



PORSCHE 914

Minor 1972 changes to an excellent but still homely and overpriced 2-seater

AS YOU CAN SEE from the photo at the bottom of the page, the 1972 edition of the Porsche 914 doesn't look any different from the 1971, and that's a disappointment. Commercially, it's too much to expect of a manufacturer to amortize its body dies in less than two years, but we were hoping for at least a mild reworking of the uncharming front end. The Porsche 916 cover car is, in effect, a restyling of the 914, and its more aggressive, brutal lines are one direction to take, if not the refinement the car deserves.


We say "deserves," because in every other way the 914 is an excellent piece of machinery. The VW 411 engine, with modifications to run on 91-octane fuel, still makes itself known audibly, but less so, while the performance is very good. We're still amazed by the gearing, with first and second being low enough for really strong acceleration, third a good all-around gear, and fourth and fifth permitting cruising at very moderate engine speeds—and moderate noise—for a 1700-cc unit. You can't get any noticeable acceleration in fourth, let alone fifth, but third, which can be used up to 72 mph, solves most passing problems. The shift linkage is noticeably better than in previous 914s we've driven; it does not seem to be redesigned but rather more carefully assembled and adjusted. Though now satisfactory, it's still not a joy to use, especially in comparison with the new 911 pattern, as on the E model tested in this issue. (On the 911, reverse is now below fifth on the right, rather than above first on the left, so that the lowest four gears are in the conventional arrangement.)

Surprisingly, the specifications for the 1972 engine list the same 8.2:1 compression ratio; power and torque are the same. The spark curve was the alteration. The minor modifications don't show up at all in the acceleration figures, which are unchanged: 0-60 mph in 13.9 sec, ¼-mi in 19.2, top speed 109 mph. Fuel consumption, however, is about 10 percent greater; we recorded 22.5 mpg compared with 25.5 in our 1970 test. But since the engine now accepts regular fuel, running costs will be almost the same and the 914's immense (for the car's displacement) 16.4-gallon tank gives it an excellent normal range of 360 miles and a potential cruising range of 450.

The spacious, comfortable interior is slightly changed for 1972, with new fresh-air vents, at each side of the dashboard, that work very effectively. The wiper and washer controls are now on a steering-column stalk, 911-style. The passenger's footrest is gone but the seat has been made fully adjustable fore-and-aft. Interestingly, the specification sticker under the hood describes the car as a 2+1! The 914 is certainly wide enough to squeeze in a third person but the space between the seats is occupied by a small bin for miscellaneous loose items. One *could* fit a small cushion in there. . .

As before, the 914 takes care of two people extremely well, with a high comfort level resulting from the combination of roomy interior, good seats, low noise level at cruising speeds and first-class weather protection from the convenient lift-off roof panel. Storing it in back doesn't use up much of the car's generous both-ends trunk capacity, double that of most two-seaters.

There's nothing new to say about the handling and braking, which are excellent and give the 914 claim to the Porsche name. So reassuring is the car that ambitious maneuvers are taken in stride, in fact become almost routine. It's a car for the really enthusiastic driver.

We were going to say "of moderate means", but the sticker price on our test car gave a suggested retail price, not including tax and license, of \$4545.50. Of this, \$409.47 is Federal Excise Tax and surcharge, but the optional "appearance" group (vinyl-covered roll bar, dual-tone horn, chromed bumpers, fog lights, pile carpeting, 5½J rims, 165-15 radials and leather-covered steering wheel) is \$311, and the tinted glass and retractable antenna (apparently being installed as standard, though ostensibly optional, equipment to several German cars, whether or not radio is fitted) add \$73 and \$46 respectively. Definitely not a bargain even before the current pricing situation, the Porsche 914 is going to see continued competition from the Datsun 240Z which, of course, has its own proportionate price increase. The 914 has its open-air qualities going for it—despite the decreasing quality of the atmosphere, it's still fun to drive an open car on occasion—and, not to be discounted, the name PORSCHE. 

GORDON CHITTENDEN PHOTO

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