rolled off the production line with a 1.6-liter, four-cylinder, 90-horsepower flat-four engine under the name 912.



Beneath the rear grille, it's not Porsche's flat-four that growls, but something entirely different. ARTTU TOIVONEN

For those unfamiliar with the 'little brother', here's a brief introduction: the 912 was Porsche's budget model, intended to bridge the gap between the original Porsche—the 356—and its significantly more expensive successor, the 911.

The engine came from the Porsche 356, albeit slightly detuned by five horsepower. Externally, the cars are distinguishable only by the model badge on the engine lid; inside, by the three gauges instead of the 911's five. And even that's not a sure sign, as the 912 could also be ordered with the full five-gauge cluster at the time.



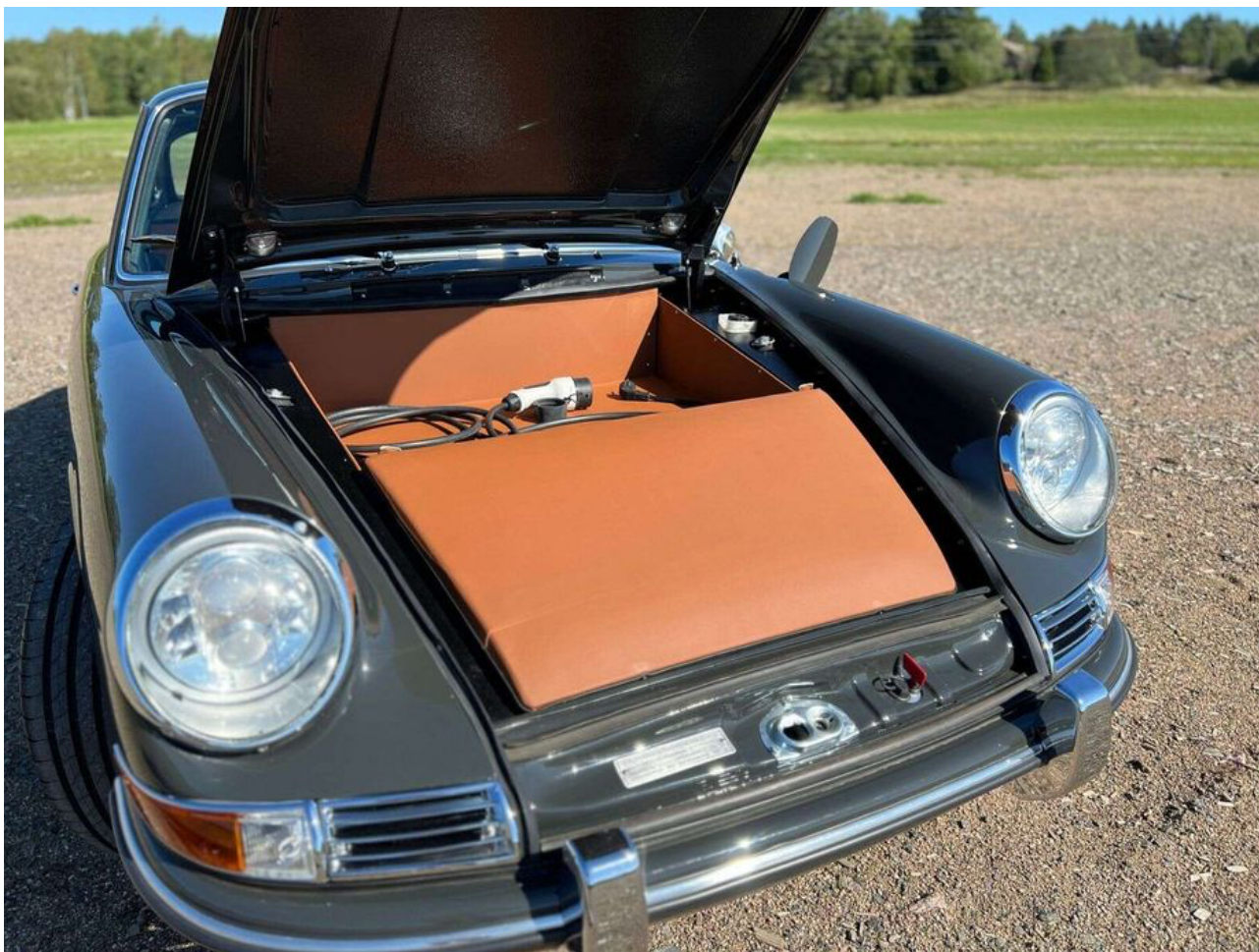
The 'OG' on the license plate, of course, refers to 'Old Generation'—in other words, the old generation. ARTTU TOIVONEN

The 912 was produced from 1965 to 1969 and, in fact, sold better than its big brother. The car was eventually replaced by the distinctively styled 914, but returned for one more year as the 912E when Porsche manufactured the model for just over a year for the U.S. market.

That car was powered by the engine from the Volkswagen 411, though bored out to two liters by Porsche.

A neat setup

However, Porsche's boxer engine was ditched from this car a long time ago. At the rear axle, there's a five-speed dogleg gearbox, with first gear positioned to the far left and back, and the even gears up front.



There's almost as much luggage space left as in the original. ARTTU TOIVONEN

Accompanying it is an electric motor rated at 88 kilowatts, or 120 horsepower, powered by a 37-kilowatt-hour battery pack. Charging is done via a Type 2 cable, and naturally, the charging port is hidden in the same spot where a gas Porsche's fuel filler would be—on the left front fender.



Before, this was where gasoline was filled; now, kilowatts are plugged in. ARTTU TOIVONEN

The charging speed isn't specified, but it's estimated to be around five to six hours from empty to full. The car's builder, Tim Olin, owner of Turku (Finland)-based Autofabrik - Ove's Garage, says the company hasn't tested the driving range, but it could be roughly 250–300 kilometers.

'The top speed hasn't been tested either, and it's not very important,' Olin chuckles.

I'm not testing that either, but I did test the acceleration.



The grille in the center of the engine bay bears a striking resemblance to the rear grille of a Porsche 356. ARTTU TOIVONEN

It's as if something's missing.

Inside, the Porsche is built in the somewhat trendy Singer style. Brown leather is combined with a checkered fabric, which also appears as trim on the dashboard.



There would be plenty of takers for these seats, regardless of the powertrain. ARTTU TOIVONEN

There are five gauges, and they are quite faithful to the original style. The tachometer doesn't work yet, but according to Olin, a fix is on the way.

I turn the ignition key on the left side of the steering wheel, and a green light comes on in one of the multi-information gauges. Nothing else happens. But the electrical system is on, and the car is ready to drive.



The original, restored, and fairly large-diameter wooden steering wheel helps somewhat with operating the otherwise rather heavy steering. ARTTU TOIVONEN

I admit it's a reflex to press the clutch all the way down before shifting gears, even though in this case it wouldn't even be necessary.

According to Olin, first gear is too short a ratio, and accelerating in it would mostly just smoke the rear tires, so I start moving off in second gear.



The Porsche's steel wheels are 16 inches. Early models used small steel wheels, while the iconic Fuchs wheels appeared only later. ARTTU TOIVONEN

There's a slight delay built into the accelerator pedal and the system controlling the electric powertrain—almost certainly intentional, perhaps to protect the drivetrain.

The car does move immediately when the accelerator is pressed, but it doesn't launch with a neck-snapping burst.

A change in the soundscape

Admittedly, the absence of the boxer engine's distinctive chatter—whether four- or six-cylinder—changes the driving experience dramatically. Other mechanical sounds from the drivetrain remain, and on the road, the soundscape consists of tire noise, gearbox hum, and a slight electrical system whine.



EV West manufactures ready-made conversion kits for Porsches and, for example, the Volkswagen Beetle. ARTTU TOIVONEN

Second gear alone is enough for all urban driving. The electric motor runs almost silently at around 5,000 rpm during normal driving, but the manufacturer promises it can handle short bursts up to 10,000 rpm.

So, the range of just second gear is sufficient for crawling in the city, urban driving, and even a bit beyond.



Nothing more is needed for the door: a handle, an open button, and a window crank. ARTTU TOIVONEN

There are five gears in the gearbox. Third gear works well for regular highway driving, and fourth could be used on the motorway. Fifth gear is quite unnecessary and might not handle pulling from low revs due to torque.

Watch the driving experience in the video below and jump virtually behind the wheel of the electric 911!

<https://www.iltalehti.fi/autotestit/a/8b6d88b3-724c-4988-a3bb-53a1fb015000>

Hop into the all-electric Porsche 911! ARTTU TOIVONEN

Perhaps the first-generation 911 Turbo's transmission would work well in an electrified setup. It's only a four-speed but can handle more torque than the older 901 or 915 gearboxes.

The change in the center of gravity is noticeable.

In the city, the car nicknamed the E911 is insanely fun to drive. Second gear alone is more than enough for driving, and there's no need to use the clutch when approaching or leaving

traffic lights. However, shifting between gears does require the clutch, and at those moments you can clearly feel the familiar 'clunk' of the original 911's gearbox.



In the first-generation 911, the shapes of the door open buttons and levers varied somewhat. Early models used a button located at the end of the armrest. ARTTU TOIVONEN

So there's still plenty of mechanical feel, even though the gasoline engine has been replaced with electric power. The brakes have quite good grip, and even when leaving the city and enjoying winding roads, they don't feel like they're about to run out anytime soon.

And if they did run out, it would be easy to fit four-piston Brembo brake calipers from newer Porsches inside the 16-inch wheels.



You could hide fairly large brakes inside the wheels. ARTTU TOIVONEN

The steering is unassisted. It naturally relies on the original light-framed 912's steering ratio and gearbox, and since the battery and other electrical components have added significant weight to the front, the steering feels heavier.



At first glance, a perfectly restored or refurbished Porsche can't be distinguished from the gasoline engine models. ARTTU TOIVONEN

Driving with the original, large-diameter steering wheel isn't too tiring. You can't spin the electric Porsche around the city with just your fingertips, but there's no need to.

Similarly, the car's front end has settled down compared to the original 911 and no longer exhibits that corkscrew-like movement on the highway that the gasoline-powered model had. The weight distribution, based on feel, is much closer to that of a typical mid- or front-engine car than the original 911.

How does it drive?

Thanks for asking, it drives excellently. Considering the car is rated at 120 horsepower, its acceleration is almost phenomenal. I find a suitable closed area, a good stretch of asphalt with fresh pavement.

With second gear and a gentle start from a standstill, the electrified 911 accelerates to 100 km/h in exactly 6.5 seconds, by which point the motor is already practically at its maximum RPM.

You could shift into third gear at around 95 km/h, at which point the stopwatch would show exactly seven seconds.



The Porsche 911 turns 60 years old this year. Its shapes have always been elegantly simple.
ARTTU TOIVONEN

The zero to sixty acceleration timer shows exactly three seconds, and the 30-50 km/h interval takes one second, as does the 50-70 km/h range.

The figures are impressive considering the estimated weight of the car. The first-generation 911S accelerated from zero to 100 km/h in 6.8 seconds, and that was with the 1972-1973 models.

Is it fun?

Considering that I've driven dozens and dozens of combustion-engine Porsche 911s over my life—from model years 1965 to 2023 and power ranges between 130 and 800 horsepower—the all-electric 911 ranks really high on their internal fun scale.



The basic body of the Porsche 911—with minimal changes—from 1963 to 1997. ARTTU TOIVONEN

It's visually incredibly stylish, a classic sports car that at a quick glance is hard to distinguish from its combustion-engine siblings.

Thanks to its weight distribution, it's more balanced to drive at brisk speeds on winding roads than a typical 911 of this age, and since the torque-rich motor compensates for the disadvantages of the added weight, it's actually at least as fast to drive as a well-tuned and built combustion-engine 911—if not much faster.



The basic shape of the headlight remains unchanged, but inside it features modern LED technology. ARTTU TOIVONEN

In the city, it's easy to handle and turns heads just like a classic 911 should, but it disappears effortlessly from traffic lights.

The electrified 911 would surely be the perfect vehicle for enjoyment and a hobby car, even though the modern and seemingly hassle-free electric technology requires little more maintenance than regularly plugging in the charging cable after a drive.



Blasphemy? No, rather something Porsche would surely have done back in the 1960s if they had been able to. ARTTU TOIVONEN

The only small downside is the price tag. Close to two hundred thousand is quite a sum—but fortunately, that includes a perfectly restored short-wheelbase Porsche. And those don't come cheap even with a combustion engine.

Is the electrified classic Porsche then blasphemy? Absolutely not. Now the car is on the road, ready to delight fellow drivers and look great among plastic modern cars anytime, as long as the battery is fully charged.

It no longer lies somewhere in a barn, under a spruce tree, or in a garage waiting for a year or decades until someone might start restoring it. If they ever would.

Original article: <https://www.iltalehti.fi/autotestit/a/8b6d88b3-724c-4988-a3bb-53a1fb015000>

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