

Summer Northwest Passage 2026 Ah, Grasshopper: Prepared You Are

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If you drive a manual transmission, you probably know right where the engagement point is on your clutch pedal. That engagement point and the interplay with your engine speed are really the most important concepts you learn. At least that's what I think after learning how to drive my first manual transmission at age 44.

With great excitement, my husband Cody and I were ready to start our first day of driving on the June edition of Northwest Passage. We had purchased this 2006 911 Carrera 4S Cabriolet specifically for club multi-day drives. I learned how to operate a manual on this very car over the last year. My first lesson was from the original owner, who kindly and patiently taught me for two hours so that we could drive it back together from Reno.

We're ready to start our morning before the group meet-up by driving over to the best-reviewed local coffee shop in downtown Lebanon. Engine started, sunglasses on, depress the clutch, shift into first, a little gas, and ease back into that engagement point. Let's try that again, ease back into that engagement point. Release it further, nothing. Gulp? Further back, and stutter, almost engine died, but no stall, thank you very



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much, and we're moving finally. "Uh, Cody, I think we have a serious problem." I come to a stop again and try to figure out, was that a one-time thing? It most certainly wasn't. It was as if the clutch had left the party.

Jim Goetsch is the first victim of my plea for help back inside the hotel. We strategize, and in the end, I call the experts at Matrix when they opened. After some checking on the brake fluid reservoir to make sure we're not leaking it out through the clutch cylinders, it's deemed safe to drive to the shop. The bad news: It's probably just a failed clutch since that part is still original and has 81,000 miles of wear.

If we had to choose between a failing clutch at the beginning of the trip or a failing clutch in the middle of that same trip, I'm going to pick the beginning every time. So now it's decision time: we have the whole trip ahead of us but also need to limp this car back to Portland over 1.5 hours away. If you know Jim, you know he exudes positivity, "You've got to go back for your other car and join back up with us tonight; you can still have a great Northwest Passage!"

So that's exactly what we did. We quietly sulked past the morning driver meeting and I clumsily shifted our way all the way onto the highway. I cried maybe a little on the inside when we encountered stop-and-go morning traffic with a broken clutch, but we got our 911 to Matrix.

Replacing the 911, we are very fortunate. We



picked up my daily driver, a 2025 Taycan 4S we call Grasshopper. Some might tell you at this point of the story we hoped to drive the Northwest Passage on an electric dream and a prayer. I'd heard the stories about EVs on the Northwest Passage, and maybe you have too. They go something like this: charging is hours out of the way, they missed a meal, the range was close, etc. But here was my concern: Was the Taycan all shiny and washed like I prepared the 911? No. Did it have the door graphics lovingly aligned and applied without bubbles? No. But don't you worry, I peeled those off the 911 and sloppily applied them to the Taycan,

second big differentiator that made our Taycan switch easy was hotel selection, all of which had charging on-site so that we started each morning with a full up to 300-mile charge. Thanks to the Northwest Passage committee for choosing those hotels if it was a tiny factor in their decision-making.

The only segment of the Northwest Passage that gave me pause was crossing between 101 from Eureka to I-5 and Ashland through northern California. There weren't really any good charging options on that route, so we needed to make sure

we had plenty of charge to make it with some to spare. There are great apps to check a plan like that; one of them, A Better Route Planner (which is now owned and designed by Rivian), said we'd get to Ashland with 5%, and the built-in Porsche app planner said 23%. Apparently, my settings on the first app weren't right, because wouldn't you know we arrived with 23% just like the Porsche app predicted? Maybe Porsche does know the Taycan best.

To ensure we had enough spare charge leaving Eureka, we did break away from the driving group for the

*Were we stuck
on the side of
the road walking
for hours to the
closest charger
for a bucket of
electrons?*

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Jeramie and Mindy Shane.

only time on Day 4, about 1.5 miles out of our way to a Tesla Supercharger to top off. And wouldn't you know that it took us SO LONG to charge that by the time we returned to the group brunch spot, Cody and I had the pleasure of waiting 20 minutes in line behind other members for our turn at the buffet!

And I might have cheated a little at the Ashland Springs Hotel. Their overnight charging infrastructure was installed by a now-bankrupt company called Sema Connect, and the payment terminal was failing with our perfectly functional credit cards. But thanks to that long-time EV experience, I used my Sema Connect network card that's kept in a folder full of cards I had ordered over a decade ago, and that did authorize, and wouldn't you know, we never received a bill.

Cody and I both loved a new charging network provider called Ionna we used on the way home at two locations, and they finally get it: canopies and nice layouts near convenience stores just like gas stations. We'll be choosing them and their ultra-fast chargers every time we see them on our trips now. The Taycan proved its beast-mode charging capability of up to 320 kW. That's the equivalent power of 8 homes at once.



We enjoyed the driving, sights, and most of all the people in our first Northwest Passage. We didn't set out to be the one unique EV on the tour, but we needed to be when our lovingly cared-for and never-ending money-pit of a 911 wanted to take vacation at the same time we did. ■