

Porsche Experience Center—Japan

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY ROBB HUNT



For the past seven days my life had consisted of the stifling city hum of Osaka and Tokyo, suffocating crowds on the public subways and the swarms of tourists at Shibuya Crossing. But all of that faded away when we saw the inviting countryside racetrack, an eager sport exhaust and 7,000 RPMs on the Cayman ready to scream down the back straightaway. Like so many parents, having a soon to be college graduate makes you realize that life is moving fast (whether you like it or not) and that they are beginning their own life independently from you. So, when my lovely wife suggested I surprise my son at Christmas with his bucket list trip to Japan as a father/son adventure before his career takes hold, I jumped at the chance knowing that such an adventure might not be as easily possible in the years to come.

Neither of us had ever been to Japan before this trip and we were both very excited to see and eat all that this incredible country had to offer. We focused our trip on Japan's two largest cities- Osaka and Tokyo. It is hard to imagine just how big Tokyo is, but the greater Tokyo area is over 5,000 square miles and is home to 37 million people. We used our feet and Japan's transit system throughout our 12-day trip for transportation and, needless to say, our feet took a beating.

Our trip was planned for the peak tourist season in Japan which is Spring, where people from all over the world descend to see their world-famous cherry blossoms blooming. It was absolutely beautiful while we were there and we had planned many tourist attractions for our trip. But one, in particular, was a happy reprieve from the usual; the Porsche Experience Center just outside of Tokyo. I hadn't taken into consideration how much walking we would do on our trip which made sitting in a Porsche for a couple of hours even more enjoyable than it already was.

From the time he was a little boy, my son has always been fascinated by the inner workings and mechanics of things which is what led to him getting a degree in Cyber Security. I've always liked things that go fast and I have a vivid memory of seeing my very first Porsche. It was love at first sight. A dark navy blue

930 that I couldn't take my eyes from. Even after more than 40 years after that "love at first sight" experience, I can still see it in my mind. It was a work of art, a fast machine that was calling out to me.

As my son grew up, he too developed a love for cars, and we've made many memories by going to car shows and working on our own cars in the driveway together. The Porsche 930 might have been my first love but, as I matured, I realized that what I really wanted was a 911, a weekend car that my wife and I could take wine tasting in the beautiful Willamette Valley. In 2019 my dream finally came true when I found a 1999 996 manual Cabriolet. With the convertible top down, hair tossed by the wind and sun on our faces we feel like we are on a mini vacation every time we take her out for a drive.

Now, we didn't travel to Japan specifically for the Porsche Experience Center but since neither of us had ever been to one we thought it would be the perfect activity to get us away from the usual tourist attractions. It did not disappoint.

The PEC has all the latest Porsche models available to drive around their track so my son and I each chose a car that we had not driven before, the 718 Cayman with PDK. Every driving experience comes with a personal instructor and guides you through some driver's courses before hitting the track. These were similar stations to some of the High-Performance Drivers Education classes I have taken that PCA offers to its members - kick plate, wet

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*For myself,
the machine
and the
unfamiliar
landscape
in front of
me driving
the world's
best marquee
around the
track was a
thrill.*

track drifting, autocross, etc.

I thought that I had successfully requested a fluent English-speaking instructor, but I should have had my tech savvy son register us because I forgot to check that box. However, our PEC instructors' English was far superior to my Japanese and their expertise on these cars and teaching me how to handle them to their desired potential was amazing.

They have some very impressive models available to choose from at the PEC including both the GT4 RS and GT3 RS models, Manthey editions, Macans, Cayennes (for which they also have an off road course) and the 900+hp Taycan Turbo S, which they let my son take around the track.

As I sat there, ready to enter the track with my Cayman, I was very grateful that we had taken a break from endless skyscrapers, sore feet and throngs of people to experience an exhilarating countryside track just outside Tokyo. For myself, the machine and the unfamiliar landscape in front of me driving the world's best marque around the track

was a thrill. All I had to do was just point the car and go. It's not too often Porsche owners get the opportunity to take our cars out on the track and, while that is fun, this frees us from the anxiety that often comes when it's our own precious cars barreling down the raceway.

The PEC had a lot to offer besides the driving experience, including a souvenir shop with all things Porsche, display cars, memorabilia, high tech driving simulator room, and a coffee shop. My son and I enjoyed a relaxing lunch at the 906 Restaurant after our driving sessions which included a nice variety of American and Japanese menu choices using local ingredients. The entire PEC experience featured Porsche quality and high-level customer service I have grown to appreciate.

So, if you are in the same neck of the woods as a PEC on your next vacation, I highly recommend enjoying all that Porsche can offer from the single best sports car marque in the world with ten locations worldwide including two US locations in Los Angeles and Atlanta. ■