

CLASSIC DRIVER

New Audi A5 Cabriolet



The convertible version of Audi's A5 will be in British showrooms next spring. Unusually, the Ingolstadt company has also announced that the high performance S5 will follow shortly afterwards. Top level Audis are usually launched later in the model's cycle.

The new car replaces the successful A4 cabrio and is the latest in a line of generous 2 + 2, two-door convertible Audis that started with the iconic 1990s Audi 80 version and carries over many generic styling cues. Indeed, if placed alongside each other the three versions look very similar: pillarless, no roll bars, a 'flat' deck profile from screen to boot, generously long doors, and a high quality fabric roof.

The latter is of interest as Audi has eschewed the current trend for folding metal tops (à la BMW 3 Series), preferring a lightweight soft top that can raise in 17 seconds (retracting in 15) at speeds up to 31mph. It also has the benefit of offering more than adequate luggage space (380 litres when raised, 320 litres when stowed) for the four adult passengers that Audi is confident can be carried in the car.



The initial engine line-up will be two FSI direct injection petrol engines and one TDI diesel: 2.0 TFSI (211PS), 3.2 FSI (265PS), 3.0 TDI (240PS). The diesel will come with quattro as standard, but 4wd will also be offered across the range as an option. Transmissions are either 6-speed manual, an 'S tronic' twin-clutch 7-speed automatic or 'multitronic' CVT. S tronic is only available on the 3.0 TDI quattro and is standard on the range-topping S5 Cabriolet.



Unlike its hardtop sibling, the convertible S5 carries the supercharged 333PS V6 as fitted to the new S4 rather than a V8. The more efficient 6-cylinder will give 5.6 second 0-62mph potential, with fuel economy of up to 29.4mpg (a figure awaiting official verification). Quattro 4wd is standard; however the company will offer as an option a new sports differential that apportions drive not only from front to rear but also between

each rear wheel, allowing an outside rear wheel greater traction to in effect 'push' the car through a corner. This will initially be only available on S5 models, finding its way to other convertible A5s in due course.

UK prices for the new range will start at around the £30,000 mark, with the S5 at approximately £42,000. Deliveries will commence next spring.



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