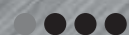




# Vive la Panamera!

FOCUS ON PANAMERA  
DRIVING





**What could be more exclusive than this? Without having to wait for the Panamera to be launched on the market, guests of the Porsche Travel Club were already being dazzled by its delights on a grand tour of Provence. A one-of-a kind journey through the South of France with a host of individual experiences: the Panamera has arrived.**

By  
Jürgen Zeyer

Photos by  
Bernd Kammerer

**Police are there** to keep order; still, twelve examples of the new Panamera confidently soaring down country lanes around the Gorges du Verdon in Provence, France’s answer to the Grand Canyon, can create a bit of confusion. And occasionally the local police’s own commitment to order can be affected, as well. With an innocent request for a souvenir photo, three gendarmes flag down the impressive fleet of Porsche Travel Club tourists not far from the Lac de Sainte-Croix—and then immediately send them on their way with the reassuring news that everything will be taken care of to smooth the next leg of the journey. After briefly accompanying the Panamera convoy, the police car then races past the column in a breakneck ma-

neuver, only to pull into position at the next turnout. What a sight, when three gendarmes become fans, form an honor guard, wave, and simultaneously press their camera shutters to document their proximity to Porsche’s fourth model series. Vive la chance! Amazement is just the beginning.

It is just one small step from amazement to admiration. The guests of the Porsche Travel Club’s Panamera adventure have long since taken that step. “I am utterly thrilled,” says Yuval Rakavy. The Israeli businessman was one of about fifty participants, traveling in three groups, who engaged each of their senses in an exclusive, three-day road trip through Provence with the Panamera. Rakavy himself had already ordered a black Panamera Turbo, but the anticipation was simply too great to wait any longer. “I just had to be there. When a car manufacturer changes course to the extent that Porsche has, the result is either a classic or just a fashion trend.” He qualifies this statement, declaring, “The Panamera will be a classic.” A certitude that merely intensifies with each passing kilometer of the approximately 600-kilometer (370-mile) route through southern France.

The call of the Panamera was heard—and answered—around the world, and tour guides Harald Becker and Matthias ▶

**Map of France with Provence in detail:  
All around the loveliest spots**







**Looking, gazing, examining: The Panamera becomes one of the most popular sights during its journey through southern France**

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**“Phenomenal. I am absolutely astounded at how easily it drives. It’s a luxury sedan, yet it responds as a real sports car should.”**

Missling were there to effortlessly escort and initiate the eager travelers into the world of the new Gran Turismo. Praveen Sharma had made the trek from New Jersey. His first impression: “Phenomenal. I am absolutely astounded at how easily it drives. It’s a luxury sedan, yet it responds as a real sports car should.” Oleg Antipov from Russia raves about the “out-and-out comfortable feel”; he instantly felt at home in the vehicle. Mohammad Marouf from Kuwait is an experienced Porsche connoisseur: waiting for him at home are a Carrera GT and a 911 GT2 as well as two Cayenne SUVs. Now, with the Panamera, he has rediscovered his favorite brand all over again. “This car is completely different, and yet it’s a Porsche right down to the last detail. Luxury and sports in perfect harmony.” His wife and daughter will soon be able to share this feeling: Marouf has ordered both a Panamera Turbo and a 4S for his family.

Visiting from Mongolia, the Chinbats were still at the thinking-it-over stage. The couple decided to turn the Provence tour into a family getaway, and arrived together with their son and daughter-in-law. “A fantastic car” is Bat-Amgalan Chinbat’s verdict. “We are so entranced with the Panamera that we scarcely notice the loveliness of the landscape.”

And yet Provence and the Panamera are perfectly suited to one another. In fact, this luxury sports car tempts one to believe that the roads of southern France must have been built with the Panamera in mind. “We selected routes to showcase the two most exceptional features of the Panamera: its superlative comfort and its singular sportiness,” explains tour guide Becker. And it is precisely these qualities that are put into action.

Time and again, the drivers encounter warning signs with jagged lines to indicate dangerous bends. For the new Porsche, such messages merely announce pleasure ahead. Take, for example, the potholed asphalt strip that zigzags from tiny Aups via Moustiers-Sainte-Marie in countless hairpin bends with dramatic vistas, at last ascending the karst cliff formation. In doing so, the Panamera effortlessly grants the driver’s every wish—with a push of the Sport button, it’s more dynamic than ever. And the confident rumble of the powerful 400-horsepower (4S) or 500-horsepower (Turbo) engines is a reassuring promise: You can rely on me—I can always give you more, if needed.

After lunch—as befitting the Porsche Travel Club, this takes place in one of master chef Alain Ducasse’s restaurants—the motorcade reaches the high plateau with its celebrated lavender fields. The beguiling scent completes the intoxication of the senses: smelling, tasting, feeling, sensing, seeing—pleasure at the Panamera level. And, incidentally, the question “Where are we going?” is never asked. The destination is of no import; it ▶





Bons vivants have right of way: The Provence tour route always allows for improvisation

**“This car is completely different, and yet it’s a Porsche right down to the last detail. Luxury and sports in perfect harmony.”**

is the moment at hand that is of the essence. It is the sheer bliss of being outside time in Porsche’s fourth production series. Endless blue skies and oleander and bougainvillea in bloom all lend color to the magic that is Provence, to blend with those magical Panamera moments.

Such moments are repeated twice each day in the forecourt of the Four Seasons Resort Hotel in Tourrettes. Here, the resplendent Porsche dozen lines up at the excursion starting point and destination. Each time, the Panamera immediately diffuses its unique allure. Until the moment of farewell arrives. Rakavy, the businessman from Israel, stands before the black Panamera Turbo, now so familiar, and has just one more request: “Wouldn’t it be feasible,” he asks with a wink, “to just ship the car to Israel right away?” The Panamera will arrive. No question about it. ◀

## Porsche Travel Club 2010 Program

Next year, the Porsche Travel Club will once again be offering a selection of more than fifty tours. The following tours either are new or have been slightly modified:

**The Provence/Côte d’Azur Tour**  
(September 22, September 29, October 6)

**The Portofino Tour**  
(October 13)

**The Hamburg/Sylt Tour**  
(May 28–30, October 1–3)

**The Burgundy Tour**  
(May 13, August 26)

**Further information and the complete program are available on the Internet:**

[www.porsche.de/travelclub](http://www.porsche.de/travelclub)

Tel.: +49-711-911-78155

E-mail: [travel.club@porsche.de](mailto:travel.club@porsche.de)

## Off the Beaten Path

**Individual travel: it can be done, even during peak season on the Côte d’Azur. Here are a few water-cooled tips courtesy of a Franco-ophile. But vite, vite, before the secret is out.**

Two kilometers to St. Tropez. The pearl of the Côte d’Azur must lie somewhere beyond the hood of the car in front of us. An eternity away. Just turn right and forget the blue expanse on the left. Drive toward Ramatuelle. Très idyllic, promises the front-seat passenger. Then continue uphill for a bit and above all, keep moving forward. Once the street flattens out again, you automatically release your foot from the pedal and gaze out into the distance. Vineyards, verdant hills dotted with solitary, luminous white villas, and directly in front of you the Cap Camarat lighthouse, which reigns over the turquoise-blue sea from its craggy throne. We get out, take a deep breath of that unmistakable Provence fragrance, irresistible to Porsche Travel Club guests, too. “Absolutely incredible,” I say. My passenger smiles, but says not a word.

Seemingly moments ago we were still in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the Gulf of St. Tropez, and here we are in the hush of Ramatuelle’s Plage de Pampelonne. Dreams begin here, among the pristine beauty of the coast of southern France: rocky promontories jutting into the sea, cliff lines interrupted by sandy beaches and often inaccessible except by boat or hours of walking, and yet more craggy cliffs—and above all, no direct thoroughfare to the water. It is not much easier to reach the Plage de Pampelonne itself, whose 67 acres make it the largest on the Côte d’Azur and reputedly one of the most beautiful in Europe. Here, too, your choice is limited: a few access roads crossing through vineyards down from the hinterland. And the last few meters to the beach have to be managed on foot.

For decades, the Ramatuelle community has successfully resisted all attempts to sell this true pearl of the Côte to tourism investors. The beach is there for everyone. Building development is not allowed, and so you can relax and enjoy your café au lait in company with Jack Nicholson and Johnny Depp, or wait until May to join the entire Formula One elite at Club 55. The only unpopular items here are cameras; that is the rule. The people of southern France defend the unspoiled character of their region passionately. Hosts and guests don’t think twice about the unfiltered cigarette dangling from their lips. Sure, they’ve heard about the smoking ban, but that’s a decree from Paris—and Paris is far, far

away. That may well be why the roads are improved only once in a blue moon.

Here in the hills, cruising is the choice du jour. The longest linear slope is perhaps 100 meters long; the narrow blacktop road jerks and snakes through forests of pine and olive trees. Here and there you notice where a storm or forest fire has cut a swath through the foliage down to the sea. From Croix-Valmer, you drive along the coast in the direction of Gigaro-Plage. At the end of the beach you will find a parking lot, and from there you walk, continuing in the direction of Cap Lardier, a promontory that is a nature reserve area. After walking uphill and downhill on the well-developed path, it is impossible to resist the feeling that you have completely left fast-paced Europe behind. As far as the eye can see, one is surrounded by nature, untouched and pure. Small bays with crystal-clear waters, the scent of herbs, a few seagulls circling above. When there is a wind from the east and the waves are crashing onto the Plage de Pam-

pelonne, just a few miles away, all is particularly tranquil here in the slipstream. If you don’t swim now, you have only yourself to blame. The only aspect that may take some getting used to is that most of those relaxing here in the tiny coves tend to wear a sun hat and a watch—but little else. The closer one gets to the cape, the fewer people one encounters. It’s hard to believe that this is really the Côte d’Azur.

By now, stars have discovered this for themselves. Johnny Depp and his wife, Vanessa Paradis, live up in Plan-de-la-Tour; the road heading up that way is a true delight. But watch out—sometimes it goes so far... and no further. Roads may be completely closed due to hill climbs. And if you ask the kindly gendarme why no one bothered to provide any information thirteen kilometers ago, down at sea level, his friendly smile is accompanied by the prompt reply: “What’s the problem? The sun is shining, and you are on vacation, aren’t you?” ◀

By Jürgen Löhle  
Photo by Bernd Kammerer

*“One must not tarry if one wishes to see yet more.  
Nothing remains forever.”*

(Paul Cézanne, French painter who loved the South of France)

