

# Rare treat

The 968 is one of the scarcer mainstream Porsches of recent years, but has none the less gained a reputation as one of the best driver's cars around. And for good reason, too, suggests Philip Raby. Here's how to buy one. Photography by Dave Wigmore. Additional material by Peter Morgan



**H**ere's one for the pub-quiz addicts. In the almost three-year period from autumn 1992 to midsummer 1995 Porsche built just 12,776 968s. That makes it one of the rarest mainstream Porsches of recent years. Indeed, the company now assembles roughly the same number of Boxsters every six months.

But the 968 none the less made a huge impact on the automotive world. It's hailed by many as one of the best-handling Porsches ever made, and has gained a reputation as a near-perfect trackday machine. The front-mounted engine and rear-mounted transmission give almost 50/50 weight distribution, while 240bhp passing through a six-speed gearbox to the rear wheels further enhances the driving experience. And here's the best bit: a well-maintained car can be yours for around £12,000, or as little as £10,000 if here in the UK you're prepared to drive from the left-hand seat. Tempted? You should be!

It has taken the best part of the decade since its demise for the 968's reputation to come good. When it was unveiled, in August 1991, it was dismissed by many pundits and punters alike as little more than a facelifted 944, itself a warmed-over 924 dating right back to the mid-1970s. And at around £35,000 it was also relatively expensive (these days you can buy a brand-new Boxster for about the same). It was hardly the best strategy for moving metal in the depths of a recession.

But was the 968 really just an updated 944? Well, on the face of it, yes, it was. But Porsche claimed that 80 per cent of the 968 was new compared with the outgoing 944S2. And take even a cursory glance at a 968 – especially in profile – and its lineage is obvious. But Porsche made a superb job of updating the appearance of the car, to the extent that it still looks remarkably modern today, whereas the lines of the 944 have in recent years become quite dated.

The 968's basic body structure remained largely unaltered from that of the 944, but an all-new front end literally transformed the appearance. There was a smoother, more integrated bumper with a larger air intake, and more rounded wings with exposed headlamps that tilted forward when switched on. It was all fairly obviously based on the 928 (even though that car first appeared in 1977), and incorporated a look that would be adopted (albeit without the pop-up lights) for the 993-model 911 Carrera.

The 928's influence (especially from the later S4 and beyond) could also be seen at the rear of the 968. The bumper was far smoother and neater than the 944S2's rather fussy arrangement, and featured big, bold lamp units that were now entirely flush with their surroundings. The word 'Porsche' was equally boldly embossed into the rear panel, while the '968' badge was proudly positioned centrally.

Other external modifications included body-coloured plastic sill covers, teardrop-shaped door mirrors, elegant colour-coded door handles, and not least Cup light-alloy wheels. It might have seemed to some a cynical marketing strategy, but the fact is that it all worked as a very convincing package, and breathed new life into a previously rather tired-looking car.

Porsche knew, of course, that a shapely body alone wouldn't be enough to persuade buyers to choose its new model and, as you'd expect of the company, it made sure that the changes were far more than merely skin-deep.

The engine was the first area to come under scrutiny. The 944S2's 3.0-litre, all-aluminium, in-line four had gained a reputation for being a reliable and torquey unit, so Porsche didn't have to do too much to make it even better. Lighter pistons and connecting-rods were used in an effort to reduce the inherent imbalance of such a large-capacity four-cylinder motor, but as with the 944 unit there were also two contra-rotating balance shafts to make the engine feel almost as smooth as a six-cylinder unit.

But the most significant improvement was the adoption of VarioCam valve timing. In simple terms this consists of a solenoid acting on a spring-loaded plunger pushing on the chain by which the exhaust camshaft (itself driven by a toothed rubber belt from the crankshaft) drives the inlet camshaft. This causes the inlet camshaft to rotate slightly in relation to the exhaust camshaft, and allows the inlet-valve timing to be altered by up to 15 degrees. At engine speeds of over 1500rpm the timing is advanced to reduce exhaust emissions and increase torque, and then at over 5550rpm the timing is retarded again. The entire process is masterminded by the engine's Motronic management system.

All this, combined with new inlet and exhaust manifolds, a new exhaust system, and revised fuel injection, meant that maximum power was boosted from the 944S2's 211bhp at 5800rpm to an impressive 240bhp at just 4100rpm. Torque increased, too, from 207lb/ft at 4100rpm to 225lb/ft at 4110rpm. No wonder that Porsche didn't see the need to produce a 968 Turbo (although a handful were later built – see page 76). The last 944 Turbo offered just 250bhp and 258lb/ft of torque, with none of the inherent driveability of the normally aspirated engine.

The resulting performance wasn't to be sniffed at, either, with a 0–62mph time of 6.5 seconds and a maximum speed of 156mph. OK, so it's not (quite) in the 911 Carrera league, but remember that the 968 was about half the price of a contemporary 911 (and, what's more, remains so today as a second-hand purchase).

The power passed through an all-new Getrag six-speed gearbox which as in the 944 was mounted at the rear of the car, with a torque tube linking it to the front-mounted engine and clutch. Tiptronic transmission was an £1800 option that replaced the rather crude three-speed automatic once offered for the 944. This brand-new system gave the choice of either four-speed automatic changes, or else clutchless, manual shifts using the floor-mounted lever. Literally tip the lever forward to change up a gear, and back again to change down.

Both the suspension and brakes were carried over virtually unchanged from the 944S2, although the former had revised spring and damper rates to give even better handling. The brakes, as before, featured ventilated discs with four-piston calipers; ABS was standard.

Inside the car the changes were far less dramatic than those made to the exterior – but then maybe it needed fewer changes anyway. The

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oval-shaped dashboard was lifted straight from the 944 with just a few minor updates. The speedometer now read to a hopeful 180mph (300km/h) instead of 160mph, while the 944's digital clock became an external temperature readout, and an analogue clock was positioned in a redesigned centre console.

A driver's airbag was standard in left-hand-drive cars, and optional in UK cars. Cars without airbags were fitted with a new – and very comfortable – three-spoke steering wheel (which today, incidentally, has become a sought-after update for other Porsches). A passenger airbag was optional.

The door panels and fittings were subtly updated with new handles, pockets and loud-speaker grilles. The seats, meanwhile, were new, and similar in style to those fitted to the 911. As in the 944S2, seats had manual longitudinal movement, with electric control for the height alone (although fully electric operation arrived in 1994). Central-locking and an alarm were standard fitment, while air-conditioning was an option in UK cars.

As with the last 944s the 968 was also available in Cabriolet form, at around £38,000 in 1992. The combination of the 968's updated bodywork with a sleek hood design made this one of the best-looking open-top cars around, and many argue that it remains just that today.

Whether coupé or Cabriolet, there was no doubt in Porsche's corporate mind at the time of the car's launch in August 1991 that the 968 was a great car. But for the reasons we've already mentioned (high price, and the tail end of a recession) the 968 wasn't a sales success.

The sad fact is, though, that the 968 just didn't sell as well as Porsche had hoped it would, so in 1992, a year after its launch, the company introduced the Club Sport. This was essentially the 968 equivalent of an RS-model 911, and as such was treated to a comprehensive weight-loss programme. Out went the electric windows (to be replaced by flimsy winders), electric mirrors, central-locking, electric rear-hatch release (instead there was a toggle behind the left-hand seat; even in right-hand-drive cars), rear windscreen wiper, rear seats, and much more. A pair of lightweight Recaro seats completed the diet.

All this shaved a worthwhile 50kg from the weight of the car, and gave a modest increase in performance. More importantly, perhaps (and some would argue that this was the real reasoning behind it), the price was reduced to just under £30,000.

To improve the car's performance and handling still further the Club Sport stood 20mm lower on stiffer springs and adjustable Koni dampers. And to reinforce the sporty image the car was available only in solid (ie non-metallic) colours – red, yellow, white, black and blue – and customers could choose to have the Cup wheels colour-coded to match. And if they were really daring large and rather lurid 'Club Sport' side decals could also be specified.

Whether or not the Club Sport was primarily a marketing ploy we couldn't say. But we do know that in building it Porsche created one of its best-ever trackday cars. The reduced weight and firmed-up suspension with the already great engine and gearbox was a winning com-

bination, and today Club Sports are in great demand by trackday enthusiasts.

Back in the 1990s, though, the world economy was still struggling, and trackdays were almost unheard of, so few people were prepared to spend £30,000 on such an uncompromising machine; you had to be dedicated to drive a Club Sport as everyday transport.

Porsche Cars Great Britain realised that buyers wanted at least some luxuries in their sports cars, and so came up with a compromise. The 968 Sport appeared in January 1994 and had the lowered and uprated suspension of the Club Sport, yet retained most of the standard features of the standard car. You enjoyed the best of both worlds, in other words.

Priced at £32,995 the Sport, while not a runaway success, did become the best-selling 968 in the UK, and may well have continued to sell in worthwhile numbers were it not for the fact that Porsche stopped production of the 968 in 1995. The reason? Because it was about to launch an all-new entry-level car in the form of the now hugely successful Boxster.

Its short life, 924 ancestry and low production run could have meant that the 968 became all but forgotten as the world moved on to a new generation of water-cooled Porsches. But enthusiasts realised what a superb car it was, and today, almost 10 years after the last 968 was built, it's still very much in demand, and holding its value much better than the 944.

Whether you're looking for an everyday road car, a weekend toy, or a dedicated trackday machine, you shouldn't overlook the 968. It's much more than just a facelifted 944. ■

# Variations on a theme

## Coupé

Even the standard 968, with its high specification and powerful, torquey engine, makes an excellent sports tourer



## Club Sport

Stripped back to basics and fitted with lower, firmer suspension, this is one of the greatest driver's cars ever built



## Turbo

Basically a Club Sport with a 350bhp, turbocharged engine and race-style bodywork. Just three examples were sold, though...



## Cabriolet

A fully electric folding hood gives truly effortless open-top motoring. A great-looking car, with the hood up or down



## Sport

Offering a combination of the standard car's specification and the Club Sport's suspension, this was available only in the UK



## Turbo 'S'

A road-going version of the Turbo RS, with toned-down bodywork and a 305bhp engine. Sixteen were produced



# What to look for Interior

**M**uch of the 968's interior was carried over from the 944S2 (see main text) and, as such, is well put together and should have stood the test of time.

Examine the seats and carpets (including that in the luggage compartment) for signs of water damage. It's not uncommon for the sunroof (where fitted) and rear tailgate to leak, causing staining, rot and an unpleasant smell. While you're in the boot check that the roller blind for covering luggage is intact and works as it should – this can deteriorate due to long exposure to sunlight through the large glass tailgate. Incidentally, if this blind hasn't been

used much, it could well be in good condition but the boot carpet may have suffered instead and faded in the sun.

The seats themselves will be either cloth or leather – the latter a worthwhile option to seek out. Seats are generally hard-wearing, but expect some scuffing on the driver's side bolsters. Check that the seats move both backwards and forwards and up and down as they should – full electric operation only became available in 1994. Look also for wear on the top of the gear lever; replacement leather gaiters are available for about £40.

Make sure that the electric windows, sunroof, mirrors and other electrical items all oper-

ate as they should. And make a point of checking the operation of the heater – the vacuum-operated controls can fail (but note that the Club Sport has a simpler and inherently more reliable cable-operated system). Air-conditioning was optional in UK cars, but a fair proportion of 968s had it; make sure it works.

It's not uncommon to find that an updated stereo head unit has been fitted. This is fine if the work has been done properly, and there are no loose wires hanging down under the dashboard, and no bodged electrical connections. Watch out, too, for non-standard loudspeakers with the trim cut away to make them fit, and for damage left by the fitment of a hands-free phone. ■



Rear seats (top) with their three-point belts are perfect for small children; look out for water damage caused by leaks through the sunroof or hatchback, though. Door panels (top right) were redesigned from those in the 944S2. Gear-lever gaiter (above) can wear, although this one is surprisingly good; replacements are available. Heater controls (above right) can be problematic, so check they work on all settings. Handbrake lever (right) is unusual in that it's positioned outboard of the driver's seat. Covering trim can wear, too – as here

# What to look for Bodywork



Large glass tailgate can leak water and exhaust fumes if the two catches (left) aren't adjusted correctly. If the tailgate doesn't open and close easily it's likely that adjustments are required; it's straightforward as long as the threads haven't rusted. Check, too, that the luggage-compartment light comes on when the lid is opened – the switch is incorporated in the right-hand strut

Sunroof (where fitted) can leak. Part of the problem is that the plastic panel can distort, preventing it seating firmly against the rubber seal. Check, too, that the seal itself is in good condition. Make sure the sunroof tilts up (above) at the touch of the control button, and then lowers again; the mechanism should be smooth and quiet. Roof panel can be lifted off and stored in the boot – look for the soft bag in which to stow it

Polyurethane front and rear panels are designed to withstand low-speed shunts without damage, although surface crazing can occur. Any serious damage to the bumpers suggests a reasonably hard impact, so investigate further



Tyres should all be of the same brand and type, and have plenty of tread left. Good-quality tyres from a well-known manufacturer suggest a caring owner

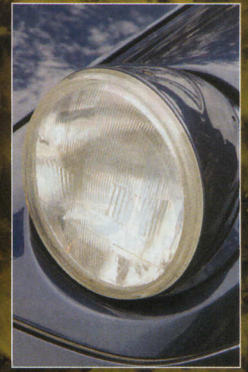
Colour-coded door handles are much better-looking than the black 944 items (which started life on the Mark 1 VW Golf). Check, though, for scuffing of the paintwork. Make sure that the central-locking (not fitted to the Club Sport) works

Cup alloy wheels are now of an age that scuffing and corrosion isn't uncommon. Provided the rim isn't badly damaged wheels can be refurbished for between £50 and £100 a corner. If wheels have been refurbished by a previous owner check that the work has been done well. It's unusual to see a 968 with non-standard wheels, but if you do ensure that the wheels are of good quality and the tyres don't foul the wheelarches. Check that there's a key for the locking wheel nuts





Door mirrors are inevitably exposed, and so vulnerable to scrapes and stone-chips. Look for poor-quality repainting. Make sure that electric adjustment (not in Club Sport) works on both mirrors and in both planes



Headlamps rise under power and then drop down under gravity alone. Mechanism can corrode, leading to one or both lights sticking in the 'up' position. Usually, though, the system requires nothing more than lubrication

Check the windscreen for stone damage and cracks (both of which can lead to MoT failure in the UK). Look for milkiness around the edges of the screen, which is a sign that the glass is delaminating. Screen is bonded in, so it's a specialist job to replace

Under the bonnet and inside the luggage compartment check the longitudinal chassis rails and suspension mounts for signs of accident damage. This can take the form of creased metalwork and poor-quality respraying of the paintwork

Body shell is fully galvanised, so rust shouldn't be an issue. If you spot corrosion be suspicious - it could be a sign of poorly repaired accident damage

Hydraulic struts to hold the bonnet in the 'up' position often fail. Replacements are readily available and simple to fit, though

The rubber seal along the top edge of the plastic sill covers can shrink. Replacements are cheap and easy enough to fit, however

Examine the paintwork carefully for signs of respraying. Any such work should have been carried out to such a standard that it's barely noticeable. Orange-peel effect, mismatched colours, and overspray on adjacent trim is just not acceptable

By today's standards the 968's panel-fit isn't particularly close. It, should, though, be relatively consistent. Uneven gaps suggest poorly repaired accident damage

Check front sidelights and indicators for cracks and water ingress, which can lead to internal corrosion. Expect to pay around £140 for a replacement unit

Front bumper and leading edge of bonnet are susceptible to stone-chips. Because of this resprayed front ends are not uncommon - and not a problem, either, provided the work has been done well, and the new paint matches the rest of the car. That's a particular concern with metallic finishes

# What to look for Mechanical components

**The 968 is generally reliable and uses well-proven technology from the 944S2. There are, however, a few points to bear in mind.**

The all-aluminium, 3.0-litre, twin-overhead-camshaft, 16-valve engine is basically the same as that in the 944S2 but with some differences (see main text) that, on the whole, make it even more reliable.

The 944S2 engine has a well-documented issue with its toothed rubber timing belt and its associated chain and tensioner. Thankfully, although the 968 uses the same basic arrangement, it has been modified to make them somewhat more reliable.

The exhaust camshaft (on the right-hand side of the engine) is driven by a toothed rubber belt linked to the crankshaft. This belt has a tensioner which consists of an oil-filled dashpot with a spring inside. The oil is forced through a hole to damp the movement – a similar principle to old SU carburettors. This automatic adjusting system works fine until the belt stretches to such an extent that the tensioner is at its maximum extension and so is unable to take up any more slack on the belt. When this occurs the belt may either slip or break, causing the valves to collide with the tops of the piston and then either to bend or break. At best you'll need to fit new valves; at worst the cylinder head, bores and pistons will be damaged to such an extent it may not be economically viable to repair the engine.

Unfortunately, because the belt is intended

to be self-adjusting it's often overlooked during routine servicing. We recommend, then, that the belt and its tensioner are replaced at least every 50,000 miles – or sooner if you're uncertain of its history. When buying a car check the service history, and quiz the owner as to when the belt was last changed.

Because this belt drives only the exhaust camshaft, there's a short chain linking this to the inlet camshaft, and which runs on sprockets positioned halfway along each shaft. In the 944S2 engine this chain's tensioner is prone to breaking up, causing the chain to come off its sprockets; which again can lead to bent or broken valves. The good news is that in the 968's engine the tensioner was modified with a larger, stronger pad which is less prone to wear. The bad news, though, is that it's possible for teeth on the camshaft sprockets to wear or break, potentially causing the chain to come off; even if no damage occurs to the engine, you'll need a new camshaft at a cost of around £300 plus fitting. Because of these issues the chain and tensioner should be changed every 70,000 miles. Again, check the service history.

Finally, there's yet another toothed rubber belt which drives the two balance shafts (which compensate for the inherent imbalance of such a large-capacity four-cylinder engine) from the crankshaft. One of the pulleys for this arrangement is for some reason fitted with a metal plate which, over time, can catch the belt and cause it to rip. If this happens the engine will run unevenly; a simple modification to the problem

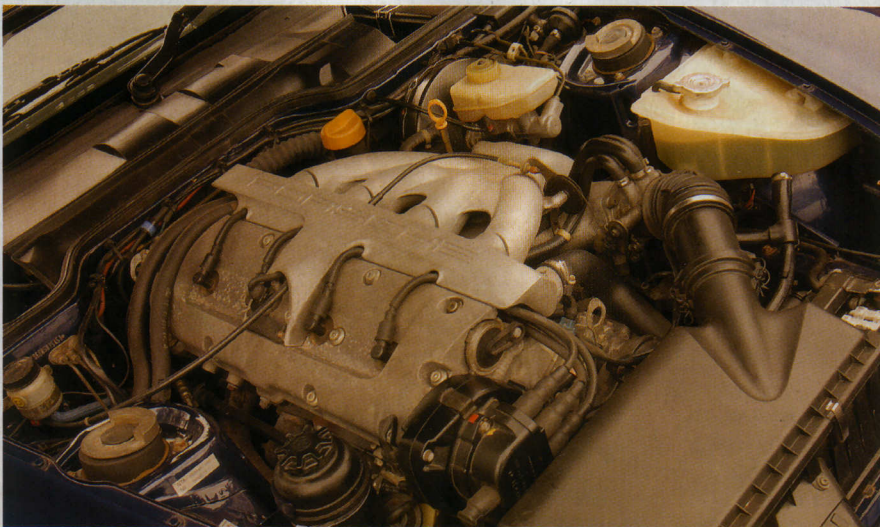
pulley avoids the fault occurring.

If there's no evidence that the belts, chain and tensioners have been renewed after no more than 50,000 miles, then it's a very good idea to have the relevant work done on any car you buy. Expect to pay between £400 and £600 for the work and parts.

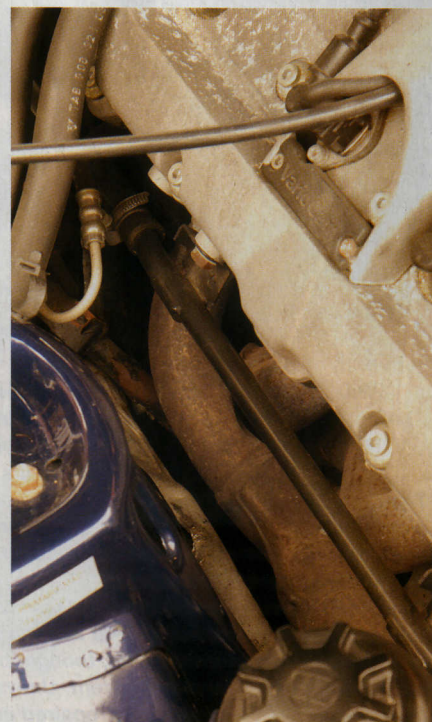
Moving on to the gearbox, the six-speed Getrag unit is generally reliable and should be a joy to use, with short, precise shifts. But listen for a whining sound from the rear at speeds of over 40mph, especially on the overrun. This indicates a worn pinion bearing in the gearbox/transaxle assembly. To cure this means removing the gearbox and stripping it. Some owners have argued that this fault was due to incorrect assembly and have tried – unsuccessfully – to get Porsche to cover the cost of repairs. Others suggest that you can prolong the life of the bearing by changing the transmission oil every 20,000 miles.

Check that the clutch doesn't slip under load, or judders when released. One great advantage of the 968 over the 944 is that Porsche helpfully provided a slot in the side of the clutch housing that allows the clutch assembly to be removed without taking out the gearbox.

Note that the 968 has a LUK dual-mass flywheel, of a similar type to that in the later 964-model 911. Although you may have heard tales of these being unreliable the problem was mainly confined to the 964's earlier Freudenburg unit; the later LUK flywheel is more reliable, and it's unusual to hear of 968s



*Engine is basically the same as the 944S2 unit, but with added benefit of Porsche's clever VarioCam system (see text). Note that this Sport model doesn't have the plastic shroud over the camshaft cover that you'll find in 'standard' 968s. Exhaust manifold (right) runs very close to steering shaft (in right-hand-drive cars). Vibration through steering wheel suggests adjacent engine mount, although better than similar 944 item, has partially collapsed from the heat, allowing engine to drop down onto shaft. Universal joints at each end of shaft can dry out and wear, too*



with dual-mass flywheel problems.

If you're looking at a car with the optional Tiptronic transmission, this tends to be reliable, and all you need to do is check that automatic changes are made smoothly and quietly, and that the manual changes work as they should.

Suspension is generally trouble-free, but the aluminium lower 'A' arms at the front can crack, causing the ball-joints linking them to the stub axle to come out. Replacements are about £140 a side, or they can be reconditioned. As on any car, dampers deteriorate with use, and fitting a new set can transform the handling. It's hard to spot if dampers are worn, but check the history to see if they have been replaced.

Brakes, on the other hand, do have issues. They're basically the same as those in the 944S2 (and other Porsches of the same period). They utilise aluminium calipers with stainless-steel plates to separate the soft metal from the friction pads and their steel backings. The

problem is that the aluminium corrodes over time, forcing the stainless-steel plates to lift. This can cause the brakes to bind and make it impossible to fit new pads.

All too often unscrupulous mechanics get around this by simply grinding the sides of the new friction pads until they fit. But the only satisfactory solution is to remove the caliper, strip it down, clean off the corrosion and reassemble it with new baseplates. Kits are available with all the parts you need, and cost about £20 per caliper; expect to pay for two or three hours' labour per corner for the job. It's very hard to see if the baseplates are lifting without taking a wheel off to give you access to the brakes; but it's worth doing. Check also for worn brake discs while you're at it.

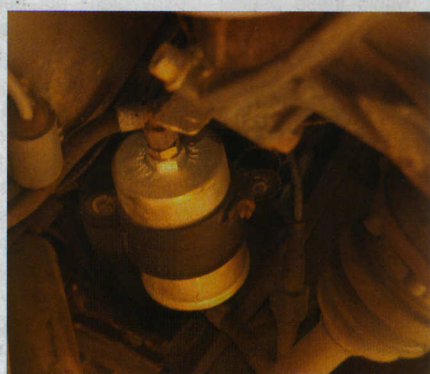
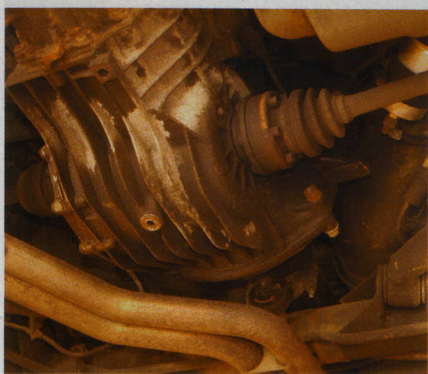
Although the 968 is basically a reliable machine, it does require regular servicing by someone who knows about the cars; in other words, not a local jobbing garage. So it's

essential that any 968 you buy has a good service history, backed up with receipts. Some cars are still maintained by Official Porsche Centres, but most are now looked at by independent specialists. Pay most attention to the last three years of history; what was done to the car 10 years ago is of little consequence today. If an owner has taken the trouble to keep all the paperwork relating to a car (including old MoT certificates, which are useful for verifying mileage), there's a fair chance that he or she has looked after the car, too.

It's sensible to run an HPI check on any prospective purchase; you can do this for £39.95 at [www.hpcheck.com](http://www.hpcheck.com) if you're in the UK (other countries have similar services). This will tell you if the car has been declared an insurance write-off, has been stolen, or has any finance outstanding. We also recommend that you have a pre-purchase inspection (PPI) done by an independent Porsche specialist. ■



**Check coolant tank (left) for signs of oil contamination – or excess pressure indicating failed head gasket. Plate on cam cover (above) signifies VarioCam system beneath it. Check discs (right) for wear. Examine drive shafts (below left) for split gaiters, oil leaks from gearbox seals. Ball-joints on front wishbones can wear (below). Fuel filter (below right) is an often overlooked service item**



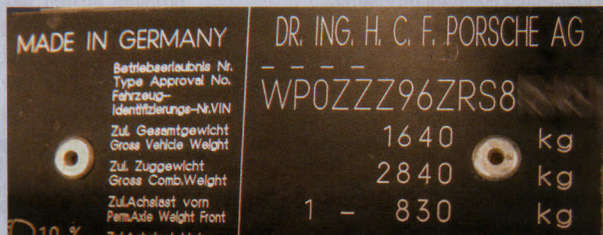
**Short chain between the two camshafts (right) can come off if the sprocket teeth are worn or broken. Look carefully at this photograph and you'll see the problem only too clearly. If this happens, at best you'll need to fork out for two new camshafts, at worst the engine will be badly damaged (see text). Far better to undertake preventive maintenance and replace the chain and tensioners at suitable intervals (again, see text)**





# Key dates

- August 1991** 968 launched to replace 944S2
- May 1992** Right-hand-drive UK cars become available
- October 1992** 968 Club Sport unveiled
- February 1993** 968 Turbo RS announced
- August 1993** Hi-fi speakers and head unit upgraded. Passenger airbag now an option in right-hand-drive cars
- January 1994** 968 Sport announced for UK market
- August 1994** Detail upgrades include more powerful headlamps, new wheels, filtered air vents, fully electric seat adjustment. Club Sport now available with optional rear seats and tip-forward front seats. Cross-drilled brake discs optional
- July 1995** 968 production ceases



**VIN number offers much useful information. 'WPO' means car's a Porsche; 'ZZZ' indicates it's a Rest of World (ie not US) model; '96' is the first two digits of 968; 'Z' is unused; 'RS' shows it's a 1994 car (NN is 1992, PS is 1993, SS is 1995); '8' is the third digit of 968, and the next five digits is the car's unique serial number**

# Best buys

If you're looking for a 968 your first decision will be whether to go for the coupé or Cabriolet. The former is also available in Club Sport trim and, here in the UK at least, in Sport form. Which you pick depends on what you're going to use the car for and – perhaps just as important – what you can find.

If you're looking for a trackday machine you ideally need a Club Sport; no doubt about it. But they're relatively scarce (less than 2000 were built) and, given the current popularity of trackdays, prices are holding at around the

£12,000–£16,000 level.

Standard coupés and Sports are at a similar level because, although they're not quite so suited to the circuit, they make great everyday cars, too. If you have the choice go for a Sport over a standard car for its firmer suspension and hence better handling. Sports are a little more sought after, but you shouldn't have to pay too much more for one.

Cabriolets carry a price premium of between £1000 and £1500 over an equivalent coupé and, because of their rarity, are sought after by those wanting stylish open-top motoring. Be aware, though, that Cabriolets tend to suffer from scuttle shake, and don't handle as

quite well as the closed cars.

Generally speaking Tiptronic transmission tends to be somewhat less attractive to buyers than manual, and so can be bought for around £500 less than an equivalent manual example. If you're happy with an automatic then this could be a good way to pick up a bargain. And it's most unlikely that a Tiptronic 968 will have been thrashed.

You will find some left-hand-drive 968s that have come to the UK from mainland Europe. In Club Sport guise these are perfect for trackdays, and not really a problem for use on the road, either. Prices of left-hookers rarely drop below the £10,000 mark. ■

# Owner's view

The 968 you see here – actually a Sport model – is Karen Roney's second Porsche. Her first was a 1986 944 which, despite a broken camshaft belt and the resulting mechanical carnage (reported within these pages), clearly didn't put her off either the marque or the model (or, he's glad to say, her lifelong friendship with Chris Horton, who found the car for her in the first place).

Karen bought the then 101,000-mile 968 last autumn for around £12,000. She – or rather her partner, Martyn – wasn't specifically looking for a Sport, but knew, given the relative scarcity of 968s to start with, that condition, mileage, service history and price (and arguably colour, too) are ultimately more important than specification alone. 'Most people seem to suggest that the Sport isn't quite as refined as the standard coupé,' she says, 'but I don't find it a problem. It may well be a factor with the Club Sport, but to be honest I'd say this car rides at least as well as my 944 used to.'

'The only things I really missed were the electric seat adjustment – I like the seat as high as possible, and there's no easy way to raise it in the Sport – and a rear window wiper, which again wasn't fitted as standard to the Sport. That was easy to solve, though. Martyn bought some second-hand parts from Porsche-Apart and fitted it himself!'

Since then the 968 has proved itself – touch wood, anyway – as boringly reliable as the 944 was, well, boringly unpredictable. The only real problem, such as it is, has been tyre noise. Initially both Chris Horton and Martyn diagnosed this – quite reasonably – as a worn-out wheel bearing, but on taking the car to independent specialist JZ Machtech for a replacement to be fitted discovered, by temporarily fitting a set of 'slave' wheels, that it's actually being generated by the (now obsolete) Avon ZZ-1 rubber fitted to all four wheels.



Not that this wasn't without its dramas. 'We couldn't get the locking wheel nuts off,' recalls Martyn, 'so eventually the JZ technician had to hammer a "disposable" socket onto them and use brute force. It meant we had to buy a set of new locking nuts, of course, but at least it saved us the expense of having the wheel bearing done.'

But those tyres will have to go, adds Martyn. 'It's annoying, because they have plenty of tread left, but whenever I use the car the constant droning drives me mad. Karen doesn't mind so much, because most of her journeys are relatively short, but after even 10 miles on a motorway you start to get a headache. Maybe we'll have to buy another set of wheels and use the Avons for trackdays!'

The only other issue to be dealt with – as far as we know, anyway; watch this space – is the gear change. Karen has happily adapted to the six-speed transmission's shift pattern, with reverse to the left and forward, next to first, but both Martyn and Chris struggle with it. 'The spring bias on the lever is too weak,' reckons Horton, 'and when you slide the lever forward into first the slightest sideways pressure tends to put it into reverse instead. At this stage I don't know what we can do about that, but I'm sure it'll make great copy for *Our cars!*' ■

## Further reading

There are no books dedicated to the 968, but a number include it alongside other 924 derivatives. You can buy the following from the *911 & Porsche World* bookshop; see page 120 or go to [www.chpltd.com](http://www.chpltd.com).

### Original Porsche 924/944/968

This full-colour, highly detailed book by Peter Morgan covers the 968 and its predecessors, the 944 and 924. Includes useful production and specification data. Costs £24.99

### Porsche 924/944/968; A Collector's Guide

A well-researched book by Michael Cotton on all the 924 derivatives. Includes some competition history. Priced at £9.99

### Porsche 924, 928, 944, 968

Written by well-known motoring journalist David Vivian, this book covers the full range of front-engined Porsches (with the exception of today's Cayenne), so the 968 doesn't get much of a look in. There are, though, some contemporary road-tests.

Not surprisingly perhaps, considering how few 968s were built, there's little about the 968 on the Internet – search on 'Porsche 968' to see for yourself. There's a fairly useful site at [www.porsche968uk.co.uk](http://www.porsche968uk.co.uk), but probably the best Internet resource is – as usual – the active forums at [www.rennlist.com](http://www.rennlist.com).

Also useful is the Sportscar Guides' Porsche 968 buyers' guide. This is available – for a modest cost – as a PDF file from [www.sportscarguides.com](http://www.sportscarguides.com). ■



## Facts & figures

# 968

**Body** All-steel, fully galvanised unit-construction body shell in coupé and Cabriolet forms

**Engine** Front-mounted, water-cooled, in-line four; all-aluminium construction. Belt- and chain-driven double overhead camshafts (see text) acting on four valves per cylinder with VarioCam timing for inlet valves. Two belt-driven contra-rotating balance shafts. Motronic M2.10.1 engine management system and DME fuel injection

**Capacity** 2990cc

**Bore/stroke** 104.00mm/88.00mm

**Compression ratio** 11.0:1

**Maximum power** 240bhp at 6200rpm

**Maximum torque** 225lb/ft at 4100rpm

**Transmission** Rear-mounted six-speed manual gearbox with dual-mass flywheel, driving rear wheels. Optional four-speed Tiptronic automatic transmission

**Suspension & steering** *Front:* Independent with single wishbones, MacPherson struts, telescopic dampers (adjustable Konis for Club Sport) with coil springs and anti-roll bar. Power-assisted rack-and-pinion steering. *Rear:* Independent with semi-trailing arms, transverse torsion bar springs, telescopic dampers (adjustable Konis for Club Sport) and anti-roll bar

**Brakes** Servo-assisted, dual-circuit hydraulic system with ventilated discs; 297mm at front and 300mm at rear, all fitted with four-piston calipers. ABS standard

**Wheels & tyres** *Front:* 7.0J x 16-inch Cup light-alloy wheels with 205/55ZR16 tyres (7.5J x 17-inch wheels with 225/45ZR17 tyres optional) *Rear:* 8.0J x 16-inch Cup light alloy wheels with 225/50ZR16 tyres (9.0J x 17-inch wheels with 255/40ZR17 tyres optional)

**Dimensions** Length 4320mm  
Width 1735mm  
Height 1275mm  
Unladen weight 1370kg (Club Sport 1320kg; Cabriolet 1440kg). All plus 30kg for Tiptronic transmission

**PERFORMANCE** (manufacturer's figures)  
**0-62mph** 6.5 seconds (Tiptronic 7.9 seconds)  
**Maximum speed** 156mph (Tiptronic 153mph)



## Thanks...

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