

CLASSIC DRIVER

Norway's North Cape in a Classic Porsche 911: A true winter wonderland...

Lead

Norway's North Cape is one of the most northerly points in Europe. When the time was right, Classic Driver Frank Strothe checked the battery and alternator of his 1966 Porsche 911 (shod with studded winter tyres), stuffed a sleeping bag and other essentials under the 'bonnet' and set off...

The Idea

I've always wanted to go to the 'Nordkapp', *writes Frank Strothe*. I've been before, in the summer, but there was no challenge in it. So for years I've pondered a winter expedition; driving in the snow is more fun, especially in a classic car that relies on your driving skill to keep it on the road, rather than a host of electronic safety measures. In Finnmark – Norway's northernmost county – mothers use run-of-the-mill hatchbacks to take their children to school in -40deg temperatures.

So to make the trip worthwhile I needed a slightly more adventurous ride: what better choice than an original, unrestored Porsche 911?



I was given various tips on how to make sure the first leg of my journey wasn't to be my last. Recommended equipment included a portable heater, a satellite phone, auxiliary fuel tank, additional lights and a crash course in basic mechanics. Perhaps a little naively, I ignored them all. I wanted a 'pure' experience, so I checked the battery and alternator, fitted spiked winter tyres and packed a sleeping bag and tent into the front luggage compartment. No more messing around, it was time to get going.



The Trip

I trailered the 911 from Germany with – what else? – a modern Land Rover Discovery. From Kramfors onwards I left my fate to the old Porsche, which I drove to Rovaniemi for the first night. Next day, the goal was to reach Ivalo where my reward would be a session at the Porsche Driving Experience, to drive some of my car's descendents on a frozen lake. It was very impressive, but, when dusk settled, I was glad to return to the wheel of my classic 911.





The next morning, I attempted to make the short trip from the old fishing village of Gjesvær to the North Cape. However, progress was halted by an oversight in my journey planning. Due to crossing a time zone, and the ban on covering the last few kilometres to the Cape alone, I had to wait an hour to join a twice-daily convoy.



Our cavalcade was a rather small one as it turned out. Led by a listless snowplough, it was just a BMW X6 with Russian plates and my 911 bringing up the rear – probably one of the most diverse trio of vehicles I’ll ever

belong to. Since it was so deserted that day, I had ample time to photograph the car next to The Globe, the North Cape's landmark monument.





During one refuelling stop, I noticed the tyre pressures were a little low. I corrected them and went on my way, only to spin the car while pulling out of the petrol station (much to the amusement of a bus full of German tourists). I made my getaway, ego somewhat damaged, and again began to enjoy the sprawling, empty road ahead. By this point I had covered over 2,000km in snowy and icy conditions and had become accustomed to them, happily wagging the 911's tail through corners.

Unfortunately, another dramatic spin soon left us both in deep snow, the 911 truly beached. It turned out that the air pressure gauge at the petrol station was wrongly calibrated: each tyre had been overinflated, so the spikes were no longer effective on the ballooning tyres. A friendly group of Norwegians came to my rescue - but not before the return of the holidaying Germans who had another chuckle at my expense.



Apart from that, and a spell where the alternator threw a wobbly for a few hours, the 911 was very well behaved. It even played saviour when I returned to the Land Rover at the end of the trip, as the Discovery's battery had drained away. In total, I travelled 6,000km in six days, and pretty well loved every minute.

Car & Equipment

1966 Porsche 911 SWB, with the carburettor trumpets partially taped-over to prevent them icing up. The only other modifications were the studded winter tyres. The car is unrestored and totally original.

Be careful. You should always carry enough in the car to survive a night outside at -40deg: an Arctic sleeping bag, a tent (or, at a push, you could sleep in the car), a down jacket, thermal trousers, thick gloves, a hat and plenty of food.

I didn't, but you should really take snow chains for emergencies. Fill up whenever the tank is half full. The 911's heater will not work properly below -20deg. So, while driving, I wore ski pants, a Polar anorak, thick mittens, a hat, and hiking boots. And still froze.





All the windows were frozen solid, too, apart from the windscreen. But in such a deserted land, it's only necessary to look ahead...

Photos: Frank Strothe

Gallery

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