

2017 Audi A4 brings more power, room and technology

May 4 2016, by By Ann M. Job



This photo provided by Audi shows the 2017 Audi A4 sedan. The 2017 Audi A4 sedan is revamped from top to bottom for 2017 with cutting edge technology, a roomier and more upscale interior and a more powerful gasoline engine. (Audi via AP)

The Audi A4 luxury sedan has been revamped from top to bottom for 2017 with a more powerful engine, new transmission and more room and technology inside.

It also is one of the more technologically advanced compact sedans on the market with a new, optional feature called Traffic Jam Assist, which takes the burden off a driver in stop-and-go traffic, applying slight acceleration, braking and steering guidance when the car is stuck in traffic and speeds are less than 38 mph. Another optional feature is a video-game-like virtual cockpit that can replace the usual instrument panel gauges.

When it comes to standard equipment, there's a new automatic forward collision system that can warn a driver and activate brakes automatically to avoid a crash with a vehicle or a pedestrian. In many other cars, this kind of system is optional.

The 2017 A4 is a solid compact car with agile and responsive handling, and available with Audi's quattro all-wheel drive system for improved traction over front-wheel drive A4s. Consumer Reports predicts reliability of the new A4 to be much better than average, and the federal government said the new model earned five out of five stars in frontal and side crash testing.

It's worth noting, though, that the new A4 looks a lot like the old A4 on the outside, despite a new underlying platform. Subtle styling changes such as new grille and headlights don't make a big impression, and the overall look, while attractive, remains tailored and serious.

The A4's prices have risen, and drivers don't have the choice of manual transmission or continuously variable transmission (CVT) anymore. The base, front-wheel drive A4 Premium model has a starting manufacturer's suggested retail price, including destination charge, of \$38,250. This includes the more powerful, 2-liter, turbocharged TFSI gasoline four cylinder and the new, seven-speed, dual-clutch automatic transmission that is designed to shift faster and be more responsive than the CVT. The starting retail price for a base, 2017 A4 sedan with quattro is \$40,350.

But prices go a lot higher: The test vehicle—an all-wheel drive, top-of-the-line Prestige model—carried a price tag of more than \$54,000. Still, it was difficult to find fault with the car as it rode comfortably in both leisurely and aggressive travel, and had plenty of amenities, including sunroof, ambient LED lighting, three-zone automatic climate control and leather-trimmed seats that come standard on every A4.

Every A4 also lets drivers select the kind of ride they want, including comfort or dynamic mode, and the test car excelled at managing road bumps to minimize jolts and vibrations to passengers.

The engine was especially pleasing, especially during a quick merge in traffic. There was little turbo lag, and the increased power—32 more horsepower this year for a total of 252 and 15 more foot-pounds of torque for a total of 273 coming on at 1,600 rpm—moved the car briskly.

With all the zippy performance, the A4 test vehicle still averaged a commendable 26 miles per gallon in combined city/highway travel, which allowed for a nearly 400-mile range on a single 15.3-gallon tank of gas. Audi does recommend premium unleaded fuel, rather than regular, so the engine can deliver peak power.

Other things of note: Brakes worked well in the A4 test vehicle to slow and stop the car in a progressive, strong manner; seats in the tester were supportive; and the large display screen atop the center of the dashboard was easy to read. Space has grown too, both for front-seat head and shoulder room, as well as legroom in the back seat.

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