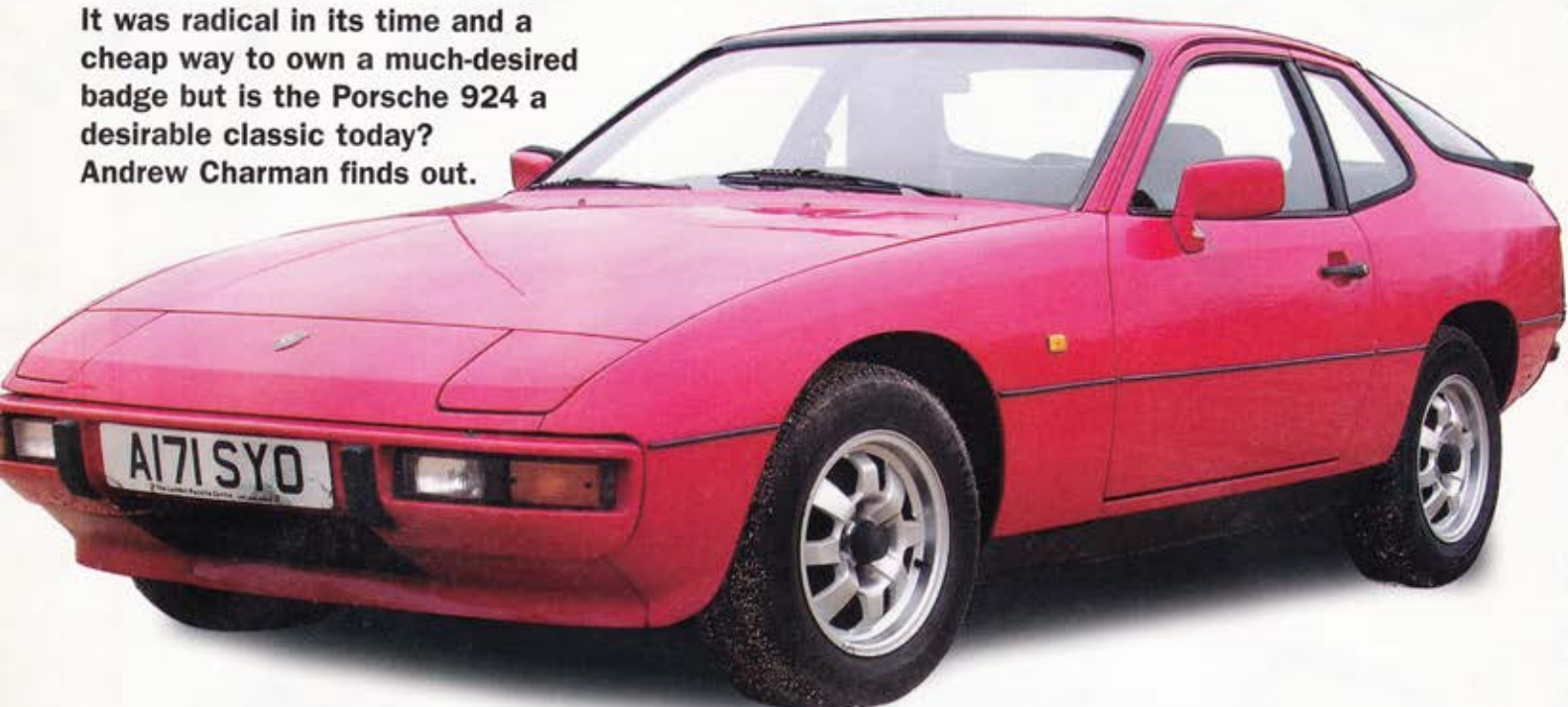


Porsche 924/924S

£500 to £5000

It was radical in its time and a cheap way to own a much-desired badge but is the Porsche 924 a desirable classic today?

Andrew Charman finds out.



The Porsche 924 is derided by many fans of the German marque, as not only was it very different to the renowned 911, it was a joint effort with Volkswagen, and for its power used a modified version of a 2-litre engine also fitted to VW's camper van.

Such collaboration, common today, was much rarer in the mid-1970s, yet Porsche and VW had been closely linked throughout their histories, and the 924 was in many ways a successor to the VW-Porsche 914 of 1969.

The 924 began life as a design for VW, which planned to launch it as an Audi but then decided that the project was too costly. Porsche bought it back to launch as its own much-needed entry-level 2+2 coupé. There were many VW components in the car, and it was built at VW's former NSU factory at

“Despite criticism by some journalists, the 924 proved popular”

Neckarsulm, with Porsche supervision. Fans of the marque were equally horrified at the move to a water-cooled front-mounted engine but with tightening emissions regulations in the USA the engineers feared Porsche's air-cooled motor would soon be uneconomic.

The 924 went on sale in 1976, hitting the UK a year later. Despite criticism by some journalists it proved popular and 50,000 had been built by 1978. Even German police used 924s. Meanwhile aftermarket tuners were giving the car more power with turbo and superchargers, and in 1978 Porsche responded with the 924 Turbo, offering 170bhp compared to the stock car's 125bhp.

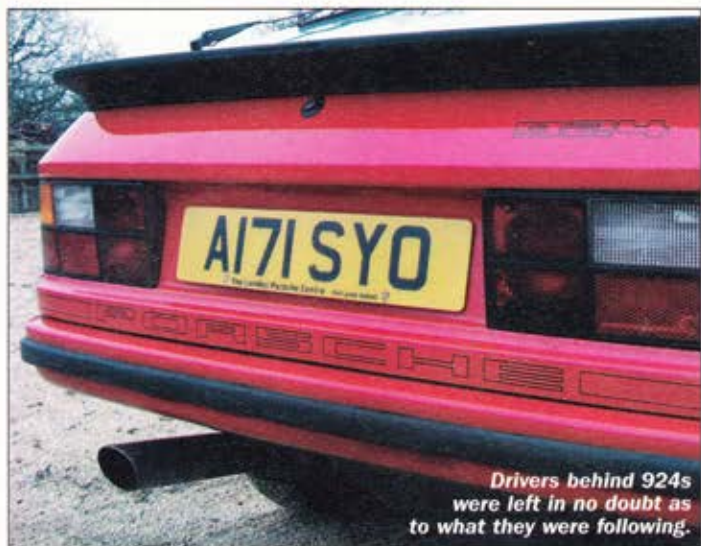
The 924 was steadily developed over the next few years alongside the 928, launched in 1978 with the same body shape but a 4.5-litre V8 engine. In 1982 Porsche filled the gap between the two with the 163bhp 2.5-litre 944. Also that year the Turbo was dropped and in 1985 the 924 made way for the 924S. This had the 944's engine and other parts but with power cut to 150bhp to ensure the more expensive car still sold.

Meanwhile Porsche boss Peter Schultz had been pressing on with his pet project, reviving the 911 and, while he succeeded, he also allowed Porsche to become reliant on sales in one market, the USA. When the global stock market crashed in 1987 Porsches became very expensive and sales plummeted, hastening the end of 924S production in 1988.

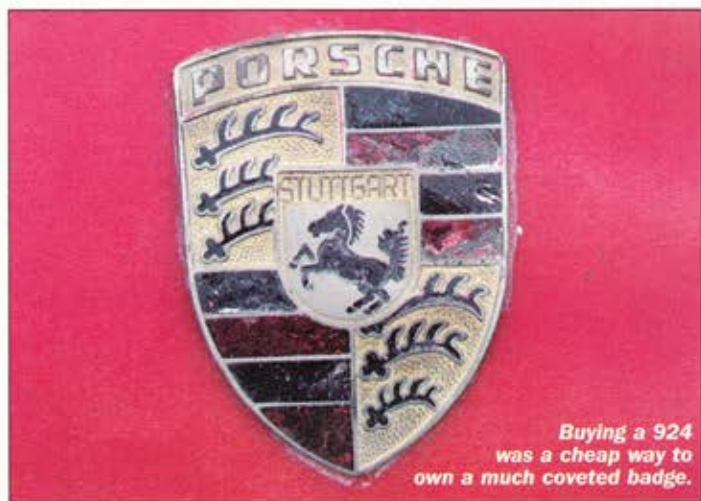
Is the 924 a good classic? Yes it is. It tours well and while not strong on luggage space it is an effective 2+2. Ignore badge snobs and you will enjoy a well-built, stylish car that will deliver many untroubled miles of motoring.



The 924 (left) and the later 924S looked very similar but underneath had several differences.



Drivers behind 924s were left in no doubt as to what they were following.



Buying a 924 was a cheap way to own a much coveted badge.



924 interior was not overtly sporty but comfortable for long-distance touring.

AT A GLANCE

- Radical Porsche which does not deserve its "VW kit-car" label.
- Not rapid but very solid, rust is unlikely to be a major problem.
- Parts supply easy either from Porsche dealers or specialists.

MEET THE SPECIALIST



■ **Andy Brown** runs the Sussex Porsche Store in Billingshurst, West Sussex. A love-affair with all matters Porsche led to the creation of the business. He bought his first car, a 944, when just 19. It was a rough example which he set about tidying up. At 21 he

was able to perform a similar task on his first 911.

Sussex Porsche Store came about in November 2002 when Andy bought out a Porsche breaker, intending to run the business part-time alongside his main job as a chauffeur. Plans changed in April 2003 when the Lexus he used for chauffeur work was run into and written off, so Andy went into Porsche spares supply full-time. Today Sussex

Porsche Store buys, sells and supplies parts for all kinds of Porsche – both cars in this feature are for sale. He hopes soon to move premises and set up a servicing operation.

Andy also puts his expertise to the test by racing a Porsche 944 – he finished fourth in the championship, one point off third, in his first season. He's a member of the Porsche Enthusiasts Club, which he describes as "very 924-friendly."

RIVALS

Mazda RX-7

Built: 1978-85

Values: £500-£4500

■ The original version of Mazda's Wankel rotary-engined coupé was considered by many the best. Today there are plenty about if you look and spares are available too, but that engine needs lots of looking after.



Datsun 260Z

Built: 1974-79

Values: £1000-£4000

■ Bigger of famed 'Z-cars' that established Datsun's sporting credentials. Far fewer built than Mazda but not too hard to find today with a little effort. Spares supply and ownership helped by very active club.



Lotus Elite

Built: 1974-80

Values: £1000-£3500

■ Very British sports car built at a time when Lotus F1 team was the one to beat. Usual Lotus reliability problems. Only around 2400 built but can be found today. Strong club support but can be pricey to look after.



DID YOU KNOW?

- Porsche never offered a cabriolet 924, but there were many aftermarket versions.
- Austrian Porsche fans Rudi Lins and Gerhard Plattner took both 924 and Turbo on 20,000 mile-plus endurance runs.
- A Porsche 924 Carrera GT Turbo won its class in the 1982 Le Mans 24 Hours, running on road legal tyres.



Galvanised shell makes rust a rarity but some points need close checking



1 Examine the underside. On 924s rust is not nearly the problem it is with older classics as all the cars had fully galvanised undersides and a minimum six-year corrosion warranty. After 1982 the cars were completely galvanised. Check for panel fit – 924 gaps are not tiny but they are even, uneven gaps suggest repairs. Look particularly at sills, as these can show corrosion especially on their rear edges. Check for evidence of crash damage and poorly carried-out repairs, these will more often show up in the engine and gearbox mounts.



2 Examine known areas subject to rusting. The areas around the number plate lights are often first to show corrosion, so look carefully and use a magnet to check for evidence of filler. Especially on early models look along the lower edges of the front wings and airdam. These easily unbolt for replacement but if this has been done ensure that the new panels are proper galvanised items. Door hinges are another prime rot spot on the earliest models while occasionally the metal around the windscreen will show signs of the tin worm – but even then only after many years of use.



3 Check around the doors. With the aid of a magnet examine above and behind the door handles for evidence of filler. A favourite thieves' trick is to punch a screwdriver through the skin at 45 degrees above the door handle which disengages the locking mechanism. Often the hole that results is merely filled with filler. Many owners fit armour plates to the door handles to prevent easy theft. They detract a little from the car's looks but offer piece of mind. Check the bottoms of the doors as these can sometimes show evidence of rust. Also check the door handles for easy operation – the handle triggers can jam and not spring back. These again are Audi items and are easily obtainable. While looking around here examine the hinges as these can rust, especially on early cars.



4 Check the bonnet area. The bonnet catches should show signs of regular greasing as neglect here leads to problems. Look at base of bulkhead under bonnet – this often fills with leaves which if left unattended can block drain holes and lead to corrosion. With the bonnet open look for small factory-applied rectangular stickers. If they are not present it suggests the engine bay has been painted and you need to find out why. Look under the battery tray for evidence of corrosion due to battery acid leaks. With the bonnet open look from passenger footwell forward under the fusebox – if you can see daylight, there is a hole under the battery tray which means corrosion that will need to be dealt with. Check around the heater on the bulkhead: it's sealed with mastic which cracks with age.



5 Check around the boot. Examine the rear hatch catches in similar fashion to those on the bonnet. Open the hatch then if possible ask the seller to close it – 924 owners know that it is essential to use both hands to avoid alignment and sealing problems which are caused by wear in the locating pins. In any case try to gauge the alignment by eye. Flaky paint on the upper areas of the hatch interior is common and easily rectified. Check the hatch seal for blocked drain holes which will cause water to be trapped inside the car. Look inside the boot area for factory stickers in similar style to on the bonnet. Examine the boot floor and spare wheel well closely, looking for deformation or repairs, which suggest the car has been hit from behind at some point.



6 Make general checks to the exterior. Examine the condition of all window sills closely. They are prone to perishing and cracking but are easily and inexpensively replaced. Check the sunroof seal – this often warps and leaks allowing rain water into the car, as can blocked drain holes in the sunroof gutter. Closely check older cars with manual sunroofs as the mechanism can wear, leaving a gap. Have a good look at the front bumper mountings – these are quite weak and even a low-speed impact will often break them. Also check out the headlights – the covers suffer greatly from stone damage and both these and the lenses themselves can be pricey. Check all the glasswork for stone chips or cracks – both the windscreen and rear hatch are large lumps of glass which will be potentially costly to replace.

“A favourite thieves' trick is to punch a screwdriver through the door skin...”



INTERIOR

Look for splits and cracks



7 Examine the dash.

The top of the 924 dash is exposed to sunlight and cracking is common but covers are available to smarten it up again. Steering wheels can suffer from the same fate. As for instruments, the layout is fairly standard and all enjoy legendary German standards of reliability – you should not suffer any problems but even if you do replacements are easily obtained.

8 Check the seats and trim.

The standard 924 trim was in leatherette material with cloth or velour inlays, and you will seldom find serious wear or damage. However front seats can be prone to splitting at their seams, but these are normally easily repaired. Look for broken door straps – replacements are cheap but fitting them is quite difficult if the bolts have seized. Gear lever gaiters are often split too.



LIVING WITH A PORSCHE 924

Trig Ellis

924S (his third 924)
 ■ Trig Ellis is now retired, leaving more time for his passion, Porsche 924s. He is Secretary of the Independent Porsche Enthusiasts Club.

Yet he was not a lifelong fan. For many years he ran company "boring cars," Ford Anglias and several Cortinas. Then he took a role without a car provided. "Having to go and buy a car made me more interested in them." He was looking for "a banger for the wife,"

when he saw a 924 for sale in the paper, having never guessed a Porsche was available at a price he could afford. "It was like seeing the light – within days our main car was demoted to my wife, I had the Porsche."

Four years on the 924 was sold, to Trig's son and he bought another. Worries over petrol costs saw this traded for a diesel Rover, but Trig soon realised his error, and he now has a 924S.

Trig's advice to anyone considering

buying a 924 is to "go buy it." He says they are reliable, and don't rust; "if you see a rusty one walk away as it hasn't been properly repaired." He advises joining the club, initially formed 11 years ago as the 924/944 owners club, and with many such owners still members today.

Trig sums up the 924 as a car you don't feel embarrassed in on the motorway today, and one that will still leave plenty of modern machinery in its wake.

PRICES

- A stock 924 needing serious work will cost £500 to £1000.
- A fair condition car, in good order, will cost around £1200 to £2500.
- For an absolute mint condition car, look to pay up to around £4000. Note that these are prices for stock 924s. For Turbos increase all prices by at least £500, and add another £500 for 924S variants.

INSURANCE COSTS

- Comprehensive, agreed value policies start at around £100 to £150. For high mileage or everyday use, premiums depend on driver's age, driving record and individual circumstances.

SERVICING AND REPAIRING

- 924 servicing is straightforward if a few basics are not neglected. Frequent oil changes are desirable or the cam spray bar can become clogged. Owners suggest cam belt changes at 36,000 instead of the 48,000 miles recommended by the Porsche factory. Bonnet and rear hatch pins need regular regreasing or they can easily seize.

PARTS PRICES

Prices from **Sussex Porsche Store** including VAT, excluding carriage

Engine 924 Short engine	£411.25
924 Long engine	£528.75
944 Short engine	£881.25
944 Long engine	£1116.25
924 complete cylinder head	£211.50
944 complete cylinder head	£381.88
924 meter head	£76.38
924 Turbo meter head	£105.75
Exhaust manifold	£52.88
924 Turbo manifold	£70.50
Fuel tank	from £70.50
Transmission Four-speed gearbox	£229.13
Five-speed gearbox	£440.63
Five-speed dog-leg gearbox	£528.75
Automatic gearbox	£381.88
924 Turbo gearbox	£464.13
Body and Chassis Door	£94.00
Bonnet	from £152.75
924 front wing	£58.75
924 rear wing	£94.00
924 tailgate	£117.50
Door glass	£29.38
Quarter glass	£23.50
Windscreen	£88.13
Headlamp pod (complete)	£64.63
Wheels 924 standard alloy (each)	£29.38
924 standard alloy (set)	£94.00
944 standard alloy (each)	£58.75
944 standard alloy (set)	£188.00

RUNNING GEAR

Vague steering a sure sign of work needed



9 Check the front suspension. Feel for vague steering on a road test – some vagueness is normal but a lot suggests wear to the u/v joint at the top of the steering column. Poor handling when at speed in right and left hand bends points to either accident damage or worn suspension bushes. A definite clunking noise on one side suggests the springs were not properly replaced with shrink-wrapped lower coils. While looking under the bonnet ask the owner to turn the steering vigorously from side to side, and check for play in the steering joint – replacement is time-consuming. Check the wheel for general play, as the 924 has a collapsible safety steering column which can partially snap in minor accidents and then is not replaced – in this state it could snap off... Front wheels on 924s are often badly aligned so check for uneven tyre wear.

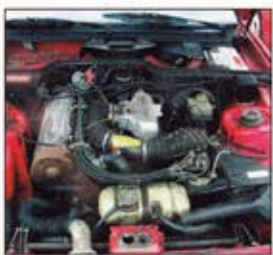
10 Check the rear suspension. Generally the rear suspension of a 924, consisting of semi-trailing arms and torsion bars, is trouble-free but you should carry out the same high-speed handling checks as for the front end, looking for signs of worn bushes or improperly replaced springs. Examine the dampers for leaks and/or wear and also look for evidence of wear in the rear wheel bearings as these are a weak point on all 924s. Check the anti-roll bar for damage or corrosion (the latter very rare) and also have a look at its mountings. While you are looking around this area, examine the tyres for uneven wear or damage.

11 Examine the brakes. A 924 combines a disc front end with drums at the rear, the Turbo and 924S have discs all round. Stock 924 brakes are VW Golf units, so obtaining spares is very easy. Front brake discs are prone to wear, check for scoring or other damage as the pads tend not to last very long. On cars with rear drums, check the adjusters on the backplate for evidence of regular greasing – neglect leads to seizing. Don't try to change the rear drum shoes with the car on a jack – the hub nuts are very tight and trying to lever them off can pull the car off the jack. Check all brake pipes for rot – especially over rear axles.

“The rear hub nuts are very tight and trying to lever them off can pull the car off a jack”

ENGINE & TRANSMISSION

Long-lasting engine looked after, serv



12 Check the 924/924 Turbo engine. Porsche chose a VW/Audi unit for these cars, modified the cylinder head and added fuel injection. Check the service history, as with regular oil changes these engines should achieve 150,000 miles without problems. Check log book for cam belt changes, they should be done at least every 48,000 miles, if they've been done at 36,000 it's a good sign, indicating a knowledgeable owner. The driver's side engine mount can give trouble – it should be the same thickness as on the opposite side. Obvious vibrations under power also suggest engine mount problems. Make usual checks for smoke. If car runs unevenly, look for cracks on the inlet manifold. If it misfires on start up and runs roughly, suspect the head gasket. Also check that turbo models have pristine service records.

13 Further engine checks and 924S unit. The 924S came with a 2.5-litre engine, basically half of the 4.5-litre V8 of the 944. Like the Turbo it is essential to see the service history of a 924S, but firstly ensure it is a true 924S engine, as some owners try to present stock 924s as S variants. The S has a longer cam cover with the word Porsche cast on it in large raised letters. Make all the same checks as for the stock 924. Especially check the state of the oil. Water in it may not mean head gasket dramas, as it can be caused by a failed seal on the oil/water cooler. Brown 'froth' on the dipstick or oil filler cap is another clue. On all 924s dirty oil leads to blocked holes on the cam spray bar and rough running. On all cars check the exhaust too, as these were not the longest-lasting components. Check all fuel pipes – they corrode over axles and are expensive to replace.



Check if properly Maintenance history vital

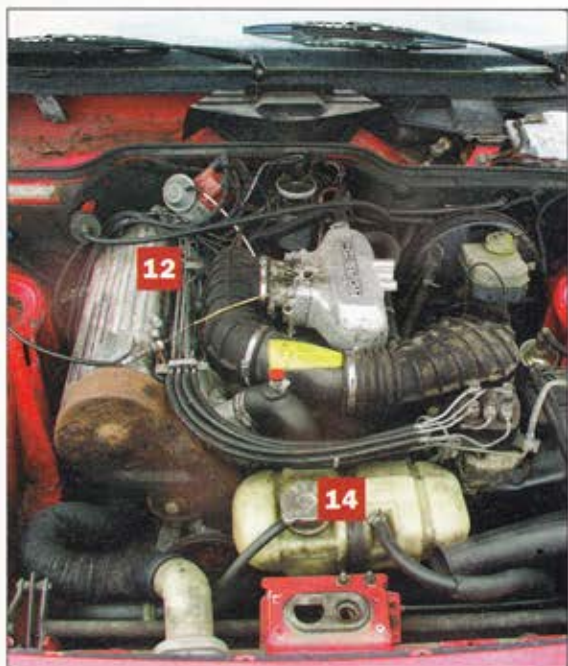


14 Check the electrical and cooling systems.

First turn the ignition on and check all the warning lights come on, and then go out when the car is started. While in the driver's seat ensure all the electrical items such as windows, mirrors, sunroof, lights etc work properly. Under bonnet, check condition of wiring loom – it sits close to exhaust manifold and wiring can get overheated, shorting out and causing a fire. Note that if you replace the battery, check the new one's height – slamming the bonnet down can result in a bit of a dent... The cooling system gives very few problems but check for the proper use of antifreeze with corrosion inhibitors as neglect here will cause cylinder head corrosion.

15 Check the transmission.

The earliest 924s had a four-speed manual gearbox sourced from Audi. The 924 Turbo launched with a five-speed Porsche 'dog-leg' 'box which was offered as an option on other cars. From 1980 all non-turbos got a five-speed Audi 'box as standard. Three-speed auto option is not desirable as it saps power. Older manual gearboxes can whine, caused by pinion bearing (above) or clutch spigot bearing wear. If the clutch needs changing, 924S versions cost more. Check for smooth synchromesh – on the 924S difficult gearchanges suggest a cracked rubber donut in the clutch. Listen for propshaft vibration – expensive to rectify.



The 924 engine may have been basically that used in a VW Camper van, but it was modified for its sporting application. The 924S got a bespoke Porsche unit.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

- **1972** Volkswagen commissions design of front-engined 2+2 coupé from Porsche, to launch as an Audi.
- **1974** VW tools up to build car but then cancels it on expense grounds.
- **January 1975** Porsche buys project back from VW.
- **September 1975** Porsche 924 debuts at Frankfurt Motor Show with 125bhp 2-litre engine, four-speed gearbox.
- **1976** 924 on sale in Germany and US, where emissions laws cut power to 95bhp.
- **February 1977** 924 on UK sale at £6999. Three-speed auto option.
- **1977** Lux version, tinted glass, alloy wheels, wider tyres, rear screen wiper and headlamp washers. US cars get more power (110bhp) and changed gear ratios.
- **February 1977** Launch of Porsche 928, shape of 924 but with 4.5-litre V8.
- **September 1977** Five-speed gearbox option, changes to brakes, twin anti-roll bars, carpet added.
- **November 1978** Porsche 924 Turbo launches, 170bhp, five-speed gearbox, uprated suspension, minor body changes.
- **1979** Five-speed 'box now standard in US models.
- **1980** New Audi five-speed 'box standard on all non-turbo 924s, chassis improvements.
- **1980** To allow racing at Le Mans, Porsche offers 924 Carrera GT. Bonnet air intake, deep front spoiler, larger rear spoiler, 210bhp turbo engine. 406 made, UK price £19,210.
- **1981** Repeaters added to front wings, more soundproofing, Turbo gets larger 18.5 gallon fuel tank, more power (177bhp).
- **1982** Launch of Porsche 944, 2.5-litre 163bhp engine. 924 Turbo dropped.
- **1983** New more spartan interior.
- **1985** 924 makes way for 924S, using detuned 150bhp version of 944 engine and its suspension and brakes.
- **1988** 924S dropped. Total UK 924 sales 11,270.

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Porsche 924 (924S)	
Engine	1984cc (2479cc) in-line four, ohc
Power	125bhp @ 5800rpm (150bhp @ 5800rpm)
Torque	121.5lbft @ 3500rpm (144lbft @ 3000rpm)
Transmission	Four-speed manual (five-speed manual), three-speed auto option, transaxle to rear wheels
Brakes	Front disc, rear drum (disc all round)
Suspension	Front: coil springs, MacPherson struts. Rear: Semi-trailing arms, torsion bars, telescopic dampers. Anti-roll bars all round
Wheels	5.5x14 inch pressed steel, alloy option
Tyres	165x14, 185/70x14 option.
Performance	Top speed: 125mph (133mph) 0-60 mph: 10.5sec (8.5sec)

WEIGHTS & MEASURES

Weight (dry) 2450lb

Height 50.0in



CLUBS SEE PAGE 113

- **Independent Porsche Enthusiasts Club**, 36 St Margaret's Drive, Chesterfield S40 4SX. Tel 01246 279358. Website www.tipec.org.uk, E-mail tipec2003@yahoo.co.uk.
- **Porsche Club GB**, Cornbury House, Cotswold Business Village, London Road, Moreton-on-the-Marsh GL56 0JQ. Tel 01608 652911, E-mail cluboffice@porscheclubgb.com, Website www.porscheclubgb.com.

THANKS TO

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