

MOTORS // PORSCHE

## BRAVE NEW WORLD

Petrolhead **NICK HENDRIX** has struggled to get on board with Electric Vehicles. But could Porsche's first effort, the Taycan, be the one to change his mind?



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL SHELFORD

PORSCHE TAYCAN TURBO:  
• PRICE FROM: £115,858  
• ENGINE: Electric  
• POWER: 680PS  
• TORQUE: 850Nm  
• 0-60MPH: 3.2 seconds  
• TOP SPEED: 162 mph

**I**T'S ALWAYS EXCITING to feel on the cusp of technological change. I remember handling my very first iPhone and spending ages astounded at the complexity and responsiveness of it. Now I swipe and flick through apps, webpages, drop down boxes and Apple pay functions as unconsciously as breathing.

We marvel at new inventions and yet quickly consider them as simply the standard. I found myself questioning whether my weekend with Porsche's new, all-electric Taycan Turbo would turn out to be one such moment. Is this (among others) the new normal?

With photographer Michael Shelford in the passenger seat, we embarked on an adventure through England's green and pleasant land on our way to Liverpool – a city synonymous historically with industry and today with culture; two things this car stands to challenge.

It's also conveniently as far away as the Taycan's claimed range (280miles) – something I was keen to interrogate.

On collection, Michael enquired as to whether the £130,000 (with many an extra) German

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saloon was “one of those Teflon’ cars”. By Teflon, I assumed he meant Tesla – and explained that although no, not a Tesla, it's not miles away. [My opportunity to mock his vehicular ignorance evaporated when he informed me that “no, it's not usually referred to as a ‘far-away lens’.”]

There's always been a stigma for me around Electric Vehicles (EVs) and hybrids – for some reason they have insisted on being ugly (Toyota Prius), awkwardly quirky (BMW i3) or ridiculously unobtainable (Rimac Concept One).

Tesla has tried to mitigate that, making cars that actually look half decent, but they're still not exactly works of art – and do you really want to give your hard-earned dollar to Elon Mush?

But with the Taycan, Porsche has made a huge leap forward for this category. It is understated but still beautiful; it grows on you the longer you spend with it; and it manages to push all the same buttons as a 911.

Entering the Taycan's matte-grey interior, I was expecting it to reveal its true colours – that the recognisable exterior was surreptitiously disguising a sci-fi cockpit with a myriad of buttons and a joystick. But inside, it's business →





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→ as usual – steering wheel, infotainment, pedals where they should be. The only clue to its electric organs is the ‘power’ button, like you’d find on your laptop rather than the start/stop that we’ve become accustomed to (key holes seem practically Jurassic in this conversation).  
We set off on our journey and as we pass through some of the Cotswolds’ historic villages, it felt like guiding the *USS Enterprise* through the pages of *Pride and Prejudice* – its silent digital surge creeping up on sleepy pheasants and drifting silently past 15th-century cottages.  
The inky black paint and stealthy styling was proving a challenge for Michael to shoot, until he caught sight of it eerily spying through some long grass and had a revelation: “I know how to shoot it now: like it’s the Batmobile.”  
Much like the Caped Crusader himself, this new EV manages to be conspicuous yet inconspicuous at the same time.  
Arriving at the tranquil Dormy House Hotel (one of the Cotswolds’ finest), we were happy

to see a charge point. Although we weren’t quite out of power, we certainly needed an overnight charge and the hotel’s set-up was easy to use. Grabbing the cable in the nifty hidden compartment in the boot, we easily plugged in and trotted off for a few sundowners.  
While we tucked into negronis, the Taycan Turbo was happily sucking juice out of the wall and getting ready for the next day’s drive.  
Bellies full of a sumptuous full English and minds wired with high-quality caffeine, we set coordinates for Liverpool.  
Although early embodiments like the Nissan LEAF hardly conjure up images of power and performance, today’s EVs are all about mind-boggling speed. I’ve wasted hours watching YouTube videos of battery-powered cars making Lamborghinis and McLarens look like double-decker buses, so I was very excited to test out the instant torque of Porsche’s first EV.  
The way the Taycan Turbo accelerates is unlike anything I’ve ever driven. My usual adjectives for [insert any V8 Italian supercar] are ‘biblical’, ‘apocalyptic’ or ‘Herculean’, but this car has me reaching for a dictionary more than a thesaurus.  
It feels like you are being teleported without any tangible experience of effort or grip. You are simply somewhere and then you are somewhere else. Here and then there. It’s effortless and serene yet also terrifying. A heady concoction.  
Approaching Liverpool from The Wirral, we passed through Port Sunlight – an entire community built in the 1880s by the Lever

brothers to support their Sunlight soap factory. It’s an unusual and extraordinary place – a feat of industrial prowess, wealth and corporate social responsibility. More than 900 of its buildings are listed and the original factory façade remains. However, behind it now is a pioneering, modern factory creating toiletries that would boggle the minds of its 19th-century creators.  
Although Ferdinand Porsche may have only been 13 when this village was constructed, it’s not a huge stretch to see that – like the factory’s Victorian façade – his iconic 1930s logo is now stuck onto a considerable evolution of his original creation. His emblem, once known for a rudimentary adaptation of the utilitarian VW →



ARE YOU SITTING COMFORTABLY?: The Porsche Taycan Turbo has a reassuringly normal interior, but with a few more displays than normal: a 16.8-inch curved screen for an instrument cluster, is joined by a 10.9-inch infotainment touchscreen, and 8.4-inch auxiliary touchscreen.





→ Beetle, is now the face of a 625hp technological super-saloon dripping in Alcantara and soft leather and packing more torque than a Pagani.

As we traced the south side of the Mersey, before ducking under the water to enter Liverpool proper, you can't help but be struck by the desolate, post-industrial surroundings. If the next Batman movie is looking for its Gotham – I think I've found it. Red-brick, former warehouses now sit empty save for piles of rubbish and rubble. Drop these buildings across the river or into London's East End and there would be a litany of penthouses, WeWork spaces and art galleries. But sadly there's not an entrepreneur in sight. Not a tech start-up for miles.

These characterful old buildings evoke such former glory that if you look past the fly-tipped mattresses you can imagine the prosperity they

used to foster. Driving silently by in the Taycan felt almost insulting; as though showing the old the new; taunting these crumbling buildings with the reason they are empty – the world has changed, evolved, globalised and we were sitting in the future, they were echoing the past.

On the other side of the river the narrative is more positive – we glided into the Titanic Hotel after a long afternoon's drive and saw what was possible with these former warehouses.

Playing heavily on the ill-fated ship's infamous story, the hotel is a vast space sitting somewhat lonely alongside Stanley Dock. The Taycan was neatly plugged into the hotel's (Tesla-branded – don't tell anyone) charging point and we settled down to reflect over a beer.

Opposite the hotel is the formidable Stanley Dock Tobacco Warehouse – the largest brick warehouse in the world, which is on the cusp of being transformed into flats, shops and restaurants. It stands there as proof that – much like Porsche has achieved with this car – something old can be made new; that adaptation is always possible and the great minds in Stuttgart have proved that with this brilliant car.

The Taycan is beautiful inside and out, user-friendly, and filled with all the class and quality you'd expect from the brand. I grew very fond of being in its company.

But am I convinced? Ecologically, it seems a no-brainer (aside from the complex debate about how batteries are actually made and whether that's really any better), but as a car lover and confirmed petrol-head, I don't know.

It is, somewhat ironically, the performance of these cars that causes me to pause.

What happens when this instantly accessible warp-speed is dropped into a Corsa or a Fiesta? Hormonal teenagers, who have just passed their tests and want to show off to their friends, will be hurtling their lumps of metal down our roads as casually as visiting the app store.

EVs are another example of technology's tendency to detach us from a visceral connection. Do we not need that interaction? The twitch of the back tires, the rumbling exhaust? Do those things not remind us that we are controlling something powerful that could easily kill us or others if not treated with respect?

This new age of high-powered EVs could have the potential to feel like a computer game where the worst-case scenario is 'game over'.

But putting the wider questions aside, there is no debating the Taycan's achievement. It is without a doubt a future classic. Just please keep it out of the reach of children. ■

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