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Audi A4 Allroad quattro First Impressions

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Audi's Answer for Smooth and Rough Motoring - The New Audi A4 Allroad



quattro.

By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

Audi's 'model explosion' of new vehicle introductions continues with the arrival of the A4 Allroad quattro, a more rugged model than the A4 Avant quattro estate on which it is based.

Having just added two new variants to the large SUV market, the SQ7 and Q7 e tron, Audi is now introducing their on/off road Allroad quattro five door estates priced from £36,010 to £42,595, with deliveries starting in September. Audi, who introduced quattro all-wheel-drive 37 years ago, now sells a third of their new cars with quattro traction.

This is the second generation Allroad and a member of the relatively new Audi A4 family of premium brand, mid-sized four door saloons and five door Avant estates. The Allroad uses the A4 Avant estate's body and Audi's quattro all-wheel-drive system. Audi UK expects the new Allroad to take between 10 and 15% of A4 Avant sales, approximately 1,000 to 1,400 units in a growing market sector.

Competitors include the Volvo V60 Cross Country and Subaru's Outback estates, but there are more and more 4x4 versions of conventional saloons and estates being brought to market. Customers driving this demand are those who don't want an SUV or Crossover but still want 4x4 traction. They want that added grip for occasional off-road work use or for more secure on-road driving over our deteriorating UK road surfaces, or to combat our worsening Winter weather.

The new range has two levels of specification - Allroad and Allroad Sport. Both levels are available with a choice of four engines. These are a 2.0 litre TFSI 252 hp petrol motor, and the turbodiesel units are a 2.0 litre TDI 190 hp, a 3.0 litre TDI 218 hp and a 3.0 litre TDI 272 hp. All have S tronic automatic transmissions as standard and of course quattro 4WD. The 2.0 litre TFSI 252 hp petrol engine however has what Audi calls 'quattro with ultra technology'.



Ultra is the brand's name for their most fuel and CO2 efficient versions. With the quattro ultra system, during standard operation, all-wheel-drive is deactivated but remains instantly available. In effect the centrally positioned limited slip differential, which supplied driving torque permanently to all four wheels, has been replaced with a multi-plate clutch and integrated decoupler fitted to the rear axle, so the rear wheels are only connected to the system when needed. Currently this new 'ultra quattro' system is only available with the 2.0 litre petrol engine with the new Allroad, but Audi says more models across their entire ranges will use this system in future.

Also in line with fuel saving and lower CO2 emissions the new A4 Allroad is up to 90 kg lighter than the first generation range it replaces, thanks to a new platform. The CO2 emissions are claimed to have improved by up to 21% as well. As the main buyers of the new Allroad will be business users the important news is that Benefit-in-Kind company car tax is 25-26% for the 2.0 litre petrol and diesel engines and 27% for the 3.0 litre V6 turbodiesel models on 17 inch wheels. As an example probably the best selling Allroad will be the new 2.0 litre TDI 190 hp quattro automatic with standard 17 inch wheels. This has an official Combined Cycle figure of 57.6 mpg and 128 g/km of CO2 so BIK is 25% and VED road tax zero cost for the First Year rate and then £110 thereafter. This model has the range starter price of £36,010.





In addition to quattro all-wheel-drive, standard specification includes electric windows and door mirrors, air-con, cruise control, Audi Drive Select with an additional Off-Road mode, Xenon headlights, Audi Smartphone interface, MMI radio with 7-inch touchscreen, front and rear parking sensors, a powered tailgate and pre-sense city brake assist. Sport versions gain items such as 18 inch alloy wheels, LED front and rear lights, front sports seats, leather upholstery. MMI Navigation, Audi Connect, updated 10 speaker sound system and front acoustic glazing with privacy glass for the rear side and tailgate windows.

All versions have 34 mm (1.34 in) of extra ground clearance over standard A4 Avant estates. The £900 optional adaptive suspension with damper control I recommend as its various modes for degrees of suspension settings can be used to iron-out the firmness of the more rugged suspension needed for off-road robustness. Likewise all versions have a boot space of 505 litres (17.83 cu.ft) and with the rear seats folded this increases to 1,510 litres (53.33 cu.ft). Of course there are loads of extra cost options such as the £900 head-up display to the £2,000 Technology Pack.

Our test drive version, the only engine available at the Media launch, the 3.0 litre TDI 272 hp 8-speed auto is priced at £39,630 but with loads of options being showcased weighed in at £56,118.

The A4 Allroad can be visually distinguished from its Avant stablemate by its large radiator grille, underbody protection plates, muscular bumpers, wide wheelarches and extended side sills. It is 29 mm (1.14 in) longer than its predecessor at 4,750 mm (15.58 ft) and the wheelbase has been increased by 13 mm (0.52in) so it is a little roomier than before.

Inside the Allroad carries over the superb cabin of the latest A4s so it looks great and is first class in quality, making it a pleasing place to be for long hours of travel whether you are the driver or passenger seated in the front or the rear.

On the road, due to its taller suspension, the body control is not as tight as conventional A4 models. It is a little looser during cornering with some body roll, but not to any great



uncomfortable extent. It doesn't 'waft' around corners, it just feels less precise. As far as ride comfort goes the optional adjustable suspension I suggest is a must for those users travelling long distances. In its standard form, or setting, the ride is firm and impacts from potholes resonate through the car. Set in its Comfort mode the ride on-road is first rate and will be tireless on long journeys.

With the 3.0 litre TDI most powerful engine producing 272 hp and 600 Nm (443 lb.ft) of torque with drive to all four wheels through a new 8-speed tiptronic auto gearbox, performance at high or low speeds on-road was effortless and during a short drive using farm land the 'grunt' was reassuring going up hills and in and out of deep-rutted tracks.





Top speed is 155 mph so 70 mph legal cruising speeds put no pressure on the engine at all with its 'tall' eighth gear using the lowest possible engine revs to provide good touring fuel economy. It is the strong silent type, aiming to please, and complies with whatever demand is placed upon it. The zero to 62 mph acceleration time is just 5.5 seconds. Officially with the standard 17-inch wheels the Combined Cycle fuel consumption is 53.3 mpg with 139 g/km of CO2 emissions. Our test car had the optional 18-inch wheels costing an extra £850 which reduces the fuel economy to 52.3 mpg and raises the emissions to 143 g/km. That increase in wheel size pushes VED road tax up from £130 to £145 a year and it increases company car BIK tax from 27% to 28%. It makes no financial sense to me to pay more for



18-inch wheels and then to pay more in running costs to have them.

For the record our test drive fuel consumption using winding Cotswold roads busy with holiday traffic was 31.8 mpg. It will do much better on a longer run or motorway journey.

VERDICT

For a few owners where off-road travel is frequent - vets, surveyors, architects, equestrian trainers and the like, the A4 Allroad quattro will make practical sense. But for most users wanting a plush estate car the A4 Avant quattro is cheaper to buy and run and still gives all-wheel-drive traction but with less ground clearance. It's a 'horses for courses' decision.

For: A high riding version of the latest and well respected Audi A4 Avant estate range, long-legged refined cruising ability, a genuine off-road alternative to a mid-sized SUV, impeccable build quality, great kerb appeal.

Against: Not the most logical A4 model for most people, higher spec. options mean higher running costs in addition to significantly increasing the already high the on-road price.



Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Audi A4 allroad 3.0 TDI quattro automatic.

Engine: 3. -litre, V6 turbodiesel, 272 hp, 600 Nm (443 lb.ft) of torque from 1,500 rpm.

Transmission: 8-speed auto, quattro all-wheel-drive.

Performance:



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0-62mph: 5.5seconds.

Top speed: 155 mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle with 18-inch wheels 52.3 mpg (31.8 mpg on test).

Emissions and Taxation: CO2 143 g/km, VED road tax £145, BIK company car tax 28%.
(Standard 17-inch wheels 56.5 mpg CO2 139 g/km, VED £130, BIK 27%).

Insurance Group: 39E.

Warranty: 3 years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,750 mm (15.58 ft), W 1,842 mm (6.04 ft), H 1,493 mm (4.90 ft), boot/load space 505 to 1,510 litres (17.83 to 53.33 cu.ft), braked towing weight up to 2,100 kg (4,630 lb), 5 doors/5 seats.

Price: £39,630 (£56,118 as tested).