Buyers Guide

By Bruce Anderson

914

1970 914-6

1970 914

1973 914 2.0

1975 914 2.0

914-6 | 914 1.7/1.8 | 914 2.0

Model Year	Pricing	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
1973-74	low	$7,300	$8,700	$11,200	$14,800	$14,400
	high	$9,800	$11,600	$15,000	$19,800	$19,300
1975-76	low	$7,300	$8,600	$11,100	$14,400	$14,200
	high	$9,800	$11,600	$14,900	$19,300	$19,000

Behind the Numbers

When introduced at the Frankfurt show in September of 1969, the 2.0-liter 1970 914-6 was intended as a replacement for Porsche's entry-level 912. Designed by Porsche, the 914 was quite a departure: a mid-engined, targa-topped joint venture with Volkswagen. In Europe, the car was marketed as a VW-Porsche. Here in the U.S., it was sold as a Porsche.

The 914 may have been controversial, but it was a commercial success. Almost 119,000 four- and six-cylinder models were built during seven model years between 1970 and 1976. While the 914 was unable to shake its questionable heritage for some time, it developed a cult-like following among racers and back-road stormers. Today, it has finally gained the respect it deserves and is seen as part of the Porsche family. Prices for nicely kept 914s seem to be steadily increasing.

The 914-4 models were completely assembled by Karmann for Porsche and Volkswagen. The six-cylinder 914-6 was completed by Porsche's Zuffenhausen factory from trimmed bodies supplied by Karmann. The 914-6 shared some components with 911s of that era. Unfortunately, a few critical factors changed the agreement between Volkswagen and Porsche, causing Porsche's version, the 914-6, to be considerably more expensive than had been anticipated.

All 914s shared their front suspension design with the 911. While the 914's rear suspension is similar in concept to the 911's, the implementation is quite different in its use of coil springs instead of torsion bars. As with 911s and 912s, four-wheel-disc brakes were standard. Similarly, the 914's transaxle was borrowed from the 901 used in 911s, but it had a special housing developed for the unique mid-engined application.

The 914-6 was offered from 1970 to 1972, and approximately 3,349 were built. Of the total number of 914-6s built, 1,788 were sold in the United States. The 914-6's real claim to fame was great handling and reasonable power. It can be driven with abandon and is great fun to own. The 914 is a far more forgiving car to drive quickly than a 356 or an early 911. While the 914-6's stock flat six produced 110 hp, many examples have been modified to make more power.

In addition to having two extra cylinders, the 914-6 was a fancier model than most of the four-cylinder versions. 914-6s had three-speed windshield wipers, electric windshield washers, chrome-plated bumpers, a vinyl-covered roll bar, and fog lights as standard equipment. They were also available with a variety of different wheels, from 15×5.5 painted or chrome steel wheels to 14×5.5 Fuchs forged alloys or 15×5.5 Mahle cast magnesium wheels (only 9.9 pounds each). 2,658 914-6s were built for 1970, 433 for 1971, and 260 for 1972. Because so few 1972 models were produced, it is difficult to establish price trends for these cars. Even rarer is 1972's 914-6-based 916 coupe, a luxurious counterpoint to Ferrari's Dino. Just 11 were built before Porsche pulled the plug on the program.

While the 914-6 would live a short life and benefit from few improvements, the 914-4 introduced alongside it would thrive and benefit from Porsche's usual development process. 1970's 914-4 used a 1.7-liter version of the VW Type IV engine with Bosch D -Jetronic fuel injection, producing 80 hp. The base 914 came with 15×4.5-inch wheels and had painted bumpers and no external vinyl trim. An optional appearance group added the chrome bumpers, fog lights, and vinyl trim of the 914-6. 13,312 1.7-liter 914s were built for the 1970 model year. The 1971 914 remained very similar to the 1970 model, but 15×5.5 wheels were available, either as a steel wheel or a Pedrini cast alloy. 16,231 1.7-liter 914s were built in 1971. During the 1972 model year, ventilation was improved and the passenger seat was made adjustable (previously, it was fixed in place).

A 2.0-liter 914-4 was introduced as a 1973 model to replace the 914-6, which was discontinued after 1972. For the 914 2.0, a new Type IV engine was developed with a longer, 71-mm stroke and a larger, 94-mm bore to yield 1971 cc of displacement and an output of 95 hp. All 1973 models received a new “side-shifter” transmission, which was responsible for a tremendous improvement in the shift action. 1970-72 914 shifters can best be described as vague — and that is polite.

At first, the 914 2.0 came with all of the appearance group options, so it looked very much like the 914-6 it was designed to replace. It had a vinyl-covered roll bar, chrome bumpers, fog lights, and a leather-covered steering wheel as well as a center console with additional instruments and new four-bolt, 15×5.5 Fuchs forged alloy wheels. Meanwhile, all 914 models received new rubber bumper guards on the front bumper for 1973. The new 914 2.0 sold for $5,300, which was close to what Porsche had been selling the 914-6 for.

In 1974, the bore was increased to 93 mm on what had been the 1.7-liter, increasing the displacement to 1795 cc and creating the 1.8-liter 914-4. The 1.8-liter engine used a new Bosch L-Jetronic fuel-injection system and had an output of 76 hp. The 914 was the first car to use this type of Bosch fuel injection and some mechanics are not fond of the system. But there is nothing fundamentally wrong with the system and a good mechanic can solve any problems that arise. Most of Bosch’s early DME systems were an evolution of this one. Mechanically, the 1974 914 2.0 remained largely unchanged from the 1973 models. However, a lot of what had been standard equipment on the 1973 model became optional for 1974. All 1974 914-4s received large rubber bumper guards on their rear bumpers to comply with new bumper legislation.

The 1975 914s introduced new, larger front and rear impact-resistant bumpers covered in black rubber, significantly changing the car’s appearance. The exhaust systems were changed on both the 1.8- and 2.0-liter 914s to comply with stricter emissions legislation. For California, a catalytic converter was required to comply with emissions. California cars also had exhaust gas recirculation and smog pumps. The fuel pumps in 1975 models were relocated to a position forward of the fuel tank to help prevent the fuel vapor lock problems that earlier cars experienced. For 1976, the 914 1.8 was discontinued, leaving only the 914 2.0.

What to Buy

Because the 914 was an entry-level car, many were not well cared for. The 914’s biggest enemy isn’t mechanical neglect, however. It’s the tin worm. 914s were not well protected against corrosion, so they are quite susceptible to rust and structural damage. Even if you are considering a 914 that was never used on snowy or salty roads, carefully check it for rust anyway. It should be checked by someone who knows the 914 well — preferably a body shop that’s familiar with the rust damage that can occur on these cars.

Be sure to check carefully for rust under the battery shelf in the engine compartment as well as the inner rocker panels. Getting into some of these areas to have a look around can be difficult, but it is more than worth your time and effort. Check the suspension mounting points on the passenger side under the battery for rust damage, as well. The battery was mounted in the engine compartment in all 914s and thus spilled battery acid into the compartment in many cars, causing serious corrosion. Fortunately, many cars were converted to use dry-cell batteries in the 1980s. The earlier, the better.

As with any Porsche, have a knowledgeable mechanic check it out carefully. Porsche shops charge the same hourly labor rate to work on a 914 as they do for any other Porsche, so extensive repairs can easily raise the price of a car to the point where that price plus the cost to bring it into good condition easily exceeds its value. Finally, avoid cars that need extensive restoration. Many 914 trim, body, and interior parts are becoming prohibitively expensive to replace. It is better to pay a premium for a car that does not need these parts.

My favorite 914s are the 1973–74 914 2.0s and the 914-6. I owned a 914-6 for 17 years, so the “Six” would have to be my absolute favorite. I also like the 914 2.0 because I feel it is the best of the four-cylinder cars, and I prefer the 1973–74 models because they don’t have the heavier, late-model rubber bumpers used on 1975 and 1976 models.

The early 914 1.7s were fairly primitive cars with poor shift mechanisms. The shifter can be updated, but it is an expensive proposition. I would probably avoid the 914 1.8 because of the L-Jetronic fuel injection and the aversion many mechanics have toward it. Incidentally, the 914-6s are also pretty primitive, with their own bad shifters and the same build quality as the early 914 1.7s. Then again, they are the most desirable of this series for their six-cylinder power.

I continue to be amazed at the new friends these cars keep finding. At one point, it seemed like a lot of young people discovered the charms of their performance. These days, we’re also watching 356 and early 911 enthusiasts who have been priced out of

the market — or simply want to add another air-cooled Porsche to their collection — buy up 914s. One thing is certain: The interest in these cars never seems to wane. With continued interest, prices continue to rise. While it's hard to say that 914s will be a wonderful investment, they sure are fun to own.

Behind the Numbers

How to Use Our Numbers

High vs. Low: Our estimates reflect values for the majority of cars on the market. On the High end you should find cars with no more than 7,000 to 9,000 miles per year, excellent paint, normal wear but little tear, and no glaring mechanical or cosmetic issues. On the Low end you should find complete, running cars with higher mileage, cosmetic damage, and/or minor mechanical needs. Generally speaking, we allow an additional 10 percent for mileage lower than 7,000-9,000 miles per year, and subtract 10-25 percent for past body damage that required paintwork. Due to the high cost to repair and restore Porsches, cars at the High price point often represent better long-term value than those at the Low end, as the cost to make a rough car nice will exceed the difference between the two.

Exceptions: Of course, some cars fall outside of our range — on both ends. Cars with major needs (excessive rust, blown engines, crash damage, etc.) and cars with salvage titles are typically worth less, often a lot less. On the other side, older or desirable Porsches with very low miles and original cosmetics in immaculate condition, cars benefitting from top-end restorations, and cars with interesting histories can command far higher prices, sometimes doubling or tripling our High estimate. An immaculate, totally original 1972 911E with 143,000 miles might qualify, since 140,000 to 180,000 miles would be considered normal in a 20-year-old 911. If the same car had