Halfway Round the World in 78 Days

19/10/2026 Le Mans, Gulfblue, Steve McQueen. Even in Tahiti, these names evoke dreams. That's reason enough to send a specially configured 911 on a roughly 23,000-kilometer journey – quite possibly the longest sea voyage any Porsche has ever taken before its very first drive.

Jérôme Lety smiles knowingly: "Paul is quite a character. About 20 years ago, when the very first Porsche Cayenne arrived in Tahiti, Paul somehow heard about it. He waited down at the harbor in Papeete, our largest city, followed the Cayenne like a shadow all the way to the Porsche dealership, arrived at exactly the same time, and bought it on the spot." In the meantime, Paul Pouvil owns several Porsche models: Cayenne, Macan, and 911. But today is special. Today he is taking delivery of a truly exceptional 911.

Jérôme Lety heads German Motors, Porsche's importer for French Polynesia. That also makes the energetic man in his mid-sixties something of a record holder: No Porsche dealership is farther from Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen than Centre Porsche Polynésie Française on Route de Ceinture, Papeete, Tahiti. As the crow flies, that's roughly 18,000 kilometers. For perspective, Tahiti, along with the legendary

islands of Bora-Bora, Huahine, Mooréa, and Rangiroa, forms part of French Polynesia, a territory the size of the European Union situated in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, far from virtually everything else, south of the equator.

Paul Pouvil's 911 Carrera GTS (992) is therefore among the rare Porsche sports cars whose life story already includes nearly 12,400 nautical miles before it has even turned a wheel under its own power. That's about 23,000 kilometers before its first drive.

Traveling in the belly of a ship

The lion's share of those kilometers is logged on board the 'Höegh Trove', one of the world's most advanced vehicle carriers. The journey begins in Bremerhaven, northern Germany, on February 20, 2026. The ship heads west into the Atlantic, then turns south along Europe's western edge and Africa's Atlantic coast, crossing the equator before rounding Cape Agulhas at Africa's southern tip into the Indian Ocean.

From there it sails toward Australia, follows the continent's southern coastline eastward into the Pacific, then turns northeast before docking in Auckland, New Zealand, on April 28. For the remaining 4,000 kilometers, the 911 disappears into a container aboard the 'Capitaine Kupe'. It departs on April 29 and arrives in Tahiti on May 9 at two o'clock in the afternoon. After around 1,872 hours, the journey is complete. An astounding 78 days after leaving Bremerhaven, the 911 rolls into Papeete's Motu Uta container terminal.

The 20-minute drive uphill to the Centre Porsche is little more than a hop by comparison. Jérôme Lety has prepared everything. The parking space reserved for the 911 Carrera GTS is outlined in light blue on the Showroom floor. At the front is an inscription: "Gulfblue. Porsche Exclusive Manufaktur. 1st in French Polynesia." Behind the car hangs an oversized photo of Steve McQueen in his racing suit together with his famous line from *Le Mans* , perfectly suited to his globe-trotting newcomer: "Racing is life. Anything before or after is just waiting."

The sports car is finished in Gulfblue, the pale-blue shade made famous by the legendary Porsche 917 driven by McQueen as Michael Delaney in the 1971 racing classic. "I'm a Steve McQueen fan," confesses Lety. "I love that movie and Porsche's Le Mans legacy." He put together this highly individual 911 Carrera GTS together with Porsche Exclusive Manufaktur in Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen. The exterior color, leather upholstery and interior, silver stitching, matching seat belts, titanium exhaust system, and carbon wheel accents all pay tribute to the legendary 24 Hours of Le Mans race.

Lety presented the design to his oldest customer and now close friend, Paul Pouvil. He knew Pouvil shared that passion right down to the smallest detail. Pouvil didn't hesitate for a second. He wanted exactly this car – as quickly as possible. Or at least as quickly as the long transoceanic shipping route would allow.

At last the day arrives. On a radiant morning in May, tropical air rests on the skin like silk as Pouvil arrives at the Centre Porsche for his first drive. His watch strap? Gulfblue. His shirt? Peach with a hint of orange, echoing the paintwork of McQueen's 917. Perfect harmony. Pouvil is 60 years old, full of energy, expressive with his hands, and boasting a mighty, infectious laugh.

80 km/h speed limit

He climbs into the driver's seat and starts the engine: The distinctive sound of the new 3.6-liter boxer engine with T-Hybrid technology immediately delivers the first goose bumps moment. Carefully, with Lety in the passenger seat, he eases the car out of the Showroom and heads toward the ferry that will carry the 911 to Mooréa. Because, as hard as it may be to believe, the neighboring island is even more beautiful than Tahiti. And unlike Tahiti, its coastal road isn't plagued by constant traffic jams.

The drive to the ferry, however, is stop and go all the way. This raises an obvious question: Why would you need a Porsche with around 398 kW (541 PS) and 610 Nm of torque to drive the 114-kilometer coastal road around Tahiti Nui or the 60 winding kilometers of the narrow asphalt strip around Mooréa? French Polynesia's speed limit is 80 kmh on rural roads, briefly rising to 90 kmh on one short stretch on Tahiti. "I love the design of the 911 when it's gleaming in the sun," Pouvil says enthusiastically. "The engineering fascinates me. I admire the perfection of every detail. Just look at the stitching on these leather seats! And then there's McQueen! Le Mans! And ..." He steps on the gas, ever so briefly. The 911 instantly surges forward as the boxer engine growls from behind. Above 2,000 rpm, the corners of Pouvil's mouth curl upward, and his eyes smile along with them. "Any more questions?"

Frigate birds circle above the ferry terminal while cars, fuel trucks, and semis crowd the docks – yet there isn't the slightest trace of hurry or raised voices. Serenity seems to be a cardinal virtue here. Marshals in reflective vests direct traffic with unwavering calm and warm smiles. The ferry sets course westward. The Pacific glows in a rich, inky blue. Ahead, Mooréa rises from the horizon in lush green, crowned by dramatically jagged mountains. It looks almost too cinematic to be real.

Less than an hour later, the ferry docks in Vai'are Bay. From here, the 911 Carrera GTS heads north before circling the island counterclockwise. Within minutes, the coastal road climbs perhaps 50 meters above sea level. Anyone who doesn't stop the car to admire the eastern view is truly missing out. The lagoon extends below like an immense, shallow opal shimmering in brilliant shades of blue, green, and turquoise. Perched above it, the Gulfblue 911 seems to borrow one of these magical colors for itself. Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen has become part of a Pacific symphony of color.

Exotic blue meets green

The narrow, twisting road threads through one village after another. To the right: rocky shores, white beaches, and outrigger canoes resting on wooden supports a meter above the water. Coconut trees and the dazzling colors of the lagoon. To the left and overhead: tropical greenery. Pouvil repeatedly pulls

over to take photos. He loves this island and is proud of its beauty. Sooner or later, every stop turns into the same scene: People gather around him and his 911. Everyone wants a picture with the exotic blue sports car and its owner. The enthusiasm, especially among younger men, knows no bounds. And whenever the 911 surges ahead accelerating like a rocket thanks to Launch Control, cheers erupt behind it.

Pouvil settles into the rhythm of the road: "It's like telepathy between the car and me. The steering, the brakes, the accelerator pedal. Everything responds instantly. Direct, precise, beautifully controllable, but never harsh." His personal highlight awaits at the southern end of Opunohu Bay. That's where the road to Belvédère d'Opunohu begins, the island's famous lookout with spectacular views north across Mooréa and its two deeply carved bays. Better still, the road first crosses an ancient volcanic crater before climbing in a succession of sweeping curves and tight hairpins to an elevation of 240 meters. These are kilometers to savor: Accelerate, brake, turn in, and flow cleanly through every bend.

Later, on the ferry back to Tahiti, Lety explains what makes owning a Porsche in French Polynesia so special. "French Polynesia is a very small market. We sell between 20 and 30 Porsche vehicles each year. That's a good number for us, and it's absolutely essential that every customer is happy. If someone gets a flat tire in the middle of the night, they might call me directly, and I'll send out one of our mechanics. Then maybe I'll run into that customer at a restaurant down by the harbor over the weekend. Everyone's sitting together, and they'll tell me a story. In our small community, news like that spreads immediately."

That's how things work in Tahiti. And before the ferry has even reached the main island, Jérôme Lety and Paul Pouvil are already discussing their next project. The Gulfblue 911 Carrera GTS still lacks the orange accents typical of Porsche's race cars from the 1970s. "No problem," Lety laughs. "We'll come up with something stylish and understated. And soon. But without rushing. After all, we're in Tahiti: La vie est belle."

From Zuffenhausen to Tahiti

The 911 Carrera GTS carries a touch of Le Mans character with its Paint to Sample finish in Gulfblue, the iconic hue of Porsche race cars from the early 1970s. The GTS sets sail from Bremerhaven, traveling by ship through the English Channel and then across the Atlantic, following the west coast of Africa southwards. Leaving the Cape of Good Hope, it continues across the Indian Ocean and, after a stop in New Zealand, reaches its destination: Tahiti in French Polynesia. This French overseas territory in the South Pacific covers an area of around four million square kilometers, roughly the size of the European Union. By area alone, Porsche Polynésie Française is therefore one of Porsche's largest sales territories in the world. Yet across its 118 islands and atolls, the total population is only around 280,000 people.

Info

Text first published in Christophorus Magazine, issue 420.

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Consumption data

911 Carrera GTS (WLTP)*: Consommation combinée (gamme): 10.6 – 10.1 l/100 km; Emissions de CO_2 combinée (gamme): 241 – 230 g/km; Statut [StandHeute]

*Further information on the official fuel consumption and the official specific CO_2 emissions of new passenger cars can be found in the "Leitfaden über den Kraftstoffverbrauch, die CO_2-Emissionen und den Stromverbrauch neuer Personenkraftwagen" (Fuel Consumption, CO_2Emissions and Electricity Consumption Guide for New Passenger Cars), which is available free of charge at all sales outlets and from DAT (Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH, Helmuth-Hirth-Str. 1, 73760 Ostfildern-Scharnhausen, www.dat.de).

Image Sublines

Path: Halfway Round the World in 78 Days/Images/img_3.jpg
Title: Paul Pouvil, Jérôme Lety, Director Centre Porsche Polynésie Française, 2026, Porsche AG
Subline: Inspired by Le Mans: Paul Pouvil and his friend Jérôme Lety, director of Centre Porsche Polynésie Française.

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Title: Porsche 911 Carrera GTS (992), 2026, Porsche AG
Subline: [ci:911-Carrera-GTS-992-II]

Path: Halfway Round the World in 78 Days/Images/img_5.jpg
Title: Tahiti, 2026, Porsche AG
Subline: A drive on Mooréa: It's a landscape reminiscent of Jurassic Park. The view to the north reveals an endless ocean. Hawaii, the nearest island in this direction, is 4,300 kilometers away.

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