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Audi Q8 e-tron S Line 55 quattro – Road Test

Published: November 13, 2023

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Online version: <https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/audi-q8-e-tron-s-line-55-quattro-road-test/>



Audi's flagship all-electric model is on course to make waves in the luxury sector, writes Robin Roberts;



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The Q8 e-tron is available in both SUV and Sportback coupé bodystyles with different battery sizes, charging and range potential but all get 4WD. There are four trim levels beginning with Sport, moving onto S line, Black Edition and Vorsprung.

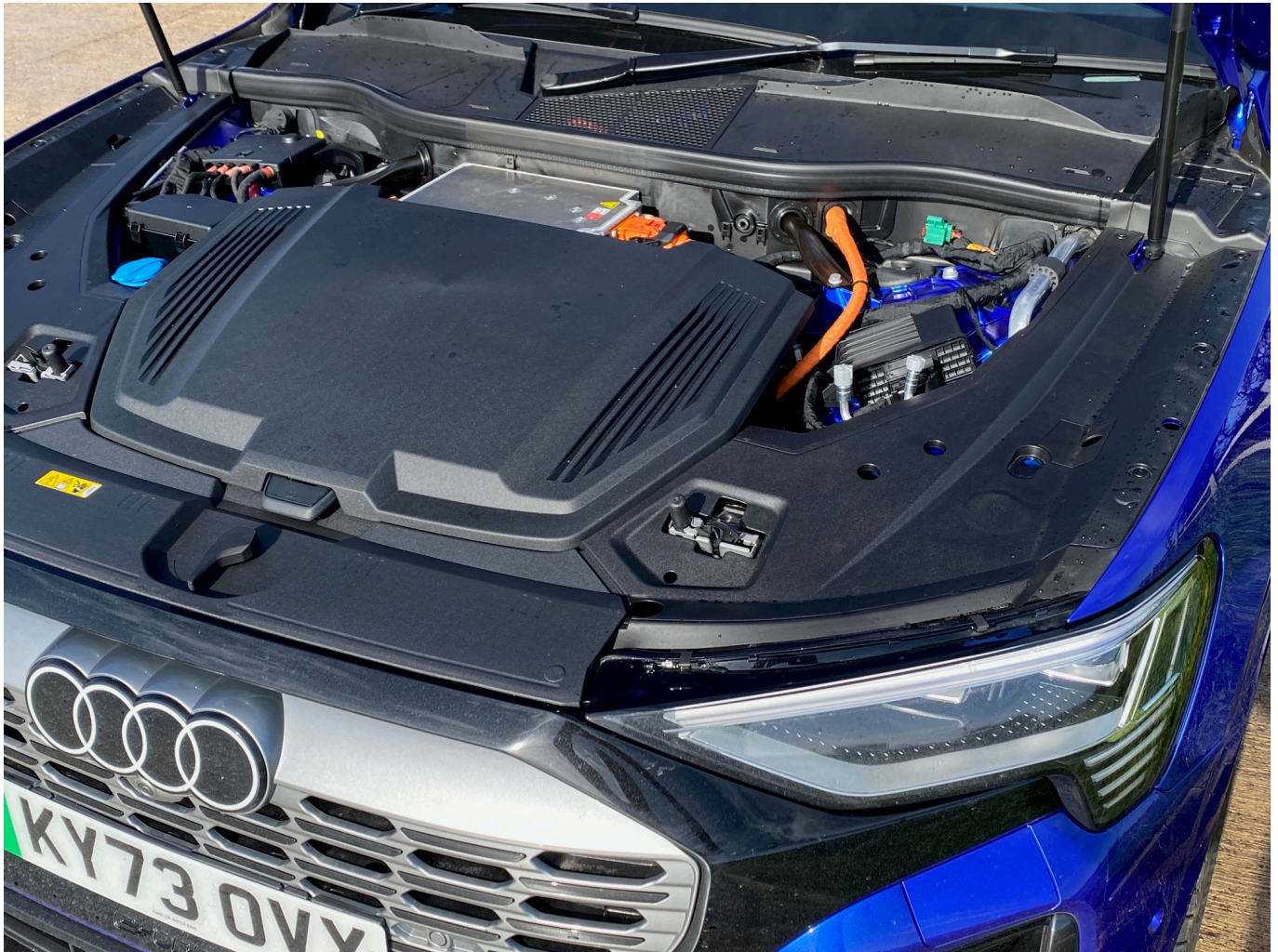
All versions can be charge up to 80% capacity in about 30 mins. and come with choice of AC and DC cables for a variety of power points.

The Audi e-tron was the company's first pure electric model when it was launched in 2019 and it became the Q8 e-tron when facelifted three years later to keep up with newer rivals, and again refreshed for 2024. Its early days were dogged by component supply shortages but these were overcome and it has become one of the prestige car maker's most sought after models.



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Officially it's a mid-size model but if you don't live in America it is a large SUV on British and European roads, and a heavy one as well.



Despite its size and weight, our Audi Q8 e-tron was exceptionally quick off the mark, swiftly overtook slower cars and effortlessly cruised motorways.

Off these main roads it was equally at home winding along country backroads taking everything thrown at it.

Handling was excellent for such a big car, the roadholding surefooted and confidence building and when you needed to slow down it did so quickly and squarely without drama under braking and just a modest pedal pressure. Push hard and it stopped in a very short distance from 70 mph.



Throttle take-up was seamless and the steering had a good turning circle for agility and ease of parking while the electronic parking brake securely held it on test hills.

Overall, the ride was velvet smooth but the big wheels and tyres could be heard coping with bad bits of tarmac even though they never intruded the cabin.

The road-noise seemed noticeable because there was a virtual absence of powertrain sources coming inside, just an occasional electric motor whine, but not a constant one at that.

With 664 Nm (490 lb.ft) of torque it was very quick off the mark away from traffic lights or out of a roundabout, pulled very strongly mid-range and seemed capable of easily exceeding the 70 mph maximum speed in the UK.

Contrastingly, it seemed to be hardly moving at the new 20 mph urban speed limit on Welsh roads we encountered but it instantly responded when out of the limit.

On a mixture of roads and journeys we saw the range reach 255 miles but calculate it would be nearer 290 miles if you really eked out the electricity from the available modes.

Whatever speed you do, the cabin environment was luxurious with nicely upholstered padded seats throughout and an offset split-back bench with drop-down central armrest. Doors opened wide to ease entry or exit and the massive boot had a powered open and closing door revealing a wide, long and fairly high loadbed with underfloor storage as well.



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Room was excellent for occupants and the front seats' adjustment was extensive and accommodating.

Adjusting the steering column and wheel with the variable door mirrors produced a driving position for any size of user.

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Visibility was good all round but the high waist meant you needed the reversing camera and sensors to avoid shorter items like posts or bins just out of sight.

For the driver, the instruments were big and clear, quickly changed to desired settings which emphasised certain features or performance and the major and minor controls, of which there were many, were all close to hand but required some familiarisation to instantly locate and use.

Cabin temperature control was very good with a wide range, extensive outlets and strong pressure directed where desired.

We liked the oddments room for a family car with door bins, pockets, recesses and trays throughout.

At night the vision was excellent with long range, wide and powerful headlights and large wipers with copious washers for dirty conditions.

Many like the high riding position of an SUV and the Audi Q8 e-tron was very satisfying in this respect which gave a commanding view reinforced by the precision of its controls and the positive stance on the road with little roll or wallowing to the handling.

You felt a little insulated from the world passing by but involved at the same time and always knew there was a lot more power in reserve should it be needed.



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VERDICT

It's an excellent flagship for the brand as it silently slips into the electric era for executive cars, which are not cheap but command respect for some very advanced engineering.

For: Performance & range, refinement, mechanically quiet, roomy with very comfortable seats.

Against: Road-noise was constant, infotainment screen and controls could be distracting.



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FAST FACTS

Model: Audi Q8 S line 55 e-tron 408 PS

Price: £88,190

Mechanical: 106 kWh battery, 300 kW motors, 4WD

Max Speed: 124 mph

0 - 62 mph: 5.6 sec

Range: 255 to 290 miles

Insurance Group: 50

C02 emissions: Zero

Bik rating: 2%, £ZeroFY, £ZeroSR

Warranty: 3 years/ 60,000 miles mechanical and 8 years/100,000 miles battery

Size: L 4.92 m (16.14 ft), W 2.19 m (7.19 ft), H 1.94 m (6.36 ft)

Bootpace: 569 to 1637 litres (20.09 to 57.81 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 2,510 kg (5,534 lb)

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