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Audi RS4 Avant – Road Test

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The Audi RS4 Avant 2.9TFSI quattro – pace and space.

The Audi RS4 has come of age and matured into a stunning model in its latest semi-estate or Avant version, *writes Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).*

RS4 production has been on and off since it was launched in 1999 and it is currently the fourth generation of the most driver-focused model in the immensely popular and wide Audi A4 range.

Audi looked very hard at the sector where it wanted to push the RS4 and decided it would do best as an Avant estate, bringing immense practicality and usefulness with a sporting edge for buyers who have few choices in the market.



With its practicality has come performance and panache and thanks to its quattro powertrain it's an all-seasons super-car in a sensible shape with room for five people and a lot of space behind.

The latest generation power-packed and torquey 2.9 litre V6 turbo-petrol engine with 450 hp and a huge 600 Nm (443 lb.ft) of torque from 1,900 rpm is matched with a really silky, quick-changing eight-speed autobox with optimised ratios, and everything goes onto the road though the company's acclaimed and effective quattro permanent four-wheel-drive system. We averaged about 30 mpg, slightly less than the stated combined figure, but after some very enthusiastic motoring saw an indicated 10 mpg, so beware how heavy footed you are.



You cannot put a wheel wrong and you know precisely where it's going with the very fluid



steering responding to each input and feeding back the subtleties of the surface, while the massive brakes quickly drag it down from speed with light pressure and under total control without any drama.

The secondary controls are just a finger away from use most of the time but need familiarity to correctly operate each time because there are a lot of them, mostly grouped on or behind the steering wheel. You have Audi's multi-purpose virtual cockpit display ahead of the driver and our test car was also equipped with the clear head-up display.

A large screen on the central console looks after the selective info-tainment, climate controls and creature comforts, as well as navigation. That's also feature-rich but means it can be distracting to use on the move.

The climate control is very effective throughout the car, easily adjusted and well maintained with good output or you can open powered windows, but there's no sunroof available.

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Driver and passenger comfort is really good from the big opening doors and low lift tailgate, with wrap-around supportive front seats and well shaped rear seats, including adjustable thigh support for the front pair.

Room is excellent throughout, the bootspace triples capacity in a moment and it's a sensible shape for most items, with a flat floor and smooth sides.



Despite the RS lowered suspension, ride quality is helped by the optional adjustable fluid suspension offering a range of settings from comfort to sporting, but it's not cheap and needs to be carefully considered. Changes can be felt almost immediately they are selected and really make a difference to the car's feedback and finesse.

The optional larger wheels and low profile tyres under blistered arches are surprisingly comfortable when utilised with the fluid suspension system and much better than you might think, but they did generate constant background noise.

That was probably more intrusive because the Audi RS4 Avant is otherwise a very quiet car until you quicken the pace and drop down a gear or two. Normal engine noise was muted yet I was tempted on many occasions to summon up the crackling roar from the engine and



distinctive oval-shaped exhausts because it was so addictive.

Then the power poured out smoothly but urgently and uninterrupted with the automatic box racing through the ratios and propelling man and machine towards the horizon.

Downchanges were achieved with intermediate blips from the engine so even when slowing down you were smiling.

The handling was sharp and surefooted at all times with the RS gaining a sports rear differential and the ride was generally comfortable even on the firmest chosen setting.

There is a lot of glass around the Avant shape and visibility is very good to front and sides, slightly restricted when reversing so the camera and sensors become a necessity. Lights and wipers were truly excellent at their jobs.

VERDICT

The comfort of the cabin, the effortless energy from the engine and the sophistication of the systems add up to an Audi experience you'll not want to give up and which few if any rivals can equal, let alone exceed.

For: Powertrain & performance, ride & handling, seats & room, practicality, refinement, potentially good economy, Audi's RS brand desirability.

Against: Very expensive options, expensive tax and high BiK penalties, constant road noise on 20-inch optional wheels & tyres, ungenerous warranty.



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

Audi RS4 Avant 2.9 TFSI quattro.

Price: £62,215 (with test options £77,760).

Engine/transmission: 450 hp, 600 Nm (423 Nm), 2.9 litre V6, turbo-petrol, eight speed auto, quattro AWD.

Performance: Derestricted 174 mph (standard 155 mph), 0-62mph 4.1 seconds.

Combined fuel consumption: 32.1 mpg (30 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 emissions 200 g/km, VED First Year rate road tax £1,240,



Standard rate £140 + £310 supplement for five years at it costs over £40k, BiK company car tax 37%.

Insurance Group: 45.

Warranty: Three years/ 60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,781 mm (15.69 ft), W 1,866 mm (6.12 ft), H 1,404 mm (4.61 ft), boot/load space 505 to 1,510 litres (17.83 to 53.33 cu.ft).