

The Porsche Cayenne Diesel quickly made a name for itself as a luxurious, agile, long-distance machine. And now its fan club wants to go all the way, asking, “How far can we get on a single tank of fuel?” An exciting question, which a *Christophorus* team set off to answer—along the Rhine river to the North Sea.

By
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Driving

Joy Ride on the Rhine



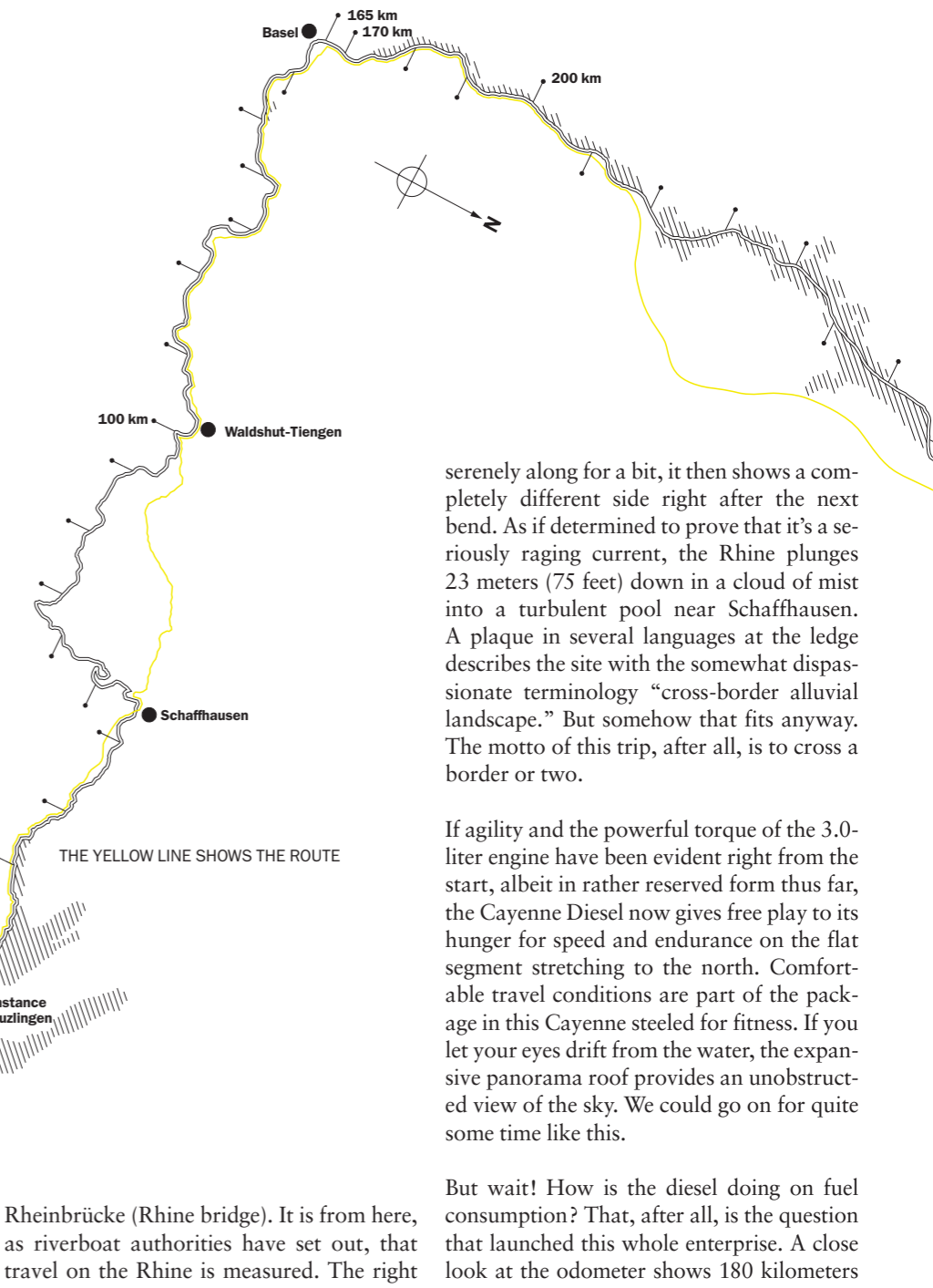


Mischa Stiefenhofer works at an independent filling station in the Swiss town of Kreuzlingen—by all accounts a neutral observer. But now he has to intervene. There’s a Cayenne outside at one of the pumps. “Stop! That’s diesel!” he yells. “I should hope so,” the driver answers calmly. A short explanation follows, and the attendant breathes a sigh of relief. Yes, a Porsche with a diesel engine. An SUV with an impressive 240 horsepower (176 kW) from a 3.0-liter, six-cylinder engine, and equipped with a 100-liter (26-gallon) fuel tank. “And how far can you get on a tank?” asks Stiefenhofer, to which the driver responds confidently, “I’ll keep driving along the river until the fuel signal sounds.” That’s the whole point of this trip, for which the destination is the road itself: Father Rhine will show the way. One hundred liters (26 gallons) is what a Formula One powerhouse needs for the first third of a race. The Cayenne Diesel is searching for a new standard.

Taking the Rhine as a flowing guide and chronicling the thirst and character of a diesel marathon runner is what we might call a sparkling idea. Stretching 1,324 kilo-

Off we go: In Switzerland, the Rhine is wild and romantic; after fueling up in Kreuzlingen and a last glance at Lake Constance, the trip odometer is set to zero

meters (823 miles), the Rhine is one of the longest rivers in Europe, originating far inland and way up in the Swiss canton of Graubünden in the shining waters of the Tomasee Lake (Lai da Tuma). But our special Cayenne distance test will begin a few hundred meters (about 1,000 feet) from the Swiss gas station, namely, on the bridge in the city of Constance known simply as the



Rheinbrücke (Rhine bridge). It is from here, as riverboat authorities have set out, that travel on the Rhine is measured. The right point, in other words, to set the Cayenne Diesel’s trip odometer to zero.

The first insight gained from this special test-drive, however, is triggered by the Cayenne’s inner workings. The automatic transmission newly programmed for this diesel, the six-speed Tiptronic S, shifts its gears so quickly, quietly, and effortlessly that the vehicle sprints and purrs along the bends of the Rhine as if on gigantic muscular cat’s paws. The river is equal to the challenge posed by this trial of strength. Meandering

serenely along for a bit, it then shows a completely different side right after the next bend. As if determined to prove that it’s a seriously raging current, the Rhine plunges 23 meters (75 feet) down in a cloud of mist into a turbulent pool near Schaffhausen. A plaque in several languages at the ledge describes the site with the somewhat dispassionate terminology “cross-border alluvial landscape.” But somehow that fits anyway. The motto of this trip, after all, is to cross a border or two.

If agility and the powerful torque of the 3.0-liter engine have been evident right from the start, albeit in rather reserved form thus far, the Cayenne Diesel now gives free play to its hunger for speed and endurance on the flat segment stretching to the north. Comfortable travel conditions are part of the package in this Cayenne steeled for fitness. If you let your eyes drift from the water, the expansive panorama roof provides an unobstructed view of the sky. We could go on for quite some time like this.

But wait! How is the diesel doing on fuel consumption? That, after all, is the question that launched this whole enterprise. A close look at the odometer shows 180 kilometers (112 miles), but for its part the fuel gauge displays only a desultory shift, having edged but a few millimeters to the left of “full.” We had thought we would see considerably greater movement by this time. But modern gauges are not known to stick. This relaxed trip with power-enhanced long-distance comfort enters an interesting new dimension beyond Wiesbaden. Here the Rhine turns from its northern direction toward the west, before heading northwest at Bingen. Embedded in this arc lies the Rheingau region, which leading wine experts consider one of the world’s ▶

best producers of Riesling. While it is tempting to test this assessment in detail, the Cayenne drivers will have to postpone the pleasure. There is some compensation in the form of a striking backdrop of vineyards, old fortifications, and narrow islands in the river, whose water here shimmers between gray-blue and dark gray.

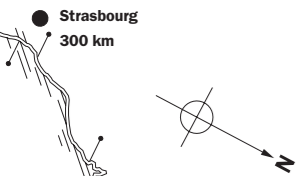
Attention turns every once in a while from the landscape to the Cayenne Diesel's trip odometer, checking somewhat critically now that 490 kilometers (305 miles) have been clocked. Yet the fuel gauge has moved only half-heartedly toward the halfway line. Are our expectations playing a trick on us?

"It's no wonder that you can go so far in this car," says Michael Schnaas dryly. Like a

hunter up on a deer stand, he sits in his glass cockpit at the wheel of a river ferry. He is the captain whom hikers and drivers turn to in order to cross the Rhine. "It's no wonder," he repeats, "if you take the car on the ferry." From Lorch across to Niederheimbach, it takes ten minutes to pitch across at right angles to the current. On passing the magical point of 555 kilometers (345 miles) along the Rhine—which like all the other markers takes the form of black and white numerals on a big concrete panel—some people may have a hard time believing that this was once a quiet and peaceful place. A single word will do it, a single cliff, and the saga to go with it—the Lorelei. Tourists from around the world come to an eager halt at this bend in the river in the hope of spotting the legendary siren. But, too bad, our itinerary does not allow for a golden-haired distraction; no drop of fuel will be wasted. The same applies to the "Deutsches Eck" headland in Koblenz, where the Mosel joins Father Rhine.

Gradually the progress of the fuel gauge becomes critical. The kilometer counter now shows 750 kilometers (466 miles)—

Switching sides: Taking the ferry to Niederheimbach and then ascending to the viewing area above St. Goar—new vistas open up



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Less Is More

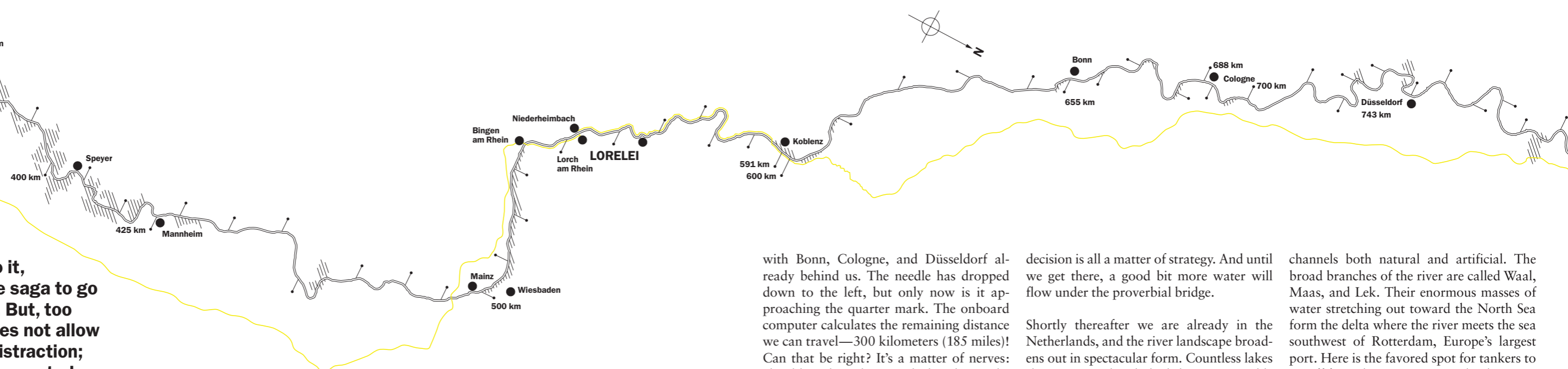
How economical is the Cayenne Diesel? The Porsche Centrum Eindhoven, in cooperation with the Dutch importer Pon's Automobielandel, organized a competition for its customers that turned test-drives into revealing fuel-efficiency trials. The winner achieved a remarkable 100 kilometers with 6.4 liters (36.8 miles per gallon).

There is nothing more convincing than personal experience. "The customers could feel that the Cayenne Diesel is a genuine Porsche. And at the same time, they would never have thought that a Porsche could be so fuel-efficient," says Raymond Konings, marketing director at the Porsche Centrum Eindhoven. The Cayenne Diesel Challenge—a competition for the most economical test-drive organized with the active support of the Dutch importer Pon's Automobielandel—produced some remarkable facts. Nearly 400 customers took the opportunity to test the Cayenne Diesel. The winner, Frank

Simonis of Eindhoven, recorded an impressive 100 kilometers with 6.4 liters (36.8 miles per gallon). Konings: "Our event was a complete success across the board."

The rules were quite simple. To create identical conditions, each competitor was required to conduct the same test-drive with a sealed fuel tank. From the Porsche Centrum, the route took drivers to the beautifully situated Hotel Bilderberg Château Holtmühle in Tegelen near the city of Venlo and then back to Eindhoven. "Everyone told us that they stopped worrying about fuel efficiency after a few miles," Konings reports. On the contrary, the pure joy of driving a Porsche outweighed all thoughts of saving fuel. And any lingering doubts were dispelled—the diesel version of the Cayenne offers exceptional responsiveness and massive torque.

The fuel consumption of the 240-horsepower, 3.0-liter V6 turbocharged diesel engine became an issue only following the return to Eindhoven. The competition came to a close with a real eye-opening experience as the onboard computer displayed the amount of diesel used by the respective drivers. "This unusual test-drive won over many individuals who had no previous contact with Porsche," Konings relates. Incidentally, Simonis, the winner of the Cayenne Diesel Challenge, was awarded a weekend at the Hotel Bilderberg Château Holtmühle. After all, he knows the way there. ◀



with Bonn, Cologne, and Düsseldorf already behind us. The needle has dropped down to the left, but only now is it approaching the quarter mark. The onboard computer calculates the remaining distance we can travel—300 kilometers (185 miles)! Can that be right? It's a matter of nerves: Should we drive down to the last drop? The

decision is all a matter of strategy. And until we get there, a good bit more water will flow under the proverbial bridge.

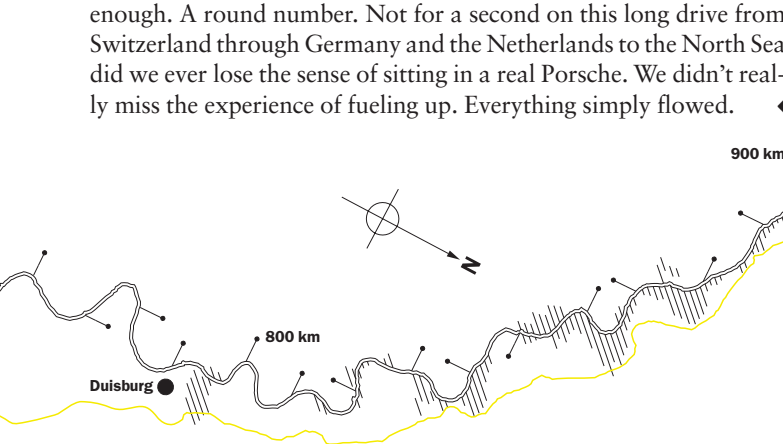
Shortly thereafter we are already in the Netherlands, and the river landscape broadens out in spectacular form. Countless lakes shimmer nearby, linked by innumerable

channels both natural and artificial. The broad branches of the river are called Waal, Maas, and Lek. Their enormous masses of water stretching out toward the North Sea form the delta where the river meets the sea southwest of Rotterdam, Europe's largest port. Here is the favored spot for tankers to set off from the European mainland. ▶



The foot on the accelerator becomes ever more cautious. The average speed of the current in the Rhine is 4.0 km/h (2.5 mph), and our onboard computer is showing 82 km/h (51 mph) for the Cayenne Diesel. Shortly before Rotterdam the computer beeps and displays its “refuel” message. At 988 kilometers (614 miles), this polite statement becomes a command. The computer promises another 52 kilometers (32 miles) on reserve. That would take us past the magical mark! Namely, all the way out to the delta at the mouth of the river, where the highway describes a turn before the great gray expanse of water onto which freighters embark and sound their horns.

We’ve arrived at our destination. One thousand kilometers are enough. A round number. Not for a second on this long drive from Switzerland through Germany and the Netherlands to the North Sea did we ever lose the sense of sitting in a real Porsche. We didn’t really miss the experience of fueling up. Everything simply flowed.



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Cayenne Diesel Spec sheet

Displacement:	2,967 cc
Power:	176 kW (240 hp) at 4,000 to 4,400 rpm
Maximum torque:	550 Nm (506 lb.-ft.) at 2,000 to 2,250 rpm
Top track speed:	214 km/h (133 mph)
Acceleration:	0–100 km/h (0–62 mph) in 8.3 seconds
Transmission:	Six-speed Tiptronic S (standard), full-time all-wheel drive

Technical details may vary from country to country.