



2026 Northwest Passage, Fall Version: Porsches, People, and the Roads Between

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There is something about a parking lot full of Porsches that makes introductions easy. Maybe it is because there is always a story behind the car. What are you driving? How long have you owned it? What did you have before it? And, eventually, inevitably: Have you ever been pulled over in it?

That was more or less how our four-day Northwest Passage adventure began on September 17th.

Our first evening started at the Best Western in Lebanon, with a meet-and-greet, hors d'oeuvres, drinks, and a room full of Porsche enthusiasts preparing to spend the next several days exploring some of the best roads Oregon and Northern California have to offer.

It did not take long for the conversations at our table to turn toward cars. From there, we somehow progressed to everyone's best stories about encounters with law enforcement - tickets received, tickets narrowly avoided, and enough accompanying explanations to keep the table laughing.

Then came talk of Porsche tours in Europe: driving different Porsches through beautiful European countryside and staying at memorable destinations along the way. Around our table, at least, it seemed to be a shared bucket-list item.



One couple we met was planning to continue south after the Northwest Passage to their home in Cave Creek, Arizona, where they would leave their Porsche and join the local club so they could participate in events there as well. It was one of the first indications of what would become increasingly apparent throughout the trip: these weren't simply people who owned Porsches. They were people who genuinely enjoyed driving them.

Before we could do that, however, those of us new to the Northwest Passage received our orientation, covering the protocols and expectations for the days ahead. A tutorial on the app Ride with GPS navigation system followed, and with that, we were officially ready.

DAY ONE: A COLORFUL CONVOY TO THE COAST

After a comfortable night's sleep, our first official driving day began with two necessities: breakfast and coffee.

Fortunately, a Dutch Bros. was only about 1.2 miles away, followed by a

buffet breakfast back at the hotel. Then came the morning drivers' meeting, with the appropriate reminders: drive safely, look after one another and, most importantly, have fun.

Soon, the parking lot began to empty.

One of my favorite sights of the entire trip came almost immediately. Looking ahead and behind, there was a long procession of Porsches—and seemingly no two were the same color. Different generations, configurations and personalities stretched down the road like a rolling Porsche color chart.

It was magnificent.

The day's route eventually carried us from Drain toward Bandon, mixing sweeping roads with smaller country lanes. We occasionally found ourselves behind slower traffic, including a truck pulling a camper that temporarily dictated our pace. But even that became part of the experience. Sometimes slowing down gives you a

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chance to stop focusing on the next corner and actually look around at the country you're driving through.

One moment in particular made the slower pace worthwhile: At a crossroads, a boy of perhaps 10 sat in the passenger seat of a car beside his mother. As the Porsches streamed past, he waved furiously at us, completely captivated by the parade of sports cars in different colors, shapes and sizes. You could see the excitement on his face.

It made me think of Foreigner's "Juke Box Hero"—only instead of hearing one guitar that blew him away, this kid was hearing the sound of Porsche engines passing one after another.

Many of us probably remember being that kid.

The afternoon also brought a sobering reminder that even experienced drivers need to respect unfamiliar roads. The sweep car left the roadway on one of the small country roads and came to rest against a tree. Most importantly, nobody was hurt. It was an unfortunate incident, but also a reminder of why the safety discussions and driving protocols matter.

By evening, we were safely in Bandon, gathering at Lord Bennett's Restaurant for drinks, dinner and another chance to socialize. After a full day behind the wheel, conversations that had begun between strangers the night before were already starting to feel like conversations among friends.

DAY TWO: COASTAL DRIZZLE AND CALIFORNIA ROADS

Friday morning greeted us with classic coastal weather: gray skies, drizzle clinging to the cars and wet pavement under the tires.



At the 9:15 drivers' meeting, Group 1 - the more spirited group - proved particularly popular. Apparently, we had quite a few people who had come to the Northwest Passage intending to exercise their Porsches.

Our destination for lunch was SeaQuake Brewing in Crescent City.

After a wonderful drive south, we settled in for pizza and salad. Being a brewery, SeaQuake naturally offered plenty of tempting beer and cider choices as well. The event leadership appropriately reminded everyone that drivers needed to save the alcohol for later, leaving the navigators free to explore the menu. My navigator—also known as my wife Cindy—discovered a marionberry cider that was particularly good.

Then it was back to the cars.

The afternoon delivered exactly the kind of roads many of us had hoped to find when we signed up for the Northwest Passage. When traffic opened up and the two-lane roads stretched ahead, the Porsches came alive. There is a particular satisfaction in driving a car designed for corners on a road that seems designed for the car.

The miles disappeared quickly.

Around 4:30, we arrived at the historic Benbow Inn in Garberville, California. What a destination!

The Benbow has an old-world English-European character that feels almost castle-like in places. The beautiful grounds, architecture and welcoming staff immediately made it feel less like a hotel stop and more like a destination in its own right.

My wife and I stayed in one of the cottages just off the



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main patio. It was spacious, comfortable and included a large, beautiful bathroom. For anyone traveling through the area who hasn't experienced Benbow, it is certainly worth remembering.

That evening, we gathered outside for dinner on the patio. The temperature was perfect, the weather cooperated and even the bugs seemed to have received instructions not to bother the Porsche club. Dinner included chicken and a beef stroganoff that was closer to beef and gravy over mashed potatoes. As someone who loves potatoes and gravy, I considered this an improvement.

A light, layered cake finished the meal, accompanied by wines that paired nicely with dinner. My wife particularly enjoyed the coastal red.

It was one of those evenings when everything seemed to work: the location, weather, food and company.

DAY THREE: THE NAVIGATOR'S DAY OFF

Saturday offered something we hadn't enjoyed much of yet: no schedule.

No alarm demanding immediate action. No rush to pack. No drivers' meeting waiting for us. No need to be standing beside the Porsche at a particular minute.

It was, as I began calling it, the navigator's day off.

The forecast could hardly have been better—sunshine and temperatures climbing into the upper 70s. We had several options. There was a planned opportunity to hike among the redwoods, while others were considering taking advantage of the



weather and pointing their Porsches toward Mendocino and Fort Bragg.

When the choice is between mosquitoes on a hiking trail and miles of Northern California curves viewed through a Porsche windshield, some of us find that decision easier than others.

The best part was that there really wasn't a wrong choice.

One couple had planned to hike until an arthritic knee changed their plans. Instead, they headed toward the Avenue of the Giants. My wife, meanwhile, was hoping she might locate a pickleball court somewhere along the way.

And several of us contemplated simply doing what brought us here in the first place: driving.

By this point, another change occurred. The people we were making plans with were no longer simply "the other drivers."

They were our new friends.

That may be one of the understated pleasures of a multi-day event like the Northwest Passage. You sign up because of the cars and roads, but somewhere

between the drivers' meetings, lunch stops, dinners and parking-lot conversations, a group of Porsche owners starts becoming a community.

The free day also provided a welcome change of pace. If I could make one adjustment to the tour schedule, I might push the morning departures back by about half an hour. The existing schedule worked, but an extra 30 minutes would have made the mornings a little more leisurely.

Then again, perhaps getting up early is simply the price of admission when there are several hundred miles of good roads waiting.

DAY FOUR: NORTHBOUND

Sunday morning arrived too quickly.

We departed the Benbow Inn early and without breakfast, because brunch awaited us farther north in Eureka.

The roads continued to provide a little of everything.

Some stretches were freshly paved and absolutely marvelous—a smooth ribbon of pavement seemingly begging for a Porsche. Others were rough enough to remind you of every suspension component connecting your seat to the road.

Traffic occasionally fragmented our procession, and some of the planned stops simply weren't large enough to comfortably



accommodate so many cars. The group broke apart several times, but there was something reassuring about continuing down the road and eventually spotting another Porsche ahead.

We might not all have been together, but we were all headed toward the same place.

The run from Eureka toward Ashland covered more than 200 miles and provided one final but substantial driving day. At one point I became separated from the group and put a little too much enthusiasm into catching back up.

My wife waited until after we had rejoined everyone to inform me that my interpretation of “catching up” had been slightly more aggressive than hers. Navigator feedback is important.

Eventually, we rolled into the Ashland Springs Hotel a couple of hours ahead of schedule. Those staying overnight could check in, while the extra time gave everyone a chance to explore Ashland.

My wife and I wandered across the street and discovered an Irish pub with live music, a dancer and, after a long day of driving, some very welcome refreshments.

By about 5:20, it was time to head back to the hotel and get ready for our final social gathering and dinner.

I had a ribeye waiting for me.

MORE THAN THE MILES

A Porsche is an unusual thing.

For most of us, it isn't transportation in the ordinary sense. There are easier ways to get from one hotel to another. There are more comfortable ways to cover hundreds of miles. There are certainly cheaper ways, but none of those alternatives would be quite the same.

The Northwest Passage gave us coastal drizzle and brilliant sunshine, smooth pavement and roads that rattled our teeth. We encountered traffic, empty two-lanes, small towns, redwoods and the Pacific Coast. We ate well, laughed often and put a considerable number of miles underneath our tires.

But the image I keep returning to is that little boy waving as Porsche after Porsche passed his window.

Perhaps he saw what we sometimes forget: These cars are special.

Not because of what they cost or the badge on the hood, but because they make us want to go somewhere. They make us take the long road. They give complete strangers something to talk about over hors d'oeuvres, and a few days later those same strangers are making plans together.

We came to the Northwest Passage to drive our Porsches. We left with stories, memories, and new friends.

And somewhere along a country road, perhaps there is now a 10-year-old boy dreaming about the day when he'll have a Porsche story of his own. ■

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