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Porsche Macan S Road Test

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Road Test: Porsche Macan S

By Kieron Fennelly.

Porsche's smaller SUV has become its best seller...

The rampant success of the Cayenne - Porsche built 650,000 during its first decade of



production - made the eventual addition of a 'junior' Cayenne to the range a case of when rather than if. Back in 2001, observers were amazed when the maker of the celebrated 911, for many the definitive sports car, revealed it was launching a full size 4x4. However, Ferry Porsche had always admired of the Range Rover, and the feeling remained strongly rooted among the company's engineers that Porsche could transform the lumbering dynamics of SUVs. Rather more compelling was an SUV market almost ten times that of the sports car market, so the potential was enormous. The Cayenne comprehensively proved the point and in 2009, planning for the junior SUV went ahead. Like the Cayenne, the Macan would share a VW Group platform, in this case that of Audi's similarly sized Q5, but Porsche has made its own modifications to the chassis and used much of its own running gear. The Macan is longer and lower, and a very different car from the Q5.

Porsche's double clutch transmission is standard and the Macan range uses three varieties of petrol engine from the special order 2.0 litre four cylinder to a pair of V6s; a 3 litre diesel is also offered, which like the four cylinder petrol engine, comes from the VW Group. We tried the top of the range 3.6 litre 394bhp Macan Turbo S; below it comes the 3.0 litre petrol Macan S (confusingly also turbocharged) priced at £45,000, the same as the V6 Diesel which in the UK represents 70% of Macan sales.



Fittings and Equipment:

The Macan is a premium car, so such features as an automatic tailgate, folding mirrors, an electrically adjustable driver's seat and tyre pressure monitoring are standard. The cabin is very well finished, even plush and quite intimate for such a seemingly large vehicle, and it offers exceptional visibility. The rear is less outstanding: legroom is limited and luggage capacity is ultimately compromised by the Macan's stylish sloping tail. Costing £15,000 more than the S, the Turbo, besides its larger engine, gains a Bosch audio system, Porsche's adjustable suspension PASM which lowers or raises ride height and tightens damping, xenon headlights and adaptive sport seats. Air suspension for the rear remains an extra.

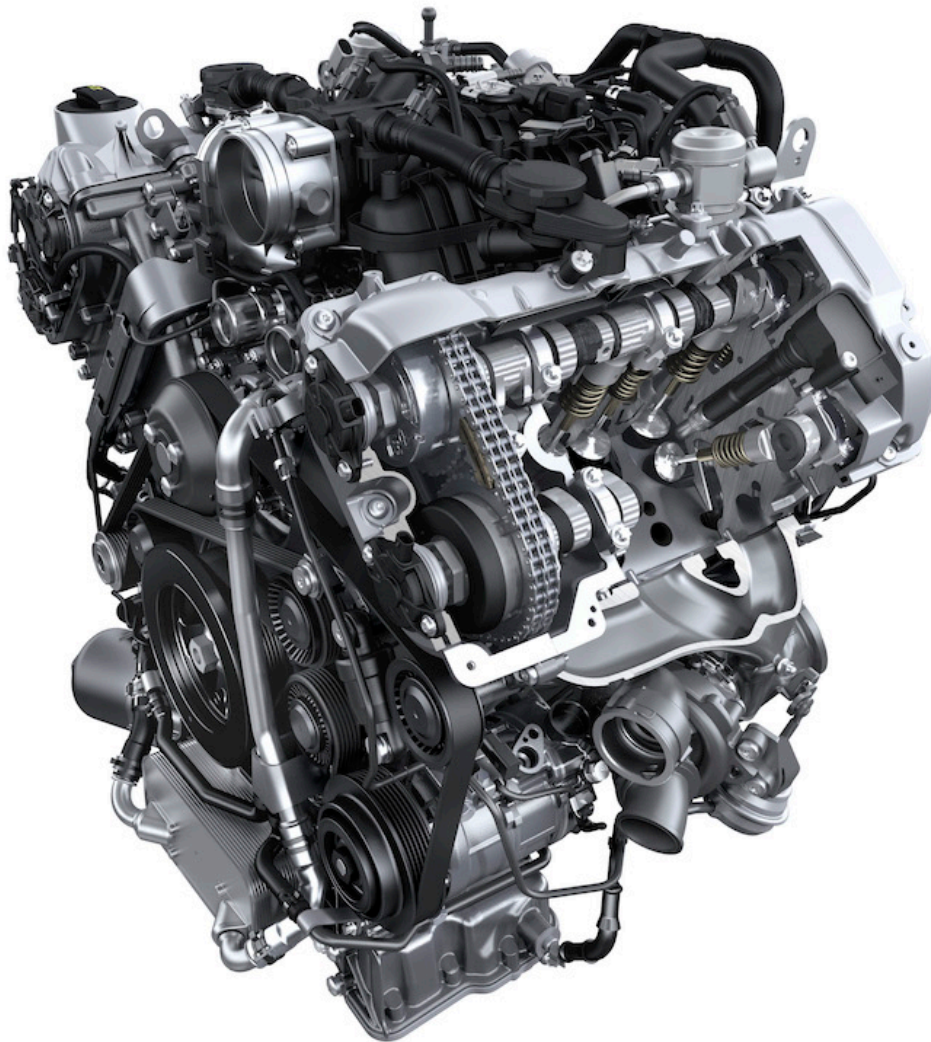
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Ride, Handling and Performance:

With its commanding driving position and well considered ergonomics, a newcomer quickly feels at home at the wheel of the Macan Turbo. Any concerns that this might be an ostentatiously rorty SUV are quickly banished – the V6's exhaust note, even in 'sport exhaust' mode, is purposeful yet refined: the cognoscenti will of course recognise the Porsche straight away, but the Macan has the good taste not to broadcast your presence. Underway, the sense of refinement continues: damping is firm – the Macan is definitely never going to offer a boulevard ride, but the cabin is well insulated from the road and the substantial ground clearance helps it traverse speed humps almost as if they were not there. If the ride is generally restful and quiet, the 21inch wheels and low profile tyres can resonate unpleasantly on some of the UK's (very unpleasant) concrete motorways: the racket at times on a drive down the southern M25 and M20 to Dover was quite a contrast with the serene ride on smooth continental roads a little later.

The Macan is of course a Porsche, and has the expected bias towards the driver: the steering wheel is perfectly weighted and gives remarkable feel; body control is exemplary with almost no roll and with Porsche's legendary steering, the Macan can be hustled along at surprising high speeds with no sense of drama and (within the obvious laws of physics) the deeply comforting feeling that it will go exactly where the driver decides to point it. How far this is a factor of four wheel drive is not clear: Porsche's PDK transmission diverts most if not all the power to the rear wheels unless it discerns a significantly greater adhesion of the fronts in which case it becomes a true four wheel driver, but the limits of adhesion even in the wet could realistically only be explored on a track. As with all Porsches, the sense of security is enhanced by the brakes, which if initially over-sensitive, provide progressive and authoritative retardation.



The turbocharged engines are never left wanting, a smooth supply of torque always eager to respond to the driver's right foot. Ultimate performance is immense: Porsche claims 0-62 mph in 5.4 seconds for the S and almost a second less for the Turbo. Again, this is delivered with minimal theatrics, little additional acoustic effect, the passenger sensing only the rapidly accelerating scenery and increasing g force. The initial inertia as the turbochargers reach their operating speed before launching the Macan Turbo's almost two tonnes imparts a very brief sensation not unlike that taking off in an aircraft: rate of acceleration and velocity seem to increase in equal measure. Yet even this 400 horsepower turbo model



behaves with perfect docility when required, predictably refined and never overtly urging its driver on. But given its head, the V6 spins eagerly to its 6,700 rpm limit and like its sports car cousins, a Macan is always ready to go faster.

VERDICT

The SUV market is the fastest growing car sector: In Europe alone it was worth over 2 million units in 2015. As one of the most expensive offerings and hardly the most spacious or economical, the Porsche Macan will never be the practical choice. You could buy a Kia Sportage which will do (almost) the same job for half the money with better rear legroom into the bargain. But no one ever buys Porsche because he or she has to and the company has astutely recognised that perhaps even more than for the Cayenne, there is a natural Porsche constituency here.

Even after two years, waiting lists extending to several months will ensure that a Macan, if not cheap to run, will retain its value. And part of that value is that this is an SUV unlike any other. Not only is it prodigiously, even ridiculously fast, it is both rewarding for both driver and passenger; impressively built, it is an immensely satisfying precision tool yet one with the dimensions to make it a relatively practical and useful every day transport.



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Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Engine: Twin turbo V6 3604cc

Compression ratio: 10.5:1

Max power: 394 hp @ 5,500-6,500 rpm

Max torque: 550 Nm @ 1,350-4,500rpm

Transmission: Seven speed PDK (double clutch automatic); four wheel drive



Performance:

0-62 mph 4.6 sec.

Top speed: 166 mph

Fuel consumption: 25.0 mpg / 38.7 mpg / 32.5 mpg Urban/Extra urban/Combined

CO2 emissions: 216 g/km

Dimensions: 4,700 mm (15.42 ft) x 1920 mm (6.30 ft) x 1625 mm (5.33 ft)

Weight: 1930 kg (4,255 lb)