

## PCGB - 996 Carrera - Buyer's Checklist

The 996 is a complicated piece of machinery, and early models are now approaching 12 years old. Whilst the majority of well-serviced and cared-for cars give largely trouble-free motoring, there are areas that need careful attention when viewing a prospective purchase. Please don't be put off by this rather exhaustive list. It was compiled after visits to two independent Porsche workshops - Jaz in Wembley, and Wrightune in Wallingford. We asked the proprietors to try and list every issue that they had seen more than once. We hope it will provide a useful checklist when viewing a car, but would recommend a professional inspection by an Official Porsche Centre, or a recognised independent Porsche specialist. Most genuine sellers have come to expect this, and be wary of any that will not agree to it.

The Porsche 111 Point check is reasonably priced (c£170), and (once passed) will enable you to obtain a warranty on cars up to the 9<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its registration or 125000 miles. A more comprehensive and far more detailed check by an inspection specialist such as Peter Morgan, for example, may be a better option if you are less concerned about the Porsche warranty – or you could always have both!! Many independent Porsche specialists also perform PPIs, and can carry out additional tests such as cylinder leakage tests and diagnostic checks.

This checklist is intended to outline the additional checks you would make on a car apart from the usual ones normally expected – V5C, MOT, HPI check, paint condition, interior condition, panel gaps, marks, scuffs, oil leaks etc.

<b>Exterior</b>		
Front PU (Bumper)	Often repainted as they are very susceptible to stone chips, but look for dents or splits which are more difficult to repair. A re-spray typically costs around £250	
	Look in the air ducts at the front, and check the radiators. Look for an accumulation of debris in the corners, which can soak up water and rot the radiators.	
Luggage Compartment	Unclip the front carpet trim (2 black plastic stud nuts and 2 trim studs) and peel back the carpet. Look for panel damage or replacement panels that might indicate a front end impact. Note that the sealant used at the factory on panel joints is a light caramel colour.	
	The C2 comes with an inflated space-saver spare wheel, stored vertically in the front compartment. On C4 versions it is deflated - under the floor carpet, and should come with a compressor to inflate it. There should also be a jack and basic toolkit. Make sure the toolkit contains a towing eye and the locking wheel nut key.	
Door Latches	The door latches on the 'B' pillar can move slightly, causing the paint to crack and corrosion can set in. A black plastic spacer was introduced to solve this problem in 2000. Note that Porsche will not rectify any rust in this area under the 10-year anti-corrosion warranty.	
Rear PU	Again, these are often repainted due to chipping and minor scratches – check for splits and cracks that could indicate more serious damage.	
Cabriolet Top	On Pre-facelift cars the rear plastic screen is prone to cracking across the middle unless the 'Boxster chop' is performed (while the top is half-way through its drop, run your hand horizontally across the rear window to ensure an even fold). A replacement plastic window will cost approximately £250 and a replacement hood around £750 fitted (non-Porsche)	
Rear Spoiler	The rear wing should automatically deploy at 75mph and retract again at 37mph to aid cooling, and down-force. It can also be activated by means of a switch on the fuse box cover in the driver's footwell. Make sure the spoiler works correctly. The rear wall is prone to splitting at the folds, but a new wall can be fitted for around £80. If the car has a fixed rear spoiler (eg GT3 bodykit, Porsche AeroKit etc) the rear spoiler raising mechanism is disabled.	

<b>Interior</b>		
Climate Control	Make sure to check that the air-con blasts freezing cold air at its lowest setting. Air conditioning problems can be expensive to rectify. Common faults are corroded radiator matrices (see above – c£500) or the filter/dryer canister (c£150).	
Doors & Windows	The doors should open and close smoothly, and the windows should drop a few millimetres as you lift the door handles. If the windows do not drop as you open the doors, the culprit is likely to be a micro-switch in the door switch assembly that may need replacement (c£125).	
Windscreen	The windscreen of all 996s are prone to delamination (milky white effect) in the corner of the 'A' pillars and bonnet. This can often be replaced courtesy of your insurance company, subject to paying the excess (c£50).	
Ignition Switch	It is not uncommon for the ignition switch to fail. The plastic barrel can crack, preventing the switch from returning to its 1 <sup>st</sup> position once the engine has started. Also the contacts in the switch can break, causing strange electrical faults. (c£22 part cost).	
Centre Console Storage Bin	The hinge on the console is prone to breaking, but there is an easy and cheap solution which costs around £18 in parts.	
Engine and Luggage compartment opening levers	On pre-facelift cars the larger mechanical levers on the driver's side sill are prone to scuffing. The replacement parts cost around £150	
	The electrical systems of the 996 are generally very reliable, but check all switches and controls perform their correct function.	

<b>Engine (also see Notes)</b>		
Oil Pressure	When hot: At least 1.0 bar at idle 4.0 to 5.0 at 4000+ rpm	
Temperature	When hot: slightly over the 80°C marker	
Oil Filler Cap & Tube	Don't be alarmed by a light coating of mayonnaise coloured residue in the cap or tube. It is quite common, and usually worse in cold weather, and if the car has been used on short runs.	
Coolant & Oil	Look for traces of oily residue in the cooling water. This could be a sign of a leaking head gasket, or much worse. Walk away from the car and don't look back!  Also look at the oil on the dipstick. Any traces of white foamy substance (water/oil emulsion) and you should also start walking!	
Coolant Expansion Tank	These are prone to cracking and pinholes. Look for staining of the engine bay panels below the tank. Not too expensive to replace at around £250.	
Idle	Should be a steady 680-700 rpm when warm. Some 996's suffer from a slightly lumpy idle, particularly when cold. A severely erratic idle could be caused by a fault in a Variocam solenoid (c£400), MAF sensor (c£150) or Ignition Coil Pack (c£30 each)	
Rear Main Oil Seal	It is no secret that this is a common problem with the M96 engine. It first shows itself by a dampening of the area at the bottom of the engine at the joint between the crankcase and transmission. In virtually ALL cases the worst that will happen will be the odd drip of oil on the garage floor. Most owners will wait until the clutch needs changing and replace the seal at that time. Multiple failures have been recorded, but they are rare. Tiptronics appear to be less prone, but not immune, to the problem. Cost when doing a clutch change is an extra £20 or so, otherwise it is a £300-400 job.	

Startup	Don't be alarmed if there is a rattle at engine startup from cold. This often happens before pressure has built up in the hydraulic valve lifters. It should disappear within 5 seconds or so. Occasionally, you may see a puff of oil smoke from the exhaust at startup. This is common, but should disappear after about 10 seconds, and should only happen infrequently, ie. Once in every 30-40 starts perhaps.	
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<b>Transmissions</b>		
Manual	Check for smooth operation and changes. Note that when cold the change from first to second gear can be slightly stiff, but this should disappear when warmed up. Listen for noises when accelerating and on a trailing throttle. All parts are now available for manual transmissions, so they can be repaired rather than replaced (as was the case until December 2006).	
Tiptronic	Check for smooth changes (up and down) when in automatic and tiptronic mode. Check both tip switches on the steering wheel are working, and also check the tiptronic display in the instrument cluster operates correctly. At present, internal transmission parts are not available from Porsche, but some independent specialists can source them and repair rather than replace the transmission. Tiptronic transmission has proved to be very reliable.	

<b>Running Gear</b>		
Suspension	A clonking sound when driving slowly over bumps may be heard. This usually means a worn anti-roll-bar drop-link (c£30 each). Creaking sounds often indicate a worn lower suspension control arm (c£150 each).	
Brakes	The brake disks are prone to corrosion, particularly the inside faces of the rear discs. It is surprising how bad they can get without being able to feel anything unusual through the brake pedal. (c£120/pair plus fitting)	
Tyres	Tyres should be worn evenly across the tread. Tyres should be of matching brand across axle (preferably all four corners) and should all be of equal 'N' rating. Uneven wear suggests geometry problems (c£150-250 for a 4-wheel alignment). Tyres – 17inch F/R cost from £110/£130, and the optional 18inch F/R cost from £120/£180.	

<b>Documentation</b>		
VIN Number	The VIN (Vehicle Identification Number) is located in three places: behind the base of the windscreen on the passenger side, on the driver side door-catch panel and on the front bulkhead in the luggage compartment to the left of the battery. Check out the VIN Decoder on the FAQ pages.	
VIL Number	The VIL (Vehicle Identification Label) can be found in 2 places: A white sticker under the bonnet and a white sticker found in the 'Guarantee and Maintenance' booklet. The country code will signify for which market the car was made, and C16 signifies the UK. A missing VIL under the bonnet could suggest the car was involved in an accident requiring the bonnet to be replaced. A missing VIL from the 'Guarantee and Maintenance' booklet could suggest a duplicate booklet and/or a personal import. Check out the Option and Paint Code lists on the FAQ pages.	
Service History	A full service history is very important when considering a 996. Expect the car to be serviced at an OPC for the first 2-3 years (the warranty runs for 2 years), thereafter any well known independent will do. The 996 needs to be serviced every year or 12,000 miles, and has to be serviced at an OPC or an approved centre so as to not invalidate the warranty if you buy one. Check the stamps in the service book.	

## Notes

Until recently, Porsche tended to treat the engine and transmissions as 'sealed units' and in the event of problems would replace them rather than repair them if faulty. Some parts of the original 3.4 engine are no longer available. An example of this is the intermediate shaft, whereby it is now necessary to replace not only the shaft (with the new strengthened shaft) but also the crankshaft. However, independent specialists have recently come up with less costly solutions if an engine or gearbox has failed out of warranty.

The collapse of the top edge of one of the cylinder walls is a rare but costly problem with the M96 engine block, which seems to be less common in the 3.6 than in the 3.4. In almost all cases it is the centre cylinder (of either bank) affected, usually happening between about 15,000 and 50,000 miles. This is thought to arise due to a lack of rigidity between the block itself and the integral Lokasil liner. The problem manifests itself with cross-contamination of the engine oil and coolant, followed by excessive steam coming out of the exhaust. If the coolant header tank has an oily residue then you definitely have a problem. If the car does have a cylinder block failure you can buy an exchange re-manufactured engine from Porsche (around £8,000+fitting) or a second hand unit (around £3,500) from a specialist dismantler. Another option would be to go for a Silsleeve conversion from Oxfordshire based Autofarm (around £8,000+fitting) which uses a re-engineered crankcase with specially designed liners and a redesigned drive on the intermediate shaft. However, Hartech in Bolton are probably the most innovative rebuilders of these engines, and have come up with some very cost effective solutions for repairing and strengthening the weak points of the engine.

Another rare problem is with intermediate shaft bearing failures leading to engine failure. A modified intermediate shaft with a larger end bearing was introduced in 2001, making these engines less susceptible, but not immune, to the problem.

You have to remember that Porsche manufactured in the region of half a million of this series of engines, and the huge majority have performed flawlessly. Whilst it is a serious issue if it happens to you, the extent of the issue can be distorted by reading the forums. No one ever joins a forum to report that they have had no problems at all!

Prices quoted are approximate (02/07), and from independents, including fitting unless stated.

Thanks are extended to Wrightune and Jaz for their help in compiling this checklist.  
[www.wrightune.co.uk](http://www.wrightune.co.uk) and [www.jazweb.co.uk](http://www.jazweb.co.uk)

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