Audi A4 Avant 40 TDI quattro – Road Test

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Author: Robin Roberts

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2019 model year Audi A4 Avant 40TDI quattro tried and tested.

By Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

While SUVs are the flavour of the season, there're rich pickings for manufacturers and drivers in cars like the Audi A4 Avant.

Most SUVs are rarely used to their full capacity or ability but an estate car, particularly a sporting estate like the Black Edition 40TDI quattro tested, can offer a more rewarding experience.

It will seat five with plenty of room or offers over 1,500 litres (about 53 cu.ft) of luggage space and delivers it all in a stylish, refined, economical and dynamic manner more in keeping with a sports-car. Estate cars are also rarer than SUVs and that means they can be more profitable for manufacturers and benefit from higher residual value for owners.

The A4 Avant and stablemate saloon range is enormous, based on just four trim levels with a large choice of petrol or diesel engines, front and four wheel drive. Then you can tactfully pick from a truly extensive list of individual options and packs to precisely appoint your chosen and now individual car; if you have the money.

This test model sits towards the top of the A4 Avant range and came with nearly £13,000 of extras, a third of its standard cost, but it’s a wonderful showcase for the series.

The new generation 2.0 TD engine delivers both frugal fuel consumption and a fine turn of speed without sign of fuss but with a flexible nature at all times. It starts promptly, runs quietly, pulls very strongly from rest and punches out power for acceleration and overtaking, while settling into a steady state on the motorway if you want a stress-free journey over hundreds of miles.

On longer trips we saw over 50 mpg displayed by the on-board computer and it never went below 40 mpg so our average seemed reasonable. To that you can add the delights of a creamy seven-speed automatic transmission with a sporting side to the selector, and the ability to drive it sequentially through the ratios when you feel the urge or want to anticipate an overtake.

The suspension can also be tuned through a range of settings from comfort to dynamic to suit inclination, both of roads and driver's style. Steering is always pin-sharp without vibration or kick-back, it's agile and responsive feeding back to the hands and the turning circle is tight. Underfoot, the big brakes really haul down speed in a rapid yet relaxed manner without drama or danger and the parking brake held it on a very steep test slope we use.

Secondary controls, mostly grouped on or around the steering wheel, can take some familiarisation but they work well with practice and best if you don't have big fingers. Controls on the fascia and centre console operate functions of the infotainment display at any time, and the heating and ventilation is comprehensive, quick to respond, with good output and distribution. I found the oddments space lacking in size although there were plenty of compartments, trays and bins; it's just that most were too small and shallow to be of much use.

Access was really good throughout the cabin or via the fifth door which opened and closed from bumper level with electric motor assistance. The seats were curvaceous and comfortable with a lot of adjustment room and support, even in the back trio. Room was adequate for a six footer infront or back but the middle seat would best suit a slim person.

The powertrain was generally quiet, wind noises were low but the road-rumbles and bump-thump from suspension were ever present, and on some surfaces became particularly intrusive due to the size of the wheels and tyres, which also adversely affected the emissions figures and meant a higher tax rate. So carefully choose what you want to use.

Visibility with the A4 Avant was better than in most SUVs. Not only did it have very good high performance headlights with long wide beams, but they also sensed approaching traffic and automatically dipped to prevent dazzle. The wipers and washers at both ends kept the glass clear. Big interior and door mirrors gave a wide view to the rear and it came with a really high quality reversing camera.

VERDICT

The Audi A4 Avant Black Edition 40TDI quattro was a very easy to live with car, a sophisticated vehicle which can fulfill many roles without compromise but always in comfort and with capability to do more.

For: Build quality and refinement, very good seats and adjustable ride, excellent handling and powertrain, quick and economical, very roomy.

Against: Expensive options, road noise intrusion, fiddly to use on-board technology, limited oddments space, ungenerous warranty.

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

Audi A4 Avant Black Edition 40TDI quattro.

Price: £52,460 as tested (see text).

Engine/transmission: 2.0 litre, four cylinder, 190 hp turbodiesel, seven speed auto, 4WD.

Performance: 143 mph, 0–62 mph 7.6-seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined figure 53.3 mpg; 46.7mpg on test.

Emissions and taxation: CO2 emissions 140g/km (*dependent wheel & tyre sizes*),VED diesel rate First year road tax £515, Standard rate £140 + £310 supplement for five years as it costs over £40k, BiK company car tax 33% (36% from April).

Insurance Group: 26E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4.74 m (15.55 ft), W 1.85 m (6.07 ft), H 1.46 m (4.79 ft), boot/load space 505 to 1,510 litres (17.83 to 53.32 cu.ft), five doors/five seats.