

MODEL FILE 44 · MODERN CLASSIC · PORSCHE · THE M96 FILE

PORSCHE 911 (996 CARRERA)

M96 3.4/3.6 · 300/320 PS · 1998–2005 · C2 · C4 · TARGA · 40 JAHRE

THE MODEL IN BRIEF

THE FAMILY

This file: Carrera 3.4 (996.1, 1998–2001, M96.01, 300 PS) · Carrera 4 3.4 · Carrera 3.6 (996.2, 2002–05, M96.03, 320 PS) · Carrera 4 3.6 · both Cabriolets · Targa (from 2002, glass sliding roof) · and the 40 Jahre 911 anniversary car (2004, 345 PS X51 kit, 1,963 units). Not covered, per the register: GT3 (Model File 39), Turbo and GT2 (Model File 40). The 996.1→996.2 step: revised front, interior, and the engine — with consequences below.

THE M96 REVOLUTION

The biggest technical upheaval in 911 history: water-cooled, new crankcase architecture, integrated dry sump, distinctly lighter. And with it came the best-known modern Carrera themes — IMS, bore scoring, RMS, AOS — which is why this file reads differently from every air-cooled file before it: the M96 is not led as a robust core with aging periphery, but as an engine whose PURCHASE-DECIDING checks sit inside it.

THE GATEKEEPER DOCTRINE

The register's doctrine, straight from the dossier: the 996 Carrera is not fundamentally unreliable, but it demands a more thorough PPI than nearly any other Carrera generation — and the decision falls on THREE points: IMS status (original or retrofitted?), bore-scoring endoscopy, and a documented oil-change history. IMS and borescope are defined as OBLIGATORY GATEKEEPER CHECKS: no other point has comparable influence on total risk. Clean, documented, unremarkable — then the 996 is a technically convincing, comparatively affordable entry into the 911 world. Missing — then even a polished car is an economic risk.

THE GATEKEEPERS

IMS · THE BEARING

The most important point of the entire file — with one refinement from verification: the risk sorts by BEARING TYPE more than by "early". MY1999 (and part of 2000–01) run the DUAL-ROW bearing with a low recorded failure rate ($\approx 1\%$ in the Eisen class-action record): from 2000–01 the SINGLE-ROW bearing took over — all 3.6 cars through 2005 — with failure rates reaching 8% under warranty per the same record. So the highest-risk cohort is the late 3.4 and every 996.2, not the earliest cars. Symptoms: metal debris in the oil, noises, failure without warning. A documented LN Engineering, EPS or equivalent retrofit (€2,000–4,000, usually with the clutch) makes a car distinctly more attractive: IMS_STATUS, IMS_UPGRADE and IMS_INVOICE are mandatory fields — the invoice, not the claim.

BORE SCORING · THE
BORESCOPE

The second gatekeeper: above all the 3.6, high mileage, short-trip life, rarely driven warm. Symptoms: ticking, oil consumption, SOOT ON ONE TAILPIPE SIDE ONLY, piston slap, power loss. The doctrine is absolute: ENDOSCOPY BEFORE PURCHASE — not optional, BORESCOPE_DONE is a gatekeeper field. The downside math explains why: a scoring revision runs €15,000–30,000+, which exceeds many asking prices. Elevated oil consumption alone proves nothing — but it is the warning signal that makes the borescope urgent rather than routine.

THE KNOWN-ISSUE LEDGER

RMS & AOS

RMS (rear main seal): very common — oil drops between engine and gearbox, not automatically critical, but documented: many cars were re-sealed during a clutch change, and the invoice belongs in the file. AOS (air-oil separator): the classic 996 point — heavy white smoke, crankcase vacuum, rough idle, high oil consumption: not engine damage, but frequent (€600–1,200), and a failed AOS can mimic far worse diagnoses — which is why it is tested, not guessed.

COOLING SYSTEM

The plastic coolant expansion tank ranks among the most frequent age defects of the model: checked at every car. Water pump: typical wear (€800–1,500) — play, noises, seepage. Thermostat, hoses, front radiators (leaves, corrosion, stone impacts) complete the block: the cooling system is priced as a system, not as parts.

COILS, VARIOCAM &
ELECTRICS

Ignition coils: very frequent — heat, age, cracked bodies, misfires: the maintenance doctrine renews them preventively. Variocam: fundamentally reliable — solenoids, timing, fault memory. Electrics, honest age: window lifters, ignition switch, the airbag wiring under the seats, central locking. Interior wear is its own line: dissolving soft-touch coating, seat bolsters, cluster pixel faults, climate panel.

INSPECTION ZONES · DRIVETRAIN & CHASSIS

GEARBOXES & C4

Manuals: robust — second-gear synchro checked cold. Tiptronic: very reliable — the oil-change history is the question, not the design. Clutch: normal wear assessment, frequently already replaced with IMS work. Carrera 4: no real weakness — front differential, propshaft, boots checked. None of these belong on the known-problem ledger, and the file says so.

SUSPENSION, BODY &
ORIGINALITY

Suspension at twenty-plus years: practically always due — control arms, drop links, top mounts, dampers: age, not disease, itemized and priced. Rust: well protected — screen frame, jacking points, doors, underbody checked: corrosion is usually damage- or neglect-caused. Originality: many cars were modified — suspension, wheels, exhaust, steering wheel, radio: documented or priced for return to stock, ORIGINALITY_SCORE carries the weighting.

FACTORY ACTIONS · VERIFIED SEPTEMBER 2026

THE RECORD

The dossier verifies cleanly: NO model-shaping recall series exists — and the famous themes (IMS, bore scoring, RMS, AOS) were never recalls at all: they live in the field record and the Eisen class-action settlement, which is precisely why the PPI, not the VIN check, is the instrument on this model. The verified US record: 00V109 (MY2000): instrument-cluster software could show an incorrect fuel level — the car could run out of fuel: reprogrammed, letters April 2000. 04V070 (MY2003): front seat backs below strength standard — seats replaced, cross-line with the Boxster. Clean sheets: MY1999, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005. The VIN check still runs — it just closes fast.

MARKET POSITION & COST FRAME

STATUS

The most affordable entry into the 911 world — and a two-tier market: cars with documented gatekeeper status (IMS papers, borescope, oil history) trade in a different class from visually identical risk cars, and the gap is the revision cost. Manual coupés, clean 996.2 cars and the 40 Jahre edition lead the collecting interest. Bands follow the transaction dataset in the usual round.

COST FRAME & MAINTENANCE

Working magnitudes, not quotes (Sep 2026): annual service €1,000–2,000 · IMS retrofit €2,000–4,000 · clutch €2,000–3,500 · AOS €600–1,200 · water pump €800–1,500 · scoring revision €15,000–30,000+. Maintenance doctrine: annual oil with the FILTER CUT OPEN and read for metal, endoscopy at higher mileage as routine, coolant changes on schedule, coils renewed preventively.

8%

Single-row IMS failures under warranty in the Eisen record: the gatekeeper is not folklore

2

Gatekeeper checks — IMS papers and the borescope: nothing else moves the risk like these

€30k+

The scoring downside: a revision exceeds many asking prices — endoscopy is not optional

Sources: Porsche factory data (M96.01/03, 300/320 PS, 40 Jahre 345 PS X51/1,963 units, family structure); IMS bearing typology and failure rates per LN Engineering's definitive guide and the Eisen class-action record (dual-row ≈1%, single-row up to 8% under warranty), verified September 2026; NHTSA record — 00V109 (MY2000 fuel-level software), 04V070 (MY2003 seat backs), clean sheets MY1999/01/02/04/05, no engine campaign; scoring, RMS, AOS, cooling, coil and age patterns per the dossier and named specialist sources. Cost figures are MI working magnitudes; market bands follow the transaction round.