

Porsche Panamera Diesel

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It looks like a bloated beast and occasionally it handles like one.

The Porsche Panamera's swollen exterior is more obvious at the back of the car; it's too bulbous to look athletic.

But there is no disguising the ability of the vehicle. Two enormous tail pipes jut from the car's stern like horizontal steel chimneys; these more than hint at the clout that the corpulent car is capable of serving up.

The front of the Panamera is far more Porsche-like, with its sweeping curved bonnet and ever-so-slightly 'hang-dog-eyed' headlights. Approaching it from the front, or when peering down its long, wide, snout, its form starts to draw you in.

Through its proportions alone, the Porsche Panamera stands out clearly in its market segment. It measures 1931mm (76.0in) in width and 1418mm (55.8in) in height, while its overall length is 4970mm (195.7in). And this particular oil-burner model can be recognised by the lettering 'diesel' on the front doors.

Step inside, and the plush cabin reeks of cowhide. The sumptuous seating-for-four and lengthy legroom, both front and rear, provide the comfort you would expect from a car costing over £60,000.

Indeed, every Panamera, has a high level of standard specification. This includes Porsche Active Suspension Management, which adapts handling to suit your preferred driving style. In 'Normal' mode the car delivers a blend of performance and comfort, and then there's a 'Sport' setting where the setup is much firmer.

The Porsche also comes with vivid Bi-Xenon headlights; parking sensors; tyre pressure monitoring; automatic dimming rear view mirrors; touch-screen satellite navigation and audio controls, as well as cruise control. In addition, the car is available with rear-wheel drive and uses a highly efficient eight-speed automatic gearbox as standard.

For the majority of time spent behind the portly Porsche's wheel, it pleases when its hefty haunches launch the car forward with as much effort as it

takes to throw a dart. The formidable engine chucks the monster from 0 to 62 mph in 6.0 seconds, and carries it to a top speed of 161 mph.

The 3.0 litre six cylinder turbo diesel car is made for touring - that much is obvious. The 100 litre fuel tank and claimed 44.1 mpg will take you across a generous slice of the European continent without the need to stop for fuel. To give you an idea of its range in the UK, the German goliath is capable of taking four passengers from Lands End to Loch Ness without refuelling.

Performance and low consumption are accompanied by smooth running and low emissions. An additional contributing factor is the auto start/stop function, which is de rigueur.

Porsche has never suffered from a poor image. Sure, like most automakers, there have been tiny blips in its history, but nothing detrimental. The arrival of the Panamera Diesel has definitely polarised the opinion of the petrol-headed purists though. Many don't see it as a 'proper' Porsche, and its styling certainly doesn't achieve universal acclaim.

That said; it's an awesome car to go long distance travelling in with three other's to accompany you. You're also bound to get lots of looks - but not always for the right reason.

PROS

- Touring range • Power • Space • Economy
- Comfort

CONS

- Divisive looks

FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 161 mph
- 0-62 mph: 6.0 secs
- Combined mpg: 44.1
- Engine: 2967cc 6 cylinder 24 valve turbo diesel
- Max. power (bhp): 296 at 4000 rpm
- Max. torque (lb/ft): 479 at 1750 rpm
- CO2: 169 g/km
- Price: £62,922 on the road

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