# New Audi A4 Avant Road Test (and latest Audi news)

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## Good for Business Both for Audi and for Customers – The New Audi A4 Avant.

## David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) reports…

High flyers in the UK's new car market are the premium brands of Audi, BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Jaguar Land Rover. With BMW sales up 14% for the first six months of this year,

Mercedes by 18%, Jaguar up 68% and Land Rover 17% – Audi's 4% increase looks poor; below par.

Perhaps there is some reluctance for customers to place orders for new cars due to the indiscretions of parent company Volkswagen and the emissions issue. VW's UK sales were down by almost 19% in June and 8.7% year to date. In Audi's case it is more likely UK customers are waiting for the new model 'explosion' as one of their Directors said recently. They have a whole host of new and updated models to bring to their range this year.

The A4 range has new additions coming very soon, the refreshed A3 range is here, the SQ7, Q7 e-tron and A4 Allroad models will be with us in the next week or so and then we wait for the Q2 compact Crossover and the R8 Spyder, plus others we don't officially know about.

Core to Audi's fleet and business sales strategy are their new premium compact A4 range of Saloons and Avant estates. Fleet and business sector sales in the UK have accounted for 54.3% of all new cars sold so far this year. The Audi A4 is in competitive company as it has to compete against the BMW 3 and 4-Series, Mercedes C-Class and Jaguar XE models and numerous must-have SUVs and Crossovers.

I have just had a spell behind the wheel of the A4 Avant estate and their prices range from £27,300 to £40,350. The RS, S and quattro Allroad versions join the line-up during this year and will push the top price up further.




Currently engine choices are four and six cylinder units covering power outputs of 150hp to 272hp with front wheel drive and quattro drivetrains, depending on the engine of choice. Just as important are the CO2 emission figure – the lower the better, reducing VED road tax and company car Benefit-in-Kind costs. The range includes no less than 12 different Ultra low emission variants. Star of the line-up will be the 2.0 litre TDI Ultra 150 hp turbodiesel with CO2 emissions of only 104 g/km which in turn means a VED cost of Zero for the First Year rate and then only £20 for Year Two onwards. Company car drivers will pay 20% Benefit-in-Kind tax, the lowest in the entire range.




My exact version was the 2.0 litre TDI Ultra 150 hp manual with Sport specification, priced at £31,550, although option packs pushed the price up to £37,045.

(Note: If you would also like to read about the 190PS Ultra Sport version, coupled with the seven speed S tronic automatic transmission, and reviewed by Tom Scanlan, please click HERE).

Fuel consumption is also important and officially the Combined Cycle figure is 65.7 mpg from this Ultra spec engine. In reality the best my test estate recorded was 62.2 mpg for a 200 miles motorway cruise at 70 mph with the Efficiency mode selected. But overall for a 360-mile motoring week, including local stop/start and winding country roads, the final figure was an impressive 57 mpg which for an estate of this size, quality and performance

was impressive. At cruising speeds I estimate the 54 litres fuel tank will allow a 735 mile cruising range between fill-ups.

And this fuel and CO2 frugality doesn't come at the expense of performance. The top speed is 133 mph and zero to 62 mph takes 9.2 seconds, not swift but rewarding enough. My test car had the six-speed manual gearbox and the fifth and sixth gear ratios lean towards overdrive ratios for fuel efficiency. Sixth gear is definitely is a cruising ratio, fifth gear copes with A-roads and fourth gear I found was most often the more responsive ratio for dealing with country lanes. Ideally I would choose the seven-speed S tronic automatic transmission option which costs an extra £1,530, just to reduce the numerous manual gearchanges needed away from motorway journeys.

If fuel economy is impressive then so is space. Being an estate the size of the load area is important and with all the seats raised the boot has a capacity of 505 litres (17.83 cu.ft) with access through a power operated tailgate and electrically retracting load area cover. With the 40-20-40 split rear seats folded the cargo space is 1,510 litres (53.33 cu.ft) although the seat backs do not fold completely flat. On the plus side the rear boot floor is the same height as the rear sill, so pushing heavy items into the boot is simple – up until the semi-folded seat rear seats.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

Standard equipment includes 17-inch alloy wheels, Xenon or LED headlights and LED daytime running lights, Audi Smartphone interface which supports Apple CarPlay and Android Auto platforms and displays contact and other information such as navigation mapping on the standard fit seven-inch display screen, although the MMI Navigation plus option has a larger 8.3-inch screen, all part of the highly praised all-digital Audi virtual cockpit which brings communication to a driver's mobile office as well as providing comprehensive driving support information. Audi Drive Select, three zone climate control, electric windows and door mirrors, computer, cruise control, parking sensors front and rear and so on are fitted. Depending on the engine chosen there are three levels of specification,

SE, Sport and S line plus a host of packs and options.

The new A4 Avant is longer and wider than its predecessor and head room in the rear is a shade better than the new A4 Saloon. The doors open wide so there is easy access for occupants and once inside there is ample space. The interior ambiance is first class with the usual high quality Audi fittings and furnishings. The Sport specification additional items of spec include a unique design for the 17-inch alloy wheels, sports front seats, SD card sat-nav and upgraded sound system.



Everything is well laid out and logical to use but the Drive Select button could be a bit closer to the driver; it is still in the position for left hand drive models. The Drive Select

function allows you to switch through various settings from Comfort to Dynamic to change the suspension settings, handling, steering weight and engine response. In its Comfort mode on winding roads the body leans a shade more through corners and floats a little over crests and dips but the ride is pleasingly compliant. Switch to firmer settings and the ride can be harsh over poorer road surfaces but the handling is sharper. Mostly I feel the Comfort mode will be most applicable to most people covering long-haul journeys.

## VERDICT

Overall the new Audi A4 Avant is stylish with lots of kerb appeal and ownership desirability, it has a premium high quality interior, it's roomy with ample load space and there is a wide spread of engine and transmission choices. None of them are cheap but you get what you pay for in this market sector.

For: A classy, high quality comfortable and roomy estate for business or family use, ideal long-legged cruiser, impressive real-life fuel economy, low emissions mean low running and tax costs. Against: Must-have items of extra equipment push up the price too much, long-legged 5$^{th}$/6th gear ratios so the optional auto transmission will reduce driving stress for high mileage users, rear seats do not fold down completely flat.




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

## Audi A4 Avant Sport estate, 2.0 TDI, Ultra 150hp, manual.

Engine: 2.0 litre, four cylinder turbodiesel, Ultra low emission, 150 hp, 320 Nm (236

lb.ft) of torque from 1,500 rpm.

Transmission: Six speed manual, front wheel drive.

Performance:

0-62 mph: 9.2 seconds.

Top speed: 133 mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 65.7 mpg (57 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 104 g/km, VED road tax £0/£20, BIK company car tax 20%. Insurance Group: 20E.

Warranty: 3 years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,725 mm (15.50 ft), W 1,842 mm (6.04 ft), H 1,434 mm (4.70 ft), boot/loads space 505 to 1,510 litres (17.83 to 53.33 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,700 kg (3,748 lb), five doors/five seats.

Price: £31,500.