

# Along came a spyder

Austrian tuners, Erhard Motorsport, built a very unusual track-focused 944 back in 2004. It's now in private hands and David White spotted it out on the 2009 Cross Border Rally across Slovenia and Austria.





The Austrian tuning firm, Erhard Motorsport, have for many years based a large part of their in-house racing programme, plus that of their customer cars, on the incredibly successful front-engined, water-cooled Porsche 944. With a top speed of 130mph [211kpm] and a 0-60mph time of 8.3 seconds in basic form, the 944 was an immediate success from its first introduction in 1981, though it is true that controversy was guaranteed on the occasion when Porsche dared to steer such a radically new course. If proof is necessary that such controversy was totally unfounded, Erhard have continued to this day to dazzle the racing fraternity with the rapidity and success of their incredible racing machines.

One 944 that fell into Erhard's hands, however, has enjoyed quite a different life pattern, having been converted into a unique 'spyder' format by the company in 2004, specifically to introduce would-be racers or thrill seekers to the feeling of being hurtled around the Nordschleife and other race tracks at full throttle racing speeds, at first as a passenger in the hot seat and then, when the time was deemed appropriate, as a racing driver proper. Taking an original 2.5 litre 944 of 1983 vintage, the company spent over 2,000 hours in turning this relative sheep into a positive wolf. From the modest 163bhp of the original, the finished product, stripped to the barest minimum and lightened wherever possible, has updated brakes, steering, shorter gearbox, lowered suspension, a plumbed-in fire extinguisher system, and an engine that positively takes one's breath away. As the only one of its kind to provide a real 'flavour of racing', it was and remains a great success.

Now, though it is hardly suitable for a trip to the supermarket, the car has been returned to semi road trim and is used with great skill by its new owner, Austrian enthusiast Herbert Rudolph, for classic road rallies and, as he says, 'for having the best possible driving experience of my life.' An incredible eye turner, certainly, and at the relatively low cost to Rudolph of around 45,000 euro, this is one of the most desirable road-going cars seen in Europe for a very long time.

