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Audi A1 citycarver – Road Test

Published: February 17, 2020

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Online version: <https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/audi-a1-citycarver-road-test/>



NEW AUDI A1 CITYCARVER FOR THE URBAN JUNGLE.

David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) is your guide...

The citycarver (all lower case letters) is a five door supermini sector sized hatchback based on the Audi A1 Sportback but with pseudo-SUV styling. It is priced from £22,040 and it is aimed at urban jungle motoring says Audi, whatever that is. There is no 4WD option, all models are only front-wheel drive so it's another case of styling over function.

The starter citycarver model is actually £1,400 more expensive than the regular A1



Sportback with the same engine and similar Sport spec level. For that sort of inflated price you can have a more conventional supermini sized SUV such as the new Nissan Juke, Skoda Kamiq or SEAT Arona.

The A1 citycarver SUV looks are achieved with jacked-up suspension, more muscular exterior styling with the fitment of plastic wheelarch enhancements, redesigned plastic sill cappings, underbody protection, deeper walled tyres for the 17-inch alloy wheels, an octagonal single frame grille similar to Audi's Q SUV models and a more robust rear bumper.

It has around 50 mm (about 2 inches) more ground clearance than a regular A1 Sportback thanks to the raised suspension and deeper walled tyres so its ride height should provide easier getting in and out but even with the extra ground clearance riding over kerbs is not to be recommended, just think about the alloys.



With demand for SUV styled models never higher the citycarver treatment is not new in most segments of the new car market but for smaller family cars the Ford Fiesta Active is probably the nearest competitor although the new larger Kia XCeed hatchback has received similar treatment over its donor Ceed versions.

Fortunately Audi with the citycarver has not adopted the interior height restrictive coupé SUV roofline recently introduced with their Q3 Sportback. This addition to the A1 Sportback range maintains the familiar usable five door hatchback body style and dimensions being a shade over 4.0 metres (just over 13 feet) in length with a 335 litre (11.83 cu.ft) boot and



folding rear seats which increase the load space to 1,090 litres (38.49 cu.ft).



The citycarver is initially available with two turbo petrol engines, the 1.0 litre 30 TFSI, three cylinder 116 hp and 1.5 litre 35 TFS four cylinder 150 hp option, both available with manual and auto gearboxes. The automatic seven speed S tronic transmission adds £1,540 to the price and the larger 1.5 engine is £1,025 more than the 1.0 litre unit.

Being an Audi there are of course lots of extra cost options such as the £1,695 Technology Pack which adds sat-nav, wireless phone charging and Audi's larger Virtual Cockpit function. The £696 Plus Pack adds privacy glass and dual-zone climate control while the Comfort and Sound Pack at £1,150 provides a Bang and Olufsen sound system, Audi Parking System Plus and heated front seats. My test car also had a £100 space saving spare wheel, tool kit and jack at £25, a grey tinted sunshield for the windscreen at £65 and leatherette interior trim elements at £150. With its distinctive Python Yellow metallic paint my 30 TFSI



116 hp S tronic auto citycarver test car with all the options I've listed cost £28,035. It costs plenty to be fashionably 'urban-cool'.

It would be easy to gloss over what the citycarver has in the way of specification either as standard or as an option but given its high price a bit more detail follows. Standard equipment includes 17-inch alloy wheels, a roof-edge spoiler normally reserved for S line versions, full LED headlights with dynamic rear turn signals, air conditioning, the Audi drive select dynamic handling system and assistance technologies such as cruise control, Audi Pre-sense front with pedestrian and cyclist recognition, lane departure warning and hill-hold assist.

Audi's typical interior design integrates an 8.8-inch MMI touchscreen and 10.25-inch fully digital cockpit display to take care of the majority of functions including connectivity. Its capability can be expanded even further by adding the optional Technology Pack incorporating the Audi virtual cockpit with an increased range of views and functions, MMI navigation plus bringing a larger 10.1-inch high resolution screen, Audi connect with its wide variety of online services and the Audi Phone Box facilitating wireless smartphone charging.

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To make city driving as effortless and enjoyable as possible in the urban sprawl and beyond, a Comfort and Sound Pack is also available, the optional Parking System Plus system with acoustic and visual assistance and additional front protection complements the standard rear sensors, plus front seat heating and the Bang & Olufsen 3D sound system with 560 watts of music power are further extra cost enhancements. All good stuff but disappointing was the perceived downgraded quality of the interior with lots of black plastic and even the door cards were hard plastic. I noticed a similar downgrading of the quality of interior materials recently in the new Audi Q3 Sportback SUV.

Although the raised suspension adds 40 mm (1.57 in) of ground clearance the deeper walled



tyres add another 10 mm (0.39 in) to the overall ride height and that increase definitely provides a softer and more comfortable ride over urban potholed roads, due to the extra cushioning. Despite its taller ride height there seemed to be no less in the way of sharp and predictable handling with very limited bodyroll during cornering either in urban or rural motoring conditions. There was ample grip during cornering despite it only being driven by the front wheels. The raised ride height also gave better visibility in and around urban traffic and the hatchback's boxy design with large side windows also gave good rear quarter visibility, which made parking easier especially with the sensors and rear view camera.

The 1.0 litre three cylinder TFSI EU6.2 compliant turbo petrol unit is well used throughout the Volkswagen Group of many brands. It's a 'gutsy and smooth little performer with 116 bhp, even allowing for the 200 Nm (148 lb.ft) of torque to be developed at a relatively high 2,000 rpm level for a modern day turbo petrol engine. There was plenty of engine flexibility and fuss-free response at lower crawling speeds. It might be classed as an urban SUV but it was no slouch or lacking in usable performance for open road driving and motorway cruising. Top speed is 123 mph and the zero to 62 mph acceleration time is 9.9 seconds - all perfectly acceptable. Matched with the seven speed auto gearbox, whether it was urban jungle or open road driving the engine worked well in harmony with the easy driving automatic.



The official WLTP Combined Cycle fuel consumption is 43.5 mpg which my week of driving matched, indeed bettered on occasions. The CO2 figure is 117 g/km so VED First Year road tax is £170 followed by the £145 Standard rate for year two onwards. The Benefit-in-Kind company car tax rate is 27% but that goes up by 1% when the new rates are applied in April this year. The insurance is Group 15E and the warranty is the usual VW Group's ungenerous three years/60,000 miles period.

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VERDICT

Many good points but a lot more expensive than the regular A1 Sportback on which it is based...



For: A practical five door supermini sized hatchback but with popular SUV styling elements, raised ride height gives improved visibility and easier access, good engine performance, compliant ride, easy and sure-footed to drive in traffic or on the open road.

Against: Too expensive compared to the A1 Sportback model with the same engine, transmission and comparable spec, too many extra cost options – some of which should be standard fit, no 4WD option, hard plastic interior trim, contrived model name, ungenerous warranty.





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

Audi A1 citycarver, 30 TFSI 116 hp S tronic auto 2WD, five door SUV styled hatchback.

Price: £23,580 (£28,035 as tested).

Engine/transmission: 1.0 litre, TFSI three cylinder, 116 hp, 200 Nm (148 lb.ft) turbo petrol, seven speed S tronic automatic.

Performance: 123 mph, 0-62 mph 9.9 seconds, Combined Cycle 43.5 mpg (43.2 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 117g/km, VED road tax £170/£145, BiK company car tax 27%.

Insurance Group: 15E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions: L 4,046 mm (13.27 ft), W 1,756 mm (5.76 ft), H 1,483 mm (4.87 ft), wheelbase 2,566 mm (8.42 ft), boot/load space 335 to 1,090 litres (11.83 to 38.49 cu.ft), five doors/five seats.