**The Beginner’s Guide to Track Days!**

Throughout the world, track days are growing in popularity. Why are they so popular and why are they so expensive? First, let’s talk about what a “track day” actually is. For those in the field, they are commonly known as “High Performance Driver’s Education” (HPDE), which is basically what it is. Track days aren’t for getting out on the track with no speed limits and a bunch of crazy people going as fast as they can. Track days are meant to be an educational experience that is aimed at teaching you car control, vehicle dynamics, threshold braking, etc. in a controlled and organized manner. Yes, I did say controlled and organized.

How do they make it controlled and organized? Most track day companies will start coaching their students two-weeks prior to the event. For example, ‘Maxspeed Track Days,’ ([www.maxspeedtrackdays.com](http://www.maxspeedtrackdays.com)) will send out information regarding the equipment that the participant may need, such as the technical inspection for their car, driving literature, equipment, etc. This gives the student a chance to start prepping themselves and their car for the upcoming event. Having said that, track days are a blast and I have never met anyone that regretted doing it. Besides, sports cars are meant to be driven and I don’t think you spent all that money on an expensive sports car to drive the speed limit on everyday roads. Magnus Walker states it best, “Get out and Drive.”

Where to begin?

For the sake of this article, I am using the lowest common denominator, which is an inexperienced driver who is not a member of any club or association. So before you go out and spend money on all that very expensive racing equipment (helmet, gloves, racing suit, 5-point harness, shocks, brakes, etc.), I would suggest that you try and experience one or two track days first.

Why do I suggest that? If you are like most people the “ideal” of going fast on a track without having to worry about the police pulling you over is exhilarating until you actually do it. In some aspects, it reminds me of the special operations forces in the military. Everyone wants to be a Navy SEAL or Special Forces until they are suffering (cold, wet, and tired). Driving fast on a track is not going to make you feel any of those symptoms but driving at speed is physically demanding. David Ferguson, an assistant professor of Kinesiology at Michigan State University states, “it’s not like driving a normal car. You’re having very high speeds, drivers exposed to G-loads that are higher than what NASA astronauts are exposed to, in hot humid environments.” Granted, you won’t experience the same G’s as an F-1 driver but some of the same demands will be placed on you and your body. For example, my wife always thought she wanted to go fast and do the ‘racecar’ experience until she actually did it. Before she had any real experience driving a high performance car, she believed that she could out drive me on a track. After one spirited run with me, she was scared sh!tless and vowed to never ride with me again (in that setting), as she screamed, “stop the car, stop the car, stop the car!”. Unfortunately, she is like a lot others and suffers from motion sickness. After that brief demonstration, she made me stop the car and pull over. Therefore, I suggest you experience it yourself before investing a lot of money into it.

Back to the topic: There are so many track day options nowadays; you don’t even have to use your own car. There are plenty of companies that will allow you to rent a track ready car. For example, the Porsche Experience Center (PEC) [www.porschedriving.com](http://www.porschedriving.com) is the perfect place to develop your skills while driving someone else’s Porsche. Yes, ‘I am down with OPP’ (Other People’s Porsches). At PEC you will not get the long straightaways or hard braking zones and a few other things you experience from a traditional circuits but you get plenty of time behind the wheel, and an experienced instructor guiding you through a very technical circuit. Plus, you get to experience some other fun things such as the low-friction handling circuit, high-speed dynamics area (serpentine and launch control), kick-plate, and the low-friction course or wet-pad. Most of those specialized areas will teach you things that normal “track days” will not.

There are other options as well; for example, ‘RaceCars Forfor Rent’ ([www.racecarsforrent.com](http://www.racecarsforrent.com)) - offers, as the name states, high-quality, high-performance, racecars that are available for rent. You don’t have to worry about wearing out the brakes or tires on your car, you simply arrive, receive some instructions, and drive. The best of both worlds – you get to drive hard in someone else’s car. Their motto is, “arrive and drive.”

Costs

How much does it cost to do this? I could actually write a book on this topic alone; therefore, I am going to try and generalize this as much as possible. I may do a few follow-up articles that go further in depth on each topic but for now I am going to keep it simple stupid (KISS). I cannot list every single company, but I will give you a few options.

1. Porsche Experience Center Cost – for approximately 1.5 hours of track time, driving their car, you will pay approximately the following:
   1. Cayman - $365.00
   2. 911 Carrera 4S - $500.00
   3. GT3 - $875.00
   4. Turbo S v GT3 $975.00
2. Porsche Owner’s Experience at the Porsche Experience Center (where you drive your Porsche on their track)
   1. Price – it is not currently listed on their website but last I heard it was: $450.00 (which means you get 45 minutes in your car and then 45 minutes in the latest version of the car you own; for example, if you own a 911S, you will drive your 911S and then get to compare it to PEC’s 992S).
3. Maxspeed Track Days – “we provide our customers with the facilities, information and coaching to enhance their high speed driving skills in a safe, yet exhilarating environment.”
   1. Costs vary by track location and season, but averages $350.00 - $700.00 for a two-day event. On average, about 3 hours of drive time/day, which is about 6 hours behind the wheel – that’s a lot of time for a track day. You use your own car.
4. Racecars For for Rent – “Providing high-quality, high performance racecars to rent for HPDE days, club track days, race weekends, PCA Club Racing, etc. Our cars are meticulously maintained by Bob Sanderson and Steve Cosgrove of [Goldcrest Motorsports.](https://www.goldcrestmotors.com/)  We are the preferred racecar rental partner at the world-famous “[Driving Club at Road Atlanta.”](https://www.drivingclubra.com/) If you use the promo-code: ‘POR4MANCE,’ you receive 10% off the base price.
   1. Costs vary on the package selected but they offer:
      1. Full track-day support
      2. Professional Instruction/Coaching
      3. VBOX in-car video & data logging

Additional Costs if you choose to drive your own car (on average):

Car Cost:

1. Registration for events: $200.00 to $500.00/day

2. Fluids need to be checked and changed every 3-5 track days (most people will recommend using racing brake fluid for every track day).

3. Tires – You will need to replace your tires about every 4-10 track days.

4. Brakes – on average, you will need to change the pads every 4-10 tracks days as well.

5. Track Day Insurance: $200.00-500.00/day (average)

(Costs for your car alone, you will average around $750.00/day)

6. Tech Inspection (pre-track day inspection to ensure your car is safe)

Costs will depend - if you are a qualified mechanic, you can DIY for free. My local Porsche Dealership charges $175.00.

Equipment (for starters):

1. Helmet (this is all you need to start) – you can buy an entry-level helmet for around $299.00. You can find some good autocross helmets here: [Bell Helmets](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B01LYGXZVJ/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B01LYGXZVJ&linkCode=as2&tag=por4mance-20&linkId=85083f0d546ff4533d7d26ac4bc61d05)

Remember there are three factors that determine your speed and success on the track:

1. Your capabilities as a driver
2. The capabilities of the car
3. The environment or track conditions (wet, paved, cold/hot, dirt, etc.).

Also, one additional tip: it is better to invest in safety versus buying “go-fast” parts. Meaning, if you are serious about tracking your car, invest in your safety first (invest in a roll-cage, 5-point harness (after a few laps around the track in a regular seatbelt and you will understand why), brakes, shocks, control arms, personal safety gear, etc. These items will save your life if you ever do experience an accident, new headers or an exhaust will not. And trust me, once you start pushing your limits and the limits of the car, you will have accidents and ‘Safety is paramount.’

Other Companies that offer HPDE:

Porsche Club of America (PCA) – each region offers their own HPDE. If you are a PCA member, check with the region in which you live to find out more information: [PCA HPDE](https://www.pca.org/drivers-education)

**Chin Track Days** <https://chintrackdays.com/how-to-join.aspx>

The first step for any driver to participate is to complete our online membership enrollment. Annual dues are $50 for a 13-month membership. Once enrolled, a new member then receives a password to login for event registration. For new members, our system default for driver status is NOVICE. So, if you are an experienced track driver, you must send an email to [info@chintrackdays.com](mailto:info@chintrackdays.com) with a summary of track history to request exemption from the novice category. Unless you provide background, you will be classified as a novice driver, by default.

* For the entry-level/novice driver, we assign a qualified instructor. The instructor accompanies the driver as a passenger while you drive on track. The driver receives real-time feedback and coaching on advanced driving skills, track etiquette, and safety. Our novice driver training also includes 2 hours of indoor classroom instruction. A Master Instructor provides lecture training on car control, vehicle dynamics, road course fundamentals, and safety.
* If you are an experienced veteran of the track, please send an email of track history to request eligibility for solo status. Experienced drivers can also enjoy the freedom of our long sessions and generous schedule, to get maximum track time for practice or testing. Even though there is no competition at our track events, competition prepared cars are welcomed.

**JZilla Track Days** <http://www.jzillatrackdays.com/info>

**Driver Packets**

Pertinent information specific to each event. Stay atop of what you need to know, when, and where! We post information specific to your event two weeks prior.

**[Rules & Regulations](http://www.jzillatrackdays.com/s/JZTD-Rules-and-Regulations-2021.pdf" \t "_blank)**

Safety is our paramount concern!**[Please familiarize with our rules so you can focus on your day](http://www.jzillatrackdays.com/s/JZTD-Rules-and-Regulations-2021.pdf" \t "_blank)*.*** Any questions should be directed at [***Jzilla Track Days Staff***](http://www.jzillatrackdays.com/contact/)***.***

**Track Schedules**

The day of can be hectic! Here are condensed schedules of how a typical day runs. Often times factors might shift the schedule around a bit, but most likely this will be how the day is run. These are only guidelines, official schedules will be added to each driver packet for accuracy.

**[Tech Inspection Form](http://www.jzillatrackdays.com/s/JZTD-Tech-Sheet-2021.pdf" \t "_blank)**

Ready to go? One more thing. You’ll need to have your car inspected by a professional shop before attending (with some exceptions). **[Print out this form and take it with you](http://www.jzillatrackdays.com/s/JZTD-Tech-Sheet-2021.pdf" \t "_blank)*[.](http://www.jzillatrackdays.com/s/JZTD-Tech-Sheet-2020rev.pdf" \t "_blank)*** This is our standard for keeping from having unfortunate surprises on track. [Please see this helpful primer for completing your Tech Sheet to facilitate smooth check in at our events.](http://www.jzillatrackdays.com/techsheetinstructions)

**Track Day Insurance:**

Hagerty: [Get a quote here](https://www.hagerty.com/Insurance/Track-Day-Insurance#:~:text=Track%20day%20insurance%20powered%20by%20RLI%2A%20provides%20single-event,participate%20in%20HPDE%20events.%20Time%20trial%20coverage%20available)

RLI Track Day insurance: <https://www.rlicorp.com/track-day>

Lockton Motorsports: <https://locktonmotorsports.com/buying-track-day-insurance/>

OpenTrack: <https://www.opentrack.com/insurance>

If you are serious about Track Days, here are a few additional tips:

1. Try and find used racing tires for track days – this will save you a lot of money in the long run. There are many companies that sell them and you can find them at ¼ of the price of new tires. Plus, you will also get better traction on the circuit. A few examples:
   1. Used Racing Tires: <https://usedracingtires.com/>
   2. Best Used Tires: <https://www.bestusedtires.com/by-type/racing-tires/>
2. Racing Brake Fluid – normal brake fluid will get very hot and start to boil, which means your average car will last about 3-laps on the track. If you get your car Tech Inspected before, I recommend having them add racing brake fluid, such as:
   1. Castrol SRF Racing Brake Fluid – [buy here](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B002TM4GBQ/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B002TM4GBQ&linkCode=as2&tag=por4mance-20&linkId=2522f7ff1fa97945f131882dd6e73af8)
   2. Motul RBF 660 Dot-4 Racing Brake Fluid – [buy here](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B005UGKKW2/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B005UGKKW2&linkCode=as2&tag=por4mance-20&linkId=2a327ccb7bd91c070b36a99ac1bfedc9)
   3. EXP 600 Plus Racing Brake Fluid – [buy here](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B002G39IXO/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B002G39IXO&linkCode=as2&tag=por4mance-20&linkId=0acd141b48be2a865b5dbe972904d244)
   4. Maxima Racing USA 80-87916 DOT 4 Racing High Temp Brake Fluid – [buy here](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B07K17J5TV/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B07K17J5TV&linkCode=as2&tag=por4mance-20&linkId=39ab681b3b9e47e0cbab2303197f6f17)
3. Roll Cages:
   1. Vivid Racing offers a few for Porsches and other brands as well:
      1. [Vivid Racing](https://www.vividracing.com/index.php?keywords=Porsche+Roll+cages)

Now that you have the options and equipment, here are a few more things to consider:

1. Choose the Correct Event – if you are a beginner, choose an event with instruction. Even if you are an experienced driver but never done a track day, there are things you will need to learn (driving line, flags, passing rules, exit, etc. If it is your first event, you may want to find a focused training course versus an open track day.
2. Prepare your car – I’ve mentioned this a few times but can’t stress it enough. Think about it this way, when you are driving at high-speeds (150 mph at Road Atlanta) there are four very small patches of rubber that connect you with the earth, make sure that your car is prepped and ready. Check your tires, brakes (pads and rotors), and fluids.
3. Self-preparation – most professional racecar drivers are also endurance athletes (meaning they keep their bodies in great shape as well).
   1. Get a good night’s sleep.
   2. No alcohol. Yes, I said it, I do not recommend drinking the night before. You do not want to be dehydrated the day of. You can save that for after the event is over.
   3. Clothing:
      1. Comfortable
      2. Tight clothing but breathable – do not wear baggy clothes
      3. Thin sole shoes – do not wear thick-sole boots (you want to feel the pedals). A tip: if you don’t have antilock brakes and you lock your brakes up going into a turn, wiggle your toes and that should loosen up the brakes just enough for the tires to get traction. It can be your version of antilock brakes. If you don’t have racing shoes, I would recommend a minimalist shoe of some sort.
      4. Dress for conditions – rain, cold weather, hot weather, etc…
   4. Helmet – if one is not provided, you will need a motorsports helmet not a motorcycle helmet (yes, there is a difference).
   5. As a beginner, I would recommend investing in a helmet and shoes.
4. Know your itinerary:
   1. Usually, the day will begin with the “Driver’s safety Brief” and classroom instruction.
   2. Do you need a special license?
   3. Do you need to bring lunch, or can you buy lunch there?
   4. Water or hydration? I recommend bringing a lot of water or G-2 Gatorade.
   5. Other questions to ask yourself:
      1. Chairs - Should you bring chairs when you aren’t driving?
      2. Shade – will there be any shade there?
      3. Fuel – I recommend filling up on your way there but what if you need gas or any other fluids – where can you go?
      4. Extra gear – when you are driving, you don’t want gear adrift in your car flying all over the place. Where will you put it?
      5. Where will you park?
      6. Can your friends or family watch? If so, where are they allowed to go?
      7. Does your car need numbers? If so, what size, color, etc.?
      8. Tools – do you need any tools?
         1. I highly recommend a tire pressure gauge and maybe a bike tire pump if air is not available. You will want to check your tire pressures after each session.
      9. Track distance from your house – if the track is more than 2 hours away, you may want to consider getting a hotel room.
5. Basic Track Rules – learn them and understand them
   1. Study the track and learn the racing line of the track – You should be able to find videos on Youtube or even learn the track by driving sim-racing cars (i.e. Forza, Project Cars, or Grand Tourisma).
   2. Braking points – each track has markers 300, 200, etc. Start learning where your braking points are (in this case, better to be safe than sorry).
   3. FLAGS – learn them
      1. Green – everything is good – go!
      2. Yelllow (standing) – caution or danger ahead (slow down)
         1. Waving yellow – Waving denotes urgency. There is an immediate danger ahead on the racing line, or in an impact zone. Slow down to 70% and no passing.
      3. Red – immediately slow down and pit as soon as possible
      4. Black – they will usually point the flag directly at you (2 reasons)
         1. There is smoke or fluid leaking from your vehicle – return to the pits
         2. You are driving like an idiot and endangering other people – return to the pit
      5. Red and Yellow striped flag – either weather or fluids is on the track and could cause the surface to be slippery.
      6. Blue Flag with yellow stripe – faster traffic approaching, you are about to be passed
      7. White Flag – slow moving or Emergency Vehicle ahead
      8. Checkered Flag – end of session
   4. Passing Zone(s), or more importantly, no passing zones:
      1. Do NOT try and pass in corners
      2. Do NOT try and pass in braking zones
      3. For newcomers there are passing zones where passing is permitted
      4. Normally, the slower car will recognize that a faster car is approaching and will direct the faster car which side to pass on (with a turn signal or hand and arm signal)
   5. Don’t try and be the fastest guy on the track, there is no points for producing the fastest lap time. Try to be safe and respectful of the other drivers, even the inexperienced ones.
   6. HAVE FUN - Try and stay relaxed – as an instructor, I always can tell how nervous the driver is based on how tight he/she grips the wheel. A tight grip on the wheel, usually means he/she is scared and is more than likely to jerk the wheel, which throws off the balance of the car, which is not good. Stay relaxed, and have fun. Listen to your instructor and try and learn the track and your capabilities first. Speed will come, don’t rush it (smooth is fast).

Last tip – your eyes – look where you want to go. Your eyes should be focused on as far out on the track as you can see. Your car will go where your eyes are looking. Also, use the entire width of the track. Your instructor will explain what that means.

After you have experienced one or two track day events and want to make it a hobby, I would recommend buying a Mazda Miata, preferably one already built for the track. Yes, I am a Porsche guy but Miata’s are a great platform for learning and developing/honing your driving skills. The newer Miata’s have traction and stability control, which can help keep you out of trouble. Why a used one? It is cheaper to buy a used one that someone else already built, than you trying to build it yourself. I can hear some people laughing at this but if you are not experienced, and serious about this hobby, this is the best route to take. You will learn vehicle dynamics, car control, threshold braking, etc. in a vehicle that is lightweight, well balanced and pretty cheap to repair.

Also, if you plan on making this a hobby or do this routinely you will need additional safety equipment:

1. [Race Seat with harness](https://www.vividracing.com/bucket-seats-c-14266.html?class_8=38&class_9=42116) – used or new, costs will vary depending on what you want
2. [Roll Bars:](https://www.vividracing.com/index.php?keywords=roll+cages+for+porsches) $2,500 - $3,500.00
3. [Hans Device](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00SHPKBHW/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B00SHPKBHW&linkCode=as2&tag=por4mance-20&linkId=381b724b300591b38583e755c6180b25) (head and neck restraint): $300 – 1,500.00
4. Clothing ([suit](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00T3TYNQG/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B00T3TYNQG&linkCode=as2&tag=por4mance-20&linkId=12d53593767e813053b5095ff9c70aff), [gloves](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0195YX9EU/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B0195YX9EU&linkCode=as2&tag=por4mance-20&linkId=6b189e753ec0038c5e05bec44c1e965d), [shoes](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B077M73TK3/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B077M73TK3&linkCode=as2&tag=por4mance-20&linkId=97371174bbd89e830f8695dc7b02584f), [balaclava](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B07ZWL4TX6/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B07ZWL4TX6&linkCode=as2&tag=por4mance-20&linkId=404585133faadaf309cb31aa07a72b4d)): $300 – 3,000.00

(average one-time cost for all equipment: $5,000.00 to $8,000.00

If you are interested in more literature, please refer to another outstanding article by Maxspeed Track Days: <https://maxspeedtrackdays.com/track-day-blog/f/what-is-a-track-day-or-hpde>