This Porsche plug-in SUV is a pricey dayglo antidepressant on wheels



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- This dayglo assault of orange and volt green is the (deep breath) 2020 Porsche Cayenne Coupé Turbo S E-Hybrid. It’s the top-of-the-range Cayenne and also a plug-in.
  Jonathan Gitlin
- You can tell the Cayenne Coupé from a normal Cayenne when it’s in profile—the roofline has been dropped at the C and D pillars.
  Jonathan Gitlin
- I don’t think I captured it very well with a camera, but from some angles the Cayenne Coupé is rather good

looking.
Jonathan Gitlin

- There isn’t quite enough battery capacity to get all the way from my house to Mama Chang on battery power alone.
  Jonathan Gitlin
- The houndstooth interior trim comes with the Lightweight sport pack. The adaptive front seats are brilliant, as is the racetex-covered steering wheel.
  Jonathan Gitlin
- Only the tachometer is a physical gauge. The 50 sign on the left screen is because this car is actually Euro-spec, imported ahead of US-spec customer cars so journalists like me could try it out.
  Jonathan Gitlin
- Apple CarPlay runs as a window in the infotainment system.
  Jonathan Gitlin
- You can option the back seat as either two seats, like here, or as a three-seat bench.
  Jonathan Gitlin
- This was a good way to see a sunrise.
  Jonathan Gitlin
- Parked by the shore on Chincoteague Island, ready to see a rocket.
  Jonathan Gitlin
- The Minotaur IV carried a National Reconnaissance Office payload into orbit.
  Jonathan Gitlin
- A delay to the launch meant stopping on the way home to take part in a briefing. The Cayenne Coupé handled that admirably.
  Jonathan Gitlin

The car you picture when someone says “Porsche” probably isn’t an SUV. Yet these days, most of the vehicles that Porsche builds are SUVs. Last year, it sold nearly 100,000 Macans and more than 92,000 Cayennes. Add up all the 911s and 718s and

Panameras across the same 12 months and you only get 88,000.

I offer these numbers to say that SUVs keep the lights on at Porsche. And when the company's engineers are called upon to build one, they make sure that it's packed full of Porsche attitude. It's the same attitude that has spent decades proving that, actually, you *can* put the engine behind a car's rear wheels and still make a safe-handling sports car. A Macan or a Cayenne has to also be a Porsche as much as it is an SUV. If you just want German luxury, you'll find it cheaper—and more luxurious—at Audi, BMW, or Mercedes-Benz.

But if cheap German luxury is what you're looking for, the 2020 Porsche Cayenne Turbo S E-Hybrid Coupé is definitely not the SUV for you. It's the most expensive Porsche SUV you can buy—a base price of $164,400 before one hits the notoriously expansive, expensive options list. It's an awful lot of money for a car, whichever way you slice it.

Unlike with the BMW X5 and X6, the transformation from regular Cayenne to Coupé doesn't really impinge on the back seats in terms of headroom, in part because Porsche dropped the rear seat by more than an inch. There's no third row in any Cayenne, but there is ample leg room in the back for the second row of seats, which can be moved forward or back by 6.3 inches (160mm). You can adjust the rake of the seatbacks or fold them down for carrying more cargo (going from 17.6 cubic feet/498L to 50.8 cubic feet/1,438L). The back seat even proved to be an acceptable temporary office complete with laptop-charging USB-C ports.

We've seen this powertrain before

Mechanically, this plug-in hybrid is identical to the not-coupe version that Managing Editor Eric Bangeman briefly drove last year. The same powertrain is also found in the Panamera Sport Turismo Turbo S E-Hybrid—presumably Porsche needs to include 670hp (500kW) and 663lb-ft (900Nm) just to carry

around all the letters in those name badges.

A 4.0L twin-turbo V8 provides 541hp (404kW), and that's joined by a 134hp (100kW) electric motor, mounted between the V8 and eight-speed gearbox. (This is yet another vehicle that uses ZF's very good 8HP automatic transmission, and yes, you are all owed an article about that sometime soon). The electric motor is powered by a 14.1kWh battery pack, which provides an EPA range of 12 miles (19km). I actually got more than 15 miles (25km) on a full charge, or a morning's worth of city-dweller errands. As it turns out, 100kW is enough for a big SUV if you're sticking to city streets with a 25mph limit. And the cognitive dissonance of driving something so outrageous (-looking, -costing, and so on) but cleanly and quietly is a warm and happy one.

Silently gliding off fetching the groceries is but one of the Cayenne Coupé's party tricks. A snap decision to see a rocket launch one morning took me out to Chincoteague Island, a trip that revealed the Turbo S as a great cruiser and accomplished on the back roads. Again, the official EPA estimate of 18mpg combined (13.1l/100km) turned out to be rather pessimistic—my four-hundred-mile day trip was more like 23mpg (10.2l/100km).

Oh boy, it's fun to drive

Most of the powertrain's torque goes to the rear wheels under dry conditions, and rear axle steering turns in the opposite direction to the front wheels at speeds under 49mph (79km/h), which contributes to the Cayenne Coupé's sense of agility. The computer-controlled antiroll bars also help, as these stiffen in milliseconds when the computer that oversees everything starts to detect some lateral acceleration. It's best in Sport Plus mode, which gives the most immediate mapping for the accelerator pedal, the most driver engagement, and the best noise. (It also charges the battery when you're off-throttle.)

In fact, I'd go as far as to recommend this Cayenne Coupé over

the top-spec turbo hybrid Panamera as a driver’s car. Not just because it feels like it weighs less, but because the elevated driving position gives you more situational awareness as a driver. I’m sure I’ve written this before, but it is remarkable how something with a curb weight of 5,673lbs (2,573kg) can feel so light and nimble to drive. (Actually, our test car was a few pounds lighter, thanks to the $11,570 Lightweight sport package, a box worth ticking just for the spectacular houndstooth fabric.) Few people need this much car, and few people can afford it. Which is a shame, because after driving it for a few days it left a huge smile on my face, and I wish more people could also have that experience. Money can’t buy happiness, but it can buy a dayglo antidepressant on wheels.

Listing image by Jonathan Gitlin

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