

CLASSIC DRIVER

Driven: Audi A4 Allroad Quattro



For those who like the Audi A4 but want off-road capabilities, you're in luck. With the Allroad Quattro, Ingolstadt is one of the few manufacturers to offer an off-road version of its popular estate. Classic Driver recently drove the newly revised soft-roader in Portugal.

The A4 Allroad Quattro is an adventurer – in comparison to its A4 brothers and their direct competition, anyway. While a 37mm taller chassis, underbody protection and permanent all-wheel drive won't conquer the Sahara, in everyday life the Allroad is always ready for a little trip into the unknown.

That increased utility can also look good, as previous generations of the Allroad have proved – although the plastic protectors over the wheelarches remain a matter of taste. There is also an impressive and distinctive single-frame grille, as well as other steel and aluminum addenda that underline the exclusivity of this special A4.





While the entire A4 family continues to be attractive to the market, the Audi design team has shown improvement in the product beyond all that attention to detail. With bolder headlamps, bevelled upper corners of the grille, more outwardly projecting air intakes in the bumper (not on the Allroad Quattro, though) and a domed bonnet, the new A4 is visually powerful and sleek on the road.

At the rear, newly designed taillights emphasise the LED lighting technology, and a modified rear apron with a small diffuser completes the design of the now eighth-generation A4 - if you count the Audi 80, the saloon series started in 1972 with the B1.





Less, visually at least, has been changed on the inside of the Audi A4, but the new version has an even higher-quality environment thanks to the use of more aluminium, and our Audi A4 Allroad is also equipped with fine-laminated wood trim strips, a first for the A4 series. A new range of Audi steering wheels also makes its debut, including the now flat-bottomed sport steering wheel. More innovations, however, are offered for the infotainment systems on the new A4: the driver can now surf the Internet and retrieve e-mails. For other passengers, the optional integrated Bluetooth car phone has Wi-Fi hotspot that can be used by up to eight devices simultaneously.

The online connection also integrates current traffic information into the navigation system, which features traffic flow on the colour monitor. A nice feature is the Google Earth maps function, which provides three-dimensional satellite and aerial images. Enhanced safety is optionally provided by the Lane Assist and Active Cruise Control, the latter braking the car automatically to avoid or reduce the severity of an imminent collision.

A new standard system also recommends when the driver should take a break, by giving a visual and acoustic 'nudge' after prolonged periods behind the wheel.



Our test car, an A4 Allroad 3.0 TDI Quattro, has multi-adjustable, solidly bolstered sport seats that provide good lateral support and adjustability. Our first chance to open up the 245HP six-cylinder engine gives a clue as to why its motorsport brothers have competed for several years at Le Mans with a diesel engine. Once the farther reaches of the accelerator are explored, the A4 Allroad surges forward as freely as the waves we drive parallel to. The numbers: 6.2 seconds from 0-62mph, and a 149mph top speed.

But our adventure is taking place not on a paved road, but on the gravel track towards the sea - and here, the A4 Allroad's off-road abilities truly come to light as it rolls effortlessly over the sandy roads studded with rocks. On the switchbacks up into the countryside around Cascais, just west of Lisbon, the Allroad again shows its athletic side: with a maximum torque of 369lb ft between 1,400 and 3,250rpm, the six-cylinder feels at home in virtually any engine speed range. In real-world terms, this means that even if you forget you're in manual mode and stay in a high gear after a tight corner, there's enough twist to ensure the car behind isn't sat on your rear bumper for too long.





A sportier driving experience is available by selecting Dynamic mode in the Audi Drive Select system: this provides a more direct throttle and steering response, firmer suspension, and faster switching of the 7-speed S-Tronic gearbox – adding to the benefits of the Allroad’s slightly wider track compared to the base A4. But even in this mode, the consumption of the upgraded six-cylinder is surprisingly moderate: during our test – and despite meeting frequent uphill inclines – we achieved at least 28mpg.

The main economy improvements in the A4 models are attributed to the start-stop system with regenerative braking, although the new electro-mechanical steering system also plays its part. The Audi Drive Select system also has an ‘Eco’ mode for the first time, intended expressly to minimise consumption; paired with a suitable driving style, an average of 46mpg is reportedly achievable.



Though the new A4 series has a possible total of 23 different engine and transmission combinations, the Allroad version is simplified by offering just four variants. The entry-level 177HP 2.0 TDI is available with a six-

speed manual transmission, and lists at £31,375 OTR, and for those who prefer a petrol engine, the 2.0 TFSI engine (211HP with a 6-speed manual or optional S Tronic) starts at £31,475.

The model we tested, the range-topping 3.0 TDI, costs £36,840 with standard S-Tronic - unbeatable with its high-torque power supply in combination with the low consumption. However, for the purposes of an adventure, all are more than up to the task.

Text: [Jan Richter](#)

Photos: Jan Richter, Audi

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