



Audi News and First Impressions of Audi's Latest Q7 Quattro Models

Published: July 21, 2016

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Online version: <https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/audi-news-and-first-impressions-of-audis-latest-q7-quattro-models/>





Two Electrifying New Audi Q7 Quattro Models - 'Fast' and 'Frugal'...

Reviewed by David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

News

Electrifying new models but in two ways. First, electrifying performance from the SQ7 4.0 V8 TDI 435 hp 900 Nm (664 lb.ft) quattro, the UK's fastest and most powerful diesel SUV, priced from £70,970 on-the-road. Second, the most frugal Q7, the e tron 3.0 TDI quattro plug-in diesel electric hybrid SUV which officially returns up to 156.9 mpg and is priced from £64,950.

These are the latest two new variants to be added to Audi's fast-growing range of models which has gone from 17 to 44 in 15 years, resulting in record global and UK sales. In the UK quattro technology has been on sale for 37 years and it now accounts for a third of Audi's 166,000 annual new car sales. Quattro all-wheel drive models range from the A1 supermini hatch up to the Q7 huge SUVs to the R8 V10 supercar and e tron Le Mans race cars.

On the subject of sales for these two new additional Q7 models, Anna Chudley, Audi UK's Q7 product manager, said at this week's media launch that last year they sold 3,700 Q7s in the UK and she expects the high performance SQ7 to account for around 15% of future Q7 sales mainly to retail customers. As for the Q7 e tron diesel/plug in electric, that version is expected to account for 10% of future sales, mainly to fleet and business customers because of its low CO2 emissions of 48 g/km, which results in a low 10% Benefit-in-Kind tax for company car users. It is also exempt from VED road tax and it is free from the London Congestion Charge. However it is not eligible for The Government's Plug-In Vehicle Grant due to its high price.

The new Audi SQ7 quattro SUV

Order books are now open with UK deliveries starting in August for the Audi SQ7 high performance engine technology showcase model with an on-the-road price from £70,970. This huge seven-seater SUV is claimed to be the UK's fastest and most powerful diesel SUV



on the market.



It is the first series production car to incorporate an electric powered supercharger with two sequential turbochargers. The supercharger, or compressor as Audi calls it, is powered by a 48-volt electrical sub system although the vehicle retains its normal 12-volt electric power supply for other functions throughout the vehicle.

Essentially the supercharger provides immediate engine acceleration response before one turbocharger kicks in for the low to intermediate power boost and the second turbo continues engine boost from the intermediate to high level speeds. Turbo-lag is a thing of the past with this supercharger twin-turbo system so expect to see other manufacturers adopting similar setups in the future.



The SQ7 uses a new 4.0-litre, V8 TDI turbodiesel unit producing 435 hp but more importantly a huge 900 Nm (664 lb.ft) of torque from only 1,000 rpm. It is mated with an 8-speed automatic transmission with quattro all-wheel drive. Top speed is restricted to 155 mph but the zero to 62 mph acceleration time is a blisteringly fast 4.9 seconds. Remember we are talking about a premium brand, high specification, seven-seater, large 5.0 metre (18.4 ft) long SUV weighing close to 2.5 tonnes.

As for fuel economy, it is not as punishing as the performance or vehicle weight suggests. Officially the Combined Cycle figure on the standard-fit 20-inch alloy wheels is 39.2 mpg and on my brief test drive this week covering the winding but traffic-busy Cotswold A roads the figure was 31.9 mpg, which, given our enthusiasm for trying the acceleration experience, was impressive. The CO2 figure is 190 g/km so VED road tax is £500 for the First Year rate and £270 thereafter. Company car drivers will pay 37% Benefit-in-Kind tax.

Standard specification includes S-specific interior goodies such as Audi's highly praised Virtual Cockpit where the sat-nav and other info can be displayed in the instrument binnacle right in front of the driver as well as on the centre display screen. Also fitted are 20-inch alloy wheels, the all-important air-suspension, active sound exhaust system which gives a glorious engine note, LED headlights, privacy glass, rear view camera and smartphone interface.



Extra cost options include the Driving Dynamics Sports Pack priced at a weighty £5,700 but given the performance potential this option includes the electromechanical active roll stabilisation function, which reduces high speed cornering body-roll and is worth the extra money. It also includes a sports differential and all wheel steering. Other key optional equipment includes 22-inch alloy wheels, carbon ceramic brakes, matrix headlights and a Tour Pack which includes Traffic Jam Assist and night vision. As a guide to what a fully spec'd SQ7 might really cost, our test drive model, priced at £70,970 on the road, but with loads of the showcase options it ended up with a price-tag of £95,160. A very high price for very high performance.

All these handling options, either standard or extra cost, gave an impressive performance of ride quality from the air suspension, superb body control from the active roll bars and



precise cornering from the four wheel steering all coupled with a music to your ears exhaust soundtrack and more power under your right foot than you are ever likely to legally need.



VERDICT

Expensively brilliant if a powerful large SUV is your requirement! .

For: Huge size coupled with huge instantaneous acceleration, a technology tour de force, beautiful roomy interior; with this amount of power, sharp handling and selectable ride comfort warrants adding some of the performance options.

Against: Other less expensive Q7 models will satisfy most needs.



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

Audi SQ7 TDI quattro 7-seater SUV.

Engine: 4.0 litre, V8, TDI diesel with supercharger and twin turbochargers, 435 hp, 900 Nm (664 lb.ft) of torque from 1,000rpm.

Transmission: 8-speed auto, quattro 4WD.

Performance: 155 mph restricted top speed, 0-62mph 4.9-seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 39.2 mpg (31.9 mpg on test), VED road tax £500/£270. BIK company car tax 37%.

Insurance Group: 49E.

Warranty: 3 years/60,000 miles.

Price: From £70,970

The new Audi Q7 e tron hybrid quattro SUV

Again order books are open now for Audi's first plug-in hybrid Q family model, with deliveries starting in August. Audi does of course have their A3 e tron plug-in family car model but the big five-seater Q7 e tron is aimed at a completely different market



The Q7 e tron is priced from £64,950, but add in the extra cost options and our test car weighed in at £78,505 on-the-road. Because of its high price the Q7 e tron is not applicable for the Government's Plug-In Vehicle Grant but it is exempt from VED road tax, with its low 48 g/km of CO2 emissions. The main buyers - company car drivers - will pay only 10% Benefit-in-Kind tax and the London Congestion Charge is free.

The UK sales growth of plug-in hybrids has been significant due to their low business-user tax costs with the less prestigious than the Q7, but more affordable, Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV leading the way with almost 12,000 registrations last year. Audi's aspirations for their Q7 e tron plug-in hybrid SUV are far less with around 370 UK sales in a full year, mostly to business-users looking to reduce their company car tax costs.



Unlike the rest of the Q7 large SUV models the e tron is a five instead of seven seater with some of the rear space taken up by the by the lithium-ion battery pack. However with five seats in use the boot still offers 650 litres (22.95 cu.ft) of luggage space with the load area increasing to 1,835 litres (64.80 cu.ft) with the rear three seats folded down.

To get to the crux of the Q7 e tron's technical features, a 3.0 litre, V6 TDI turbodiesel engine is mated with 94 kW electric motor driving the quattro 4WD system through an 8-speed auto gearbox. The combined power output is 373 hp, with 700 Nm (516 lb.ft) of torque from 1,250 rpm. Officially on standard 19-inch wheels the Combined Cycle fuel economy is up to 156.9 mpg with a CO2 rating as little as 48 g/km. On electric power only, driving range is up to 34 miles, with an overall driving range combining diesel and electric power of up to 820 miles.





On our media launch test drive over 40 miles using Cotswold winding but traffic busy roads the figure was 72.8 mpg. The battery power ran-out after 21 miles and then the vehicle used mainly the diesel engine coupled with the electric power harvested during the over-run periods. It is a fact that plug-in hybrids whether coupled with petrol or diesel engines perform best for fuel economy only if they are regularly charged. Long runs with no charging during a journey reduce the mpg figures to those of conventional non-hybrid powertrains. The battery can be fully charged in as little as 2.5 hours via a public charge point or domestic wallbox but it will take eight hours using a normal domestic socket.

There are selectable three driving modes. The EV mode is electric power only, Hybrid auto mode decides the most appropriate use of power between diesel and electric and in Hybrid Hold mode the system stores the electric power for use at a later time in the journey when it would be more appropriate. The vehicle generally starts off silently in electric mode with the diesel engine coming into play when the driver presses the accelerator more firmly.





The performance in terms of speed is impressive with 143 mph, and a zero to 62mph acceleration time of 6.2 seconds. In whatever mode the electric to diesel power transition is seamless as are the gearchanges through the 8-speed auto gearbox, and of course there is quattro all wheel drive for added grip. For even more refinement take the £2,000 adaptive air suspension system which irons out the firm ride.

Standard specification includes Audi's Virtual Cockpit, predictive efficiency assistant, MMI navigation, smartphone interface, Audi Connect infotainment and e tron connected services.

UK sales of plug-in hybrids have increased rapidly but they still only take a small proportion of new vehicle sales and Audi's conservative predictions mirror this with the Q7 e tron. For most Q7 owners the conventional 3.0 litre TDI turbodiesel versions will save around £15k on the purchase price and still return over 40 mpg, but road tax will cost £185 instead of nothing and the all-important company car tax is much higher at 30%.



VERDICT

The Q7 e-tron has its advantages but at a high initial cost.

For: Lower running costs and taxes versus Q7 diesel models, impressive fuel saving performance potential, seamless changes between electric/diesel driving modes, superb interior.

Against: Much higher purchase price over Q7 3.0 litre TDI models, only five seats as opposed to other seven-seater Q7s, not as agile in handling due to the added weight of its electric motor and battery pack, regular battery charging must be used to obtain the official fuel economy figures.



Mini Milestones and wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Audi Q7 e tron 3.0 TDI diesel/electric plug-in hybrid, quattro SUV.

Power unit: 3.0 litre V6 turbodiesel, 94 kW electric motor, combined power output 373 hp, 700 Nm (516 lb.ft) of torque from 1,250 rpm.

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

Performance: 143 mph, 0-62 mph 6.2 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle up to 156.9 mpg (72.8 mpg on test),.

Emissions and taxation: CO2 48 g/km, VED £0, Benefit-in-Kind company car tax 10%.
Insurance Group: 44E.

Warranty: 3 years/60,000 miles

Price: From £64,950.