

When a passion for Porsche turns into friendship

02/11/2026 For Porsche owner Kirk Gittens, who was diagnosed with a terminal illness in 2024, a visit to Zuffenhausen brought him face to face with some of his heroes. It was a friendship formed four years earlier that helped him get there.

On the back of Kirk Gittens's mobility scooter are six words written in pen by Andreas Preuninger: "In case of doubt, flat out." For someone whose home is filled with Porsche memorabilia, meeting the head of Porsche's GT line was already the highlight of a visit to Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen. Now he has his handwriting on the back of the scooter he relies upon to get around.

He describes the visit as "Just the most incredible experience." There was a Porsche Museum experience, a factory tour and a look inside the hallowed halls of Sonderwunsch, Porsche's special requests division. But what will remain with Gittens, he says, is the welcome he received. "The whole Porsche community is more like an amazing family, the way they embrace my situation," he says.

Two years ago, the married father of one was misdiagnosed with an illness, told he had six months to

live, and had his driving licence revoked. Heartbroken, he reluctantly sold his 992-generation 911 Carrera. Six months later, when his diagnosis was revised to a slow progressive form of motor neurone disease (MND), he successfully fought to get his licence back for a three-year term. That same week, he bought his dream car: a GT Silver Metallic 991.2-generation 911 Targa 4.

“Having this car on the driveway, waiting to be driven – this was the reawakening I needed,” says Gittens. “Porsche to me is not a car, it’s a feeling and a way of life. It’s my passion.”

The 56-year-old, who travelled to Stuttgart with two friends and his wife, Ali, cannot walk unaided and increasingly struggles with speech. He shared his thoughts for this story in written messages. But for now, he is able to drive without issue – and those precious moments behind the wheel, he explains, enable him to reconnect with something familiar. “When I’m driving my Targa, I feel like the old me. It gives me a sense of freedom. I drive as much as I possibly can, enjoying every single mile.”

A friendship that started with Porsche

Gittens met James Vellacott, who organised the trip to Zuffenhausen, four years ago at ‘Porsches by the Lake’ – a charity event in the south of England, deliberately limited to 1,000 visitors, which Vellacott co-founded. Its purpose is to bring enthusiasts together, whatever Porsche they own, while raising thousands of pounds for charity each year.

The new friends agreed to go on a road trip. In May this year, they and their wives drove from the UK to France, covering more than 2,000 kilometres and raising awareness as they went for the Motor Neurone Disease Association, which supports people affected by the disease, campaigns for better care and funds research into treatments and – perhaps one day – a cure. Finding accessible places to stay was part of making it possible for everyone to enjoy the trip.

For Gittens, the friendship – and those he has made through the Porsche Club of Great Britain – have become incredibly precious. Their shared adventures have also supported a cause that has offered invaluable support to the Gittens family. Alongside the French trip, Gittens took part in a Porsche Club GB fundraising relay from northern Scotland to south-west England, covering legs between Porsche Centres across Britain. He says the combined total raised through his charity page and the club’s efforts has exceeded £23,000 (27,000 euros) for the MND Association.

A welcome in Zuffenhausen

In Zuffenhausen, Gittens found that the warmth he has felt at gatherings and on road trips extended to people he has long admired from afar. Vellacott had contacted Boris Apenbrink through his own connections as a Porsche customer, explaining that he hoped to bring his friend. Apenbrink, Director Product Management, helped make the visit possible.

It began with a personalised tour of the Porsche Museum. That was followed by a morning at the Sonderwunsch facility, where the friends were met by Apenbrink. Then came another surprise: Preuninger arrived. For Vellacott, watching the two men show his friend around and talk cars with him was the highlight. “It was quite overwhelming,” he admits. “There were tears in Kirk’s eyes, and I think we all felt it.”

The visit offered a close look at some extraordinary customer cars, and the craftsmanship on offer to bring customer ideas to life, followed by a factory tour to see how Porsche sports cars initially take shape. Some moments would remain unphotographed. “No phones, just amazing memories,” as Gittens puts it. Then there was the note written on the back of his scooter: a personal memento from someone whose work he has long admired.

Back home, Gittens is already looking forward to the next get-together with friends and another journey in their respective Porsche models. They hope to drive to Monaco, health permitting, and there are routes to plan, places to stay and more kilometres for Gittens to enjoy in his dream 911. “I honestly can’t wait to get back in my Targa,” he says, “and meet with my Porsche family at our next event.”

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



Julian B. Hoffmann

Managing Editor Porsche Newsroom
+49 (0) 170 / 911 2771
julian.hoffmann@porsche.de

Consumption data

911 Spirit 70 (WLTP)*: Fuel consumption combined: 10.6 – 10.4 l/100 km; CO_2 emissions combined: 240 – 236 g/km; CO_2 class: G

911 GT3 RS (WLTP)*: Fuel consumption combined: 13.2 l/100 km; CO_2 emissions combined: 299 g/km; CO_2 class: G

911 GT3 S/C (WLTP)*: Fuel consumption combined: 13.7 l/100 km; CO_2 emissions combined: 310 g/km; CO_2 class: G

*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).

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Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche Aktiengesellschaft
Porscheplatz 1
70435 Stuttgart