

Words and photos: Sean Smith

# CROSSING CONTINENTS

With Rennsport Reunion as the final destination, driving 2000 miles from Colorado to California at the wheel of an RSR-inspired 911 sounds like a petrolhead's dream...



It's a shame there are so many wonderful classic cars hidden away in collections, almost never seen, and only rarely used. They're transported from their hermetically-sealed homes in enclosed trailers to be viewed as static displays, gently rubbed with microfibre cloth – but otherwise, don't touch!

There are some Porsches that are like that, but most are taken out and driven. And to prove the point that they are meant to, and can, be driven, I decided to take a Porsche built by the RSR Project and drive it from Colorado to California, winding up at Rennsport Reunion VI. But let's start with some basic facts.

Richard Schickman has been in love with 911s from a very early age. His dream machine was the 1973 Carrera RSR, one of the true icons from Zuffenhausen. They are also unicorns: they just don't exist in the wild. They ARE hidden away, and when they move from one custodian to the next, the price is massive.

So, as any right thinking enthusiast would do, Richard

set out to build his own. With his attention to detail and the quality of his build, someone else really, really wanted it. And they were willing to back it up with a cheque bearing a number with many zeros.

The car got itself a new owner. So Richard started over again and – guess what? – someone else wanted that one, too. This happened multiple times and Richard never did get a car of his own. The only thing left to do was start a business.

Richard sources 1984 to '89 Carreras with no damage and takes them down to bare metal, then puts them on a diet. Gone are the impact bumpers, the steel boot and bonnet (replaced with glassfibre, just like the original). The air-conditioning is removed, along with the electric windows and power seats. The empty shell then has steel flares welded on; finally, the body is ready for paint of the client's choosing.

The revised interior consists of a new headliner, Perlon carpet and lightweight RS-style seats and door panels.

*What better way to get your kicks than driving a classic Porsche on Route 66?*

**“HIS DREAM MACHINE WAS THE 1973 CARRERA RSR...”**





Even the glovebox door is removed to keep with the original. A Wevo shifter and a very pretty 380mm deep-dish steering wheel complete the ensemble. All glass, gaskets and rubber are replaced as well.

At the same time the engine and transmission are rebuilt and detailed to within an inch of their lives. The suspension is fully rebuilt and given new shocks and bushings. Brakes are also new at all four corners. The finished machine rides on Michelin TB 15 tyres and period Fuchs-style wheels by Braid. So you have all the beauty of the RSR with a bulletproof 3.2-litre motor.

Back to the journey to Rennsport Reunion... It was decided to skip much of the right side of the USA and ship the car directly out to Colorado. We landed in Denver and made a beeline to Autosport Werks in Broomfield, Colorado, who had been keeping an eye on our Light Yellow transport. Next stop was 100 miles south and 14,115 feet up: the summit of Pikes Peak.

Pikes Peak Highway is 19 miles long. The famous race

held there begins at mile marker 7 and climbs 12.42 miles to the top. By the time we got there car and passengers were running out of breath (the RSR was not set up for such high altitudes) but it still got us to the top. Competitors, mind you, regularly run with an oxygen supply during the race. We then headed back down to 6000ft – and more horsepower – toured around Manitou Springs, and called it a day.

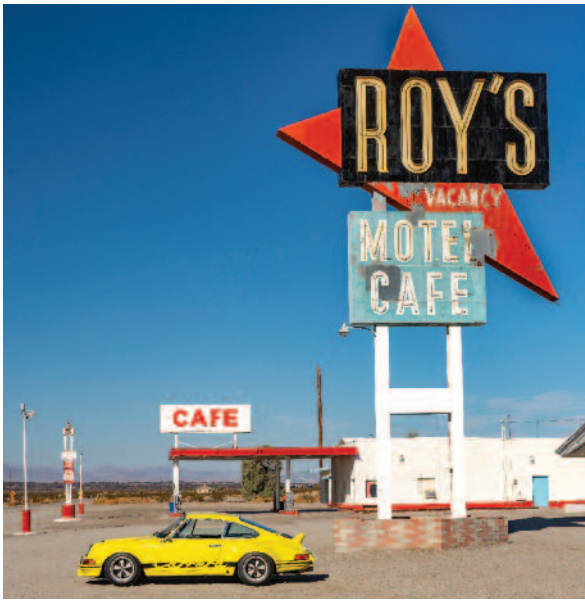
The following morning sights were set on Moab, Utah; we tried to stay off the major roads as much as possible and had a blast on some spectacularly scenic roads. It's a combination of what's outside your windshield and a completely engaging machine that just melt miles and hours away. 80mph speed limits help as well. Because 80 becomes 90 and that can become 'How fast was I going, officer?' Luckily we kept clear of Smokeys...

The high point was Route 128. It's a 42-mile run through some incredible scenery and snakelike roads that put all your driving ability to the test. The biggest challenge is to keep your eyes on the road and not become part of the

*Above: Speeding through Arizona on Route 66 – destination California and arguably the largest gathering of historic Porsches in the world*

*Below left: Playing follow my leader on the way out to Buttonwillow Raceway Park*

*Below right: Cutting the curves along the legendary Mulholland Drive*



*Above left: Roy's Place on Route 66 was opened way back in 1938. It's a 'must stop' photo opp on the way to California*

*Above right: Pausing for breath in the shadow of the 'cliffs' in Utah*

*Below: A chance meeting of like-minds along the road, all three of us headed for Rennsport Reunion...*



scenery... But that's why you drive a Porsche – it was made for roads like this.

An overnight stay in Moab got us ready for our run to Arizona. Once out of town, everything opens up wide. It's big world, small Porsche time.

You're travelling through land that you have seen in movies and read about in books. You're in the midst of the Navajo Nation.

The RSR Project machine keeps you in touch with the road and world around you. It's very elemental and analogue. You're not cosseted away in an air-conditioned digital living room; instead, you're very much attached to the car and working with it.

It has the lightness and directness of an early 911, but you're being motivated by an unstressed 3.2 motor; by taking off the weight, it's like adding horsepower. Win-win. Arizona flies by with the sound track of the custom exhaust

making us want to turn up the volume.

Heading west on Route 40 on our way to Joshua Tree National Park, we take an exit for Kelbacker road. This one is a bit rough, but you take the good with the bad. Eventually

the GPS tells us to make a right onto National Trails Highway, aka Route 66. A few miles up 66, we come to Roy's Cafe and Motel. It has the look of a postmodern Bagdad Cafe (from the movie of the same name).

No food is served at the café, only pre-packaged pastries of very questionable age, and the motel doesn't appear to have had any guests since disco was king. But it did have gas and water. What more could you ask for?

Following our trusty GPS, we head off on Amboy road, out into the big empty. This is a place where you drive for miles and miles and the mountains never seem to get any closer. I may be gripping the steering wheel a little tighter as we're in the middle of freakin' nowhere, but the 3.2 just keeps

## “ONCE OUT OF TOWN, EVERYTHING OPENS UP WIDE”





howling along and never misses a beat.

It's a good thing because, where we are, it's a long walk in any direction to anything close to civilisation – a good 50 miles of Mad Max territory before there are any more real signs of life. Joshua Tree seems almost crowded in comparison. Next stop LA.

Along the way we pass massive wind farms. We are now only a few hundred feet above sea level so every bit of power has returned and the Porsche is in its element ready for you to take it to the red line! But then there's Los Angeles traffic. If this is the land of sports cars, you could have fooled me. In fact, since the the two 964s we met up with in Colorado also heading for Rennsport, other than a few Cayennes, we have not see one other cool car! Surely that has to change?

We find our way to Bruce Meyer's collection in Beverly Hills. There we get a potent Porsche fix: CTR #001, the first

production RUF restored by Alois Ruf, a pretty little 356 outlaw and a freshly-built 911T sleeper with a twin-plug engine. Oh yeah – he also has Ferraris, Bentleys, Bugattis, a few Mercedes, Corvettes (Le Mans-winning Corvettes, that is) and a whole lot more.

We then spend some time carving the canyons on Mulholland Drive and cruising Malibu. Mulholland is a place for street racing and general automotive tom-foolery. Some sections of the road are black from all the rubber that has sacrificed itself in the pursuit of showing off.

You'd think the California Highway Patrol would have a satellite office there just to handle tickets. But we're told by another 911 driver that if you're driving a classic Porsche and are not too obnoxious, they just might give you a pass. Sounds good to me... It's time to add more black coating.

Malibu lets you know that there are all kinds of Porsche owners – and they're all driving late-model black cabriolets.

*Above: At Rennsport, Chris MacAllister in his 917K exiting the Andretti Hairpin*

*Below: Taking advantage of the lack of traffic on Route 128 to pause for photos on the way to Moab*



*Above: On top of the world! 14,115 feet above sea level – pausing for breath at the summit of the world famous Pikes Peak in Colorado*

*Below left: Wayne Baker enjoying the twists and turns of Laguna Seca's famous Corkscrew in his 1951 356*

*Below right: Ex-Hurley Haywood RSR keeping great company at the Reunion*

The Light Yellow RSR is a shining beacon of individuality: everyone on the PCH knows who's truly cool. But a few days in and around LA is enough; it's time to head north to Laguna Seca for Rennsport.

A little road rally has been organised by TRE Motorsport. It starts in Santa Clarita with about 100 Porsches of all ages and wildness. We hang out; we look; we get on the road to Buttonwillow Raceway Park where we'll stop for lunch and have some track time.

California's highways want to be like the German Autobahn – even though they're not officially supposed to be, they do a pretty damn good impression. If you're not doing triple digits, SUVs and compacts go flying by like you're parked. No problem – the

little yellow Porsche can hang with the best of them, but when you're running out of speedometer, you tend to worry about keeping your licence in your pocket and yourself out of handcuffs. Happy to report there were no meetings with California's finest.

Buttonwillow proved a bit of a let-down – we don't have the room to really have at it, so after lunch and track it's off to Monterey at a slightly more sedate pace. Maybe.

Rennsport started life in 2001 on the east coast at Lime Rock Park in Connecticut. It was such a success it immediately outgrew the track. It moved south to Daytona International Speedway

for a few generations then made its way west, and WeatherTech Raceway at Laguna Seca has been its natural habitat ever since.

## “THE LITTLE YELLOW PORSCHE CAN HANG WITH THE BEST...”







Put yourself in the paddock and it's a massive Porsche overdose! But in a good way. There's everything from the diminutive 356-001 to fire-breathing 962s, and everything in between tearing up the track, along with demonstrations trying to break the lap record runs by the 919. The crowd also gets a look at Porsche's new take on the 935, a track-only supercar.

The cars were doing what they were meant to do. Run hard! You got the sight, the sound, the smell. It was total immersion. If you weren't a Porsche enthusiast you were in the wrong place.

And when the exhaust notes go quiet for the day, musical notes pick up with the likes of Bob Weir, Dhani Harrison, Perry Farrell and Seal giving the crowd more beautiful sounds. Porsche has created a phenomenon, a gathering of

so many special machines and the people that put them in the history books. It's an event you could see from space.

But for me the highlight has been putting over 2000 miles on the RSR Project Porsche. I wouldn't have wanted to make the drive in a lesser car, and at the same time I wouldn't have wanted to do it in a modern car. This Light Yellow machine is the perfect balance. It has everything a real driver could want. It has power, a wonderful howl that never gets boring, a driving environment with perfect seats and wheel to hold onto. Every mile is a joy. Other than one puncture, the Porsche covered the earth like a fast-moving freight train.

To quote Ferris Bueller, who was commenting about another marque, 'I love driving it. It is so choice. If you have the means, I highly recommend picking one up.' **CP**

*Above: RSR and the wide-open spaces of Monument Valley in Utah. Breathtaking – there's no other word...*

**Contact:**  
[www.thersrproject.com](http://www.thersrproject.com)

*Below left: Photographer, director and racer Jeff Zwart in his 1966 906*

*Below right: Time to hit the road again...*

