

SHIPPING YOUR 911

Increasing competition and an expanding network of global buyers means the distance between you and the car of your dreams isn't as big, or as expensive, as you might think...

Written by **Kyle Fortune** Photography by **West Coast Shipping & others**



Temptation, it's a terrible thing. It's everywhere too, from the magazine you're reading now, to the internet and social media. As someone who bought their 911 after seeing it pop up on Twitter, I know only too well how these things can escalate. It's only getting worse, too: at least my car was just down the road!

The world is now seemingly smaller than it's ever been, the internet shrinking it to the point where browsing classifieds in California is an easy mouse click or screen tap away. For the Porsche afflicted, there's help with getting that 911 you have always wanted from the other side of the world, and it comes via shipping companies.

'Buy it, it's not that difficult', urged one Craig Savage on a recent social media post. It was in response to a Porsche that somebody was looking at on one of the numerous 'Porsche or Porsche parts for sale' posts that make up my Facebook news feed. Located in the USA, I was tempted myself but, like the person Savage was addressing,

the idea of importing a car from the USA to the UK is enough to suppress any real action.

Savage has good understanding though, having brought over a 912 at the end of the 1990s. Admittedly, his particular purchase was helped by the fact he had friends and family in the USA, as well his job as a baseball coach giving another reason for him to visit the car Stateside first.

As it turned out, the whole process of shipping this 912 to the UK cost Savage very little indeed. And, though the rest of us might have missed the boat, pun intended, for the real Porsche bargains, Savage's assertion that shipping a Porsche is not actually that difficult is correct. Indeed, it is even more so today. Find a car, arrange to buy it and have it shipped. It really can be that simple. And, it's not as expensive as you might think, either.

"Shipping your vehicle by sea container to Europe starts at \$900 [approximately £600] per car in a consolidated container. That includes loading, shipping and clearing US customs," says Dmitry Shibarshin of US shipping firm West

Coast Shipping. That price obviously varies depending on a number of factors including the distance from the collection point to the port in the US, whether it is shipped from the East or West coast, and even the condition of the car - whether it's drivable or not, if it's packed with spares, a pile of bits or somewhere in between.

Consolidated containers means it will be parked in a 40-foot shipping container with at least one, if not two other cars, with two on the floor and one on a custom frame suspending another above. That makes it the cheapest option. Shibarshin says: "Customers shipping high-value vehicles prefer either the 20-foot container for one vehicle or the 40-foot for just two vehicles. Both methods have the vehicles strapped down to the floor." He adds, "We understand that certain methods

Left: Two or three cars are usually placed inside a container, with the top car mounted on a secure frame

Right: All manner of ages, shapes and sizes are transported around the world by sea today



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Shipping your 911: Do's & don'ts

- Don't just pick based on price, choose the best firm for your needs
- Get photographs taken of the car you are transporting just before it is shipped
- Keep the fuel level as low as possible and top up the anti-freeze (on 996s onwards)
- Check, double check, and triple check all of the paperwork beforehand
- Speak to your insurance company directly and seek specialist advice from shippers
- Ask about how your car will be contained and secured and demand that it is on the floor
- Make sure you have evidence of its age and EU build for European-based customs

of loading work for classic cars while others do not. This is why we continually stress that hiring a car shipping company that specialises in classic cars makes a difference. Many shippers either outsource their loading to other companies or do not understand the specifics of properly loading classics to avoid damage during transport."

That expertise is something James Walker, sales manager at Classic Automotive Relocation Services (CARS) cannot stress enough. "Always use a reputable shipper," says Walker. "What can be a simple procedure can turn into a nightmare if it's not done correctly." When Josh Sadler from Autofarm wanted to take his factory prototype 911 to Rennsport Reunion V at Laguna Seca in 2015, CARS arranged everything. Choosing air freight for speed, Sadler said: "It was exceedingly painless: I dropped it off at Heathrow and flew to San Francisco and it was waiting for me on

Top left: Cars are typically anchored down in place to ensure that no damage occurs during transit over choppy seas

Top right: A great number of classic cars take to the oceans in order to attend events around the globe

a trailer when I arrived." That's an extreme example, but it underlines what can be achieved, even with short timescales.

Obviously, sea freight is significantly cheaper, but you'll need to be patient. Expect a wait of three to four weeks if you're shipping a car from the East coast of America, suggests Walker, and a further two weeks or so if it's coming from the West. If you absolutely have to take your car with you wherever you go, or just need it somewhere in a hurry, then almost anything is possible with air freight. Unsurprisingly, the cost rises accordingly – though it's not ridiculous. Walker admits there's been a growth in shipping in the last ten years or so, as more classics are delivered to various events, races and road rallies globally. Due to a bilateral agreement between the UK and the US, it's possible to transport a car either way for tourism purposes for up to six months in any 12-month period. If it's any longer, either way, the vehicle will need to be registered in the country it's being used in, with differing rules depending on where you're taking your car.

Whether you're buying or selling, the best shipping companies should be able to deal with the entire process, from picking it up from the seller's door to delivering it to yours. You must have a bill of sale and the original vehicle title from US buyers, as well as a copy of your passport and a completed Power of Attorney form to allow the shipping company to clear US customs on your behalf.

Typically, shipping a car to the UK will cost you import duty calculated at 10 per cent of its value, and 20 per cent VAT, though there are exceptions for older cars and those manufactured in the EU. Walker says the paperwork is relatively straightforward, but it's important to get it right, as if it's wrong your vehicle can be held up indefinitely in customs. A sizeable number

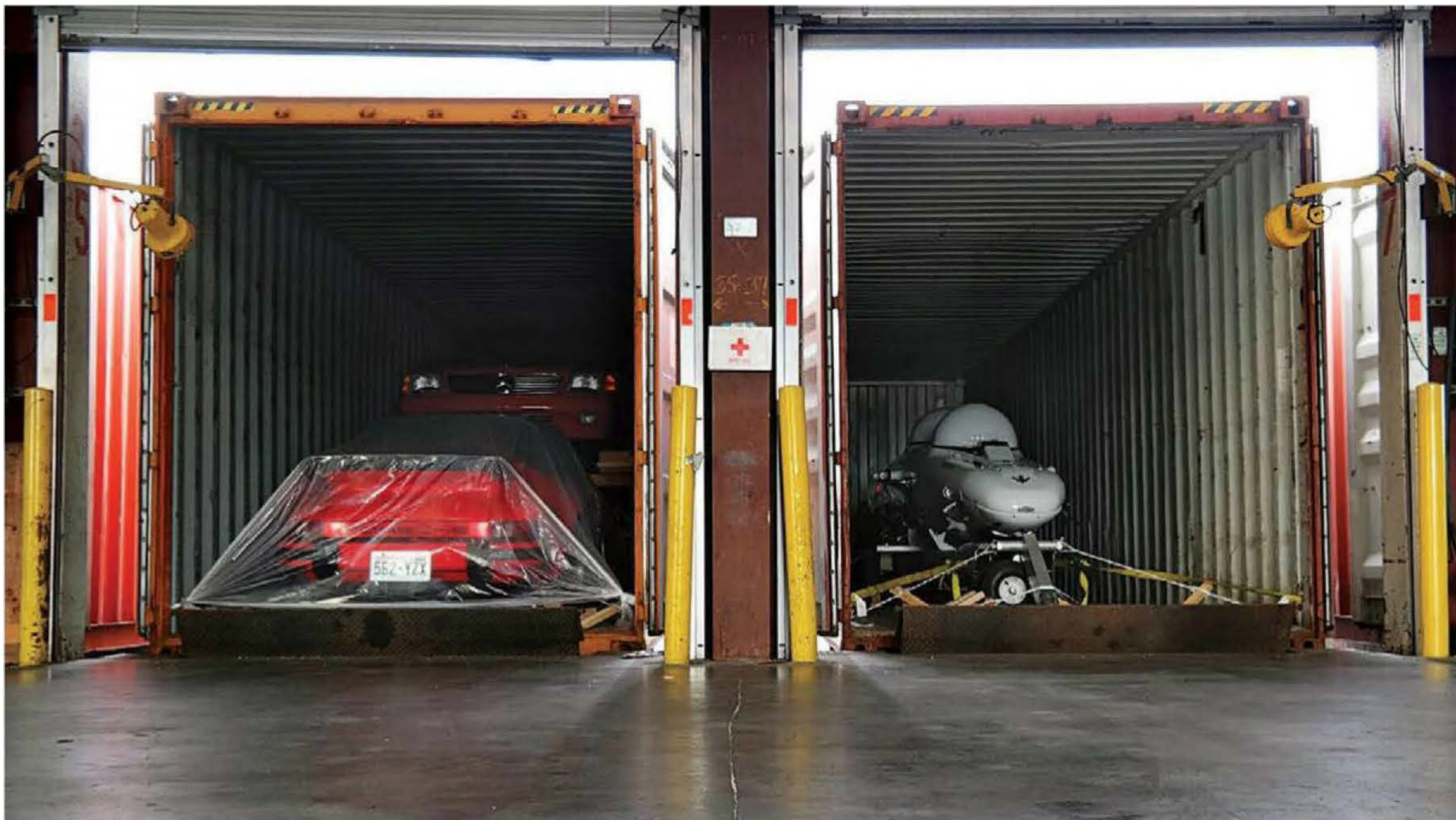
of classic cars are shipped daily to the UK and Holland. Walker puts the UK's popularity down to the historic interest ruling or Binding Tax Information 97.05 (sometimes referred to as 9705). It is a tariff relating to cars considered collectable or historically significant, and BTI 97.05 allows cars over 30 years old, that are unmodified and cost over £10,000, to qualify for a reduced import VAT cost of 5 per cent.

As with everything, there are exceptions, so it's advisable to apply early and if customs doesn't deem it to qualify, then duties may still be payable. Under BTI 97.05 the vehicle needs to possess a certain scarcity value, and be historically significant, be it racing success or in the overall development of the motor car, or of high value. That tariff heading 97.05 is particularly significant, as once the reduced VAT price it allows has been paid at the country of arrival – the UK – it is free to travel within the EU. Rates of VAT for imported vehicles at entry are higher in other European countries, which is why the UK sees so many classics arriving in its ports.

Where it gets interesting for those importing Porsches, or for any other EU manufacturer cars, is that cars built in the EU and originally exported are exempt from the standard 10 per cent import duty charge. However, don't simply assume that because it's an EU manufacturer, like Porsche, that customs will accept it as such. There has to be a paper trail to support the car's manufacture within the EU. That needs to be an export bill or invoice, or, should these be unavailable, an official letter from the manufacturer stating its year and place of manufacture.

Again, there are exceptions and potential loopholes. If you've lived in a country for at least a year, or for 185 consecutive days, and owned your car for over six months then it should be exempt from all import duty and VAT –





regardless of age. Therefore, if you're going to live abroad for work it might be well worth your while buying a newer Porsche and bringing it back with you. Vehicles imported must, of course, be fit for use on roads to the required standard of the receiving country, with Euro-bound cars requiring a European Certificate of Conformity if the car is right-hand-drive, or a European Certificate of Mutual Recognition if it is left-hand-drive, or an Individual Vehicle Approval if your car has no EU approval. An MOT will also be required in the UK when the car arrives.

Still tempted? It might sound confusing, but it's actually fairly simple and certainly not impossible to arrange yourself. Mike Hilton is one such person who enjoys the entire process.

It started out as a hobby, with Hilton buying a few Porsches, but now Hilton buys cars to bring over for sale at classclassiccars.com. The cars are predominantly US-derived but the occasional Porsche can be found there. Hilton says it's crucial to go and visit the car and take pictures of its condition for insurance purposes before shipping. "Many of the cars I've shipped I've actually driven to the port," says Hilton.

And what about shipping to and from other continents? Andrew Mearns, owner of UK-based Porsche specialists Gmund Cars, travels globally sourcing Porsches for his business. He's recently brought back a 993 RS from South Africa, a car

he shipped out there in the first place. Therefore, there's currently a nice Rennsport on the seas between Australia and the UK, a journey that will take 53 days and cost Mearns around £3,000. He admits that the process elsewhere isn't quite as simple as it can be between the US and UK: "While it's usually pretty straightforward, all countries have different rules and regulations and they can often change on a whim," says Mearns.

"Should there be anything remiss with the

value cars, some policies stipulate trackers being fitted to the container, as they can get lost in ports, or, in the worst case scenario, even fall off ships at sea.

Preparing your car for shipping is essential. Again, it's all fairly straightforward stuff, but worth noting. The car should have no more than a quarter of a tank of fuel says Walker – and preferably less – while it's wise to make sure there's plenty of anti-freeze (obviously not a

problem with air-cooled cars), particularly if you're shipping in winter. Hilton says to remember to bring a jump pack if you're picking it up yourself, too, even if you've isolated the battery in transit.

So, what is the best advice? Do your research and, as all our

"A 911 is currently stuck in customs thanks to someone simply putting '222' on the paperwork for the VIN rather than the correct 'ZZZ'"

professionals here state, don't just pick your shipper on price. Choose the shipping company that best represents what you need. There's plenty of choice and plenty of space on the ships – which keeps prices sensible. We've deliberately kept the specific pricing details to a minimum here, as it is different for every car, but there are plenty of online calculators that will give you a good idea. Speaking directly to the shipping companies is best, as they'll be able to give you a direct quote for your specific needs. Temptation is a dangerous thing, and now there's no excuse not to succumb to it. All of a sudden, that classic in California doesn't seem so far away at all... **911**

paperwork, customs immediately think there's something fraudulent going on," adds Mearns, who's suffering a long delay with a 911 which is currently stuck in customs thanks to someone simply putting '222' on the paperwork for the VIN rather than the correct 'ZZZ'.

Mearns also warns about insurance. While most shipping companies offer a one-stop shop insurance for cars in their care, if you're doing it yourself you need to check, and re-check the details. For a recent import Mearns required four different policies, as normal insurance didn't cover transit over water, needing special policies to cover transit, handling and sea. For higher

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