# Audi A3 Cabriolet

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## Following its launch earlier this year, we have now had the chance for a full road test of the Audi A3 Cabriolet. Tom Scanlan reports…

The fabric hood opens or closes in eighteen seconds and can be deployed at speeds up to 31 mph. On a 70 mph dual carriageway, the £230 optional wind deflector kept buffeting up front to a minimum and the noise levels, even at the national maximum speed, were

reasonably low.

Audi have strengthened the cabriolet in the usual way such things have to be done if a car has no roof and the car feels solid, with no scuttle shake. It seems to be just as quiet as a saloon A3, with only slight wind noise at 65-70mph and getting hardly more noticeable at much higher speeds.

Steering and braking are up to Audi's normal high standard, and the car can be driven briskly into bends with a high sense of security. The handling is generally excellent and there is all the technological anti-skid back-up automatically coming into effect if necessary. However, there were a few occasions at speed on motorways when the car seemed a touch reluctant to change lane; it was as though the wheels (on Pirelli tyres) were momentarily in a groove on the road's surface and I had to grip the steering wheel more firmly to get my change of direction. At first this was disconcerting, but I got used to it.

The test car, a 'Sport' version, had had its sports suspension 'deselected', which is a no-cost option. I must say that I prefer this to the sometimes too unforgiving type of 'sports' suspension.

The car was comfortable at all times, although I started to feel that I needed to get out of the seat after nearly four hours' non-stop driving.

The six-speed manual gearbox, again, is excellent, with a strong yet light feeling to the changes. The diesel engine provides easily enough performance for most people, enabling the car to reach 62 mph from a standstill in less than nine seconds; more important is all that typically-diesel torque for mid-range acceleration.

The controls were most pleasant to use, particularly the nicely-designed heater outlets. At night, the instruments were crystal clear and the optional adaptive Xenon headlights gave a very clear view of the road. I did have some difficulty with the Satellite navigation; for example, it would simply not let me simply enter the name ‘Calais’ into its system, until I found a long way round to do it. And using the controller actually to do your own writing also takes a lot of practice, especially if you’re not left-handed. There were also some hilarious attempts by the satnav’s voice at pronouncing foreign town names!

Convertibles usually have the problem of the roof when down taking up most of the boot; although the latest A3 cabriolet is better than before, it is still has a limited capacity.  The hood stows itself away into its own hard compartment that’s a permanent fixture at the top of the boot, so it was very useful to be able to fold the rear seats flat and, in the end, with careful arranging, quite a bit of luggage and smaller objects could be squeezed in.

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In practical terms, this car could best thought-of as a two-seater, certainly if the wind deflector is in place. Otherwise, yes, four people could ride in the car with the roof down but with hardly any luggage and no wind deflector. My two back-seat lady passengers (husbands up front), wearing suitable head gear, found it comfortable enough in the back, and, with the heater full on, could feel some heat coming through. They reported buffeting at speeds over 50 mph.

One of the really positive features over the previous models is the overall improvement in performance, emissions and economy across the range.  Depending on the model, Audi claims up to 26% less emission and 30% better fuel economy. The test car, for example, emits 110g/km meaning that the annual road fund licence outlay would be a mere £20.

On my drive of nearly 1000 miles, a lot of it at up to 110 miles an hour on autobahns, 80

mph on autoroutes, and 70mph motorways, the trip computer indicated an overall fuel consumption of 59.3 mpg. The official combined cycle figure for this most frugal model in the new range is 67.3 mpg.

Standard equipment across the range include 16” alloy wheels, air conditioning, DAB MMI radio with power-folding screen, iPod connection, Bluetooth interface, preparation for SD card-based navigation and a light and rain sensor package. Such is the long list of options available that, with relatively few on board, the test car still managed to increase its asking price from £27,820 to £35,425.

## WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC. IN BRIEF
## Audi A3 Cabriolet 2.0 TDi Sport

Drivetrain: Front engine, front wheel drive
Engine: 1968 cc twin cam, 4-cylinder in line, VTG turbocharger
Power: 150 bhp @ 3500-4000 rpm
Torque: 340 Nm (250 lb/ft) @ 1750-3000 rpm
0–62 mph: 8.9 seconds
Top speed: 139 mph
Fuel consumption, ‘official’ figures:

‘Urban’: 55.4 mpg
‘Extra urban’:  76.4 mpg
‘Combined’:  67.3 mpg
Actual figure displayed during our road test: 59.3 mpg
CO2 emissions: 110g/km