

## **2013 Audi allroad** **All-new, smooth and responsive all-terrain wagon.**

### **Overview**

The 2013 Audi allroad is all new, after hiding for the past seven years under the skin of the A4 Avant wagon, which now goes away. The 2013 allroad comes with one powertrain, the brilliant and venerable 2.0-liter turbocharged engine mated to a Tiptronic 8-speed automatic transmission with quattro all-wheel drive. The powertrain is solid, proven, versatile and efficiently powerful enough at 211 horsepower. However, premium fuel is recommended.

Direct competitors for the Audi allroad are slim, if you don't count crossover utility vehicles (CUVs). The allroad has never crossed over from anywhere; it's always been a wagon. The Subaru Outback and Volkswagen Jetta TDI SportWagen are cars that might be cross-shopped, when considering a comfortable and capable all-wheel-drive wagon of this size. Although you couldn't get the price of either to match the allroad, and with the Subaru you'd get a 3.6-liter 6-cylinder engine that makes 45 more horsepower than the allroad. The Cadillac SRX AWD moves beyond the allroad in price, power and size (while being the same wheelbase as the allroad), but it's an option that a possible allroad buyer might consider.

If you were to pick one CUV to compare, it might be the Ford Edge, with its new 2.0-liter EcoBoost engine making 240 horsepower and using a new 6-speed automatic transmission. It's about the same wheelbase, weight and fuel mileage, and it's most comparable to the Edge Limited edition with panoramic sunroof and all-wheel drive, things that are standard equipment on the allroad.

Obviously the 2013 allroad can't be compared to the 2006 allroad, because everything is better, and a bit bigger, too. And when you compare the allroad to the 2012 A4 Avant wagon, it doesn't seem so all-new, just revised a bit.

The allroad is built on the same chassis as the A4 sedan, and the size differences are insignificant, except for the height, as the allroad is 1.8 inches taller. It's got a slightly wider track because of its larger 18-inch wheels, and 3.0 more inches of ground clearance, which accounts for the height. It weighs 300 pounds more. It still manages to accelerate from zero to 60 in 6.5 seconds, a time that's plenty quick for staying out of trouble on the freeway.

The engine is super smooth, and for years has been the smoothest 2.0-liter four-cylinder in the world. Ninety miles per hour remains silent and effortless. Its 258 pound-feet of torque comes at a low 1500 rpm, so it pulls up to speed sharply.

Fuel economy is an EPA-estimated 20/27 mpg City/Highway. It's heavier and less aerodynamic than the A4, with a not-too-slim 0.36 coefficient of drag. And the range won't be as far, as the fuel tank holds .3 gallons less. Its need for premium fuel is one downside to the turbocharged engine that makes 211 strong horsepower. Premium is recommended, not required, but it's a recommendation to follow.

Audi sedans have a fresh look for 2013, and the allroad borrows the sedan face but looks even better. It's especially bold on the allroad, because of its black front fascia with no-nonsense small round foglamps and air intakes, wider track from tires, and lips on the fender flares. Roof rails add to the rugged utility, including stainless steel skidplates. Unfortunately neither the standard 18-inch wheels nor optional 19s add to the car's good looks.

The interior is very appealing, with Nappa leather and a choice of walnut, ash, oak or aluminum trim. Controls are easy to reach. The Multi Media Interface (MMI) knob is used to control navigation and Google.

There's good cargo space, with 27.6 cubic feet behind the rear seats and 50.5 cubic feet with the rear seatbacks folded. As for rear seat legroom, the allroad has the same as the A4 sedan, 35.2 inches. The Subaru Outback offers 37.8 inches and the Ford Edge 39.6 inches.

We drove the allroad at the launch in Colorado, and got good seat time on freeways and mountain two-lanes. The ride is pleasing and smooth, with no rough moments transmitted to the occupants over patchy pavement.

The little engine performs out of its league, with strong torque translating to effortless acceleration even on uphill two-lanes. The Tiptronic 8-speed automatic is fast-shifting and obedient with the paddle shifters, and has rev-matching downshifting. The brakes felt good when we used them on downhill curves. They're not quite bomb-proof, because we did hit the point of fade, but until then the pedal gave good feedback.

## **Model Lineup**

Audi allroad comes with the 2.0-liter turbocharged engine with 8-speed Tiptronic automatic transmission and quattro all-wheel drive. There are three trim levels: Premium; Premium Plus; and Prestige.

Premium (\$39,600) is the entry level and it comes standard with leather upholstery, single-zone automatic climate control, eight-way power front seats with lumbar, audio system with XM radio and single CD, power doors, power locks, power windows, power sunroof, halogen headlamps, 18-inch wheels with all-season tires. Heated front seats (\$450) are optional. The Premium Convenience Package (\$1100) features Bluetooth and music interface with iPod.

Premium Plus (\$42,600) upgrades to three-zone climate control (third zone is rear), heated memory front seats, heated mirrors, power tailgate, and a Convenience Package including Audi music interface with iPod cable, Bluetooth, driver info system and garage door opener.

Prestige (\$48,800) adds adaptive headlamps, blind spot monitoring, a 14-speaker Bang & Olufsen sound system, and Audi MMI with navigation and Audi Connect online services, including Google and Google Earth for the nav.

Options include Sport front seats with a three-spoke steering wheel and paddle shifters (\$500); adaptive cruise control, dynamic steering, and drive select with modes that set the steering, transmission and throttle response, from Comfort to Dynamic (\$3250).

Safety equipment that comes standard includes eight airbags, electronic stability control with anti-lock brakes and hydraulic brake assist, crash sensor activation, child door locks and LATCH seat system, tire pressure monitor, all-wheel drive.

## **Walkaround**

For being away for seven years, you might expect the all-new allroad to look all new, but not quite. It follows the new A4 face and lines, however, so it's not dated. In fact, the new face looks especially bold on the allroad, because of its black front fascia with no-nonsense small round foglamps and air intakes, wider track from tires, and lips on the fender flares. For 2013 the Audi grille has been chopped at the upper corners, or a better word might be styled, because less grille and more movement adds elegance to the nose. The grille still looks massive on the allroad, with long chrome bars with a big shiny Audi four-ring emblem. The headlamps are shaped sharply and flow inward perfectly, looking like the eyes of an eagle. Again, it's the upscale Prestige Plus that has this whole look, including LED rings (daytime running lights) following the shape of the xenon headlamps.

The back end looks just as tough, with muscular taillamps (LED optional) and a black fascia with diffuser and twin tailpipes.

On the sides there's a sharp crease running from the corners of the headlamps to the corners of the taillamps, over stainless sills and body-colored door handles. Roof rails add to the rugged utility, and don't forget the stainless steel skidplates. Five-spoke 18-inch wheels are standard, with 5-spoke 19s optional. We don't want to say that we think both wheels are ugly, because who knows, some might like them. Let's say we think Audi can do better.

## **Interior Features**

The allroad interior is very appealing, with stylish Nappa leather in black, brown, gray or beige. Trim on the dash and doors is walnut, ash, oak or aluminum. The console and center dash are angled toward the driver, and the center armrest top slides forward, making a comfortable elbow rest. There are storage spaces all over the place, from seatbacks to center armrests to a roomy glovebox.

The standard seats (unheated in Premium, although heat is available) are comfortable, while the optional \$500 sports seats offer more back and thigh bolstering, without being tight. For that money you also get a leather-wrapped three-spoke steering wheel with paddles for the Tiptronic, an option that's well worth it. Especially since the shift knob isn't a great fit, for sporty manual shifting; in this case, the paddles feel better.

The cabin is fairly busy because there's much to control, and it's all easy to reach, including the MMI (Multi Media Interface) knob with Google and navigation on a 6.5-inch screen, in the Prestige Plus. It's got just four buttons now; until the 2013 model there were eight. The available three-zone climate control system has been simplified slightly for 2013.

The chrome-ringed speedometer and tachometer aren't cluttered by graphics, and the gauge lighting is easy on the eyes. There are controls on the tilt-telescoping steering wheel, thumb wheels that spin and click through what you need, in particular on the display located between the speedo and tach. It can show the transmission gear, radio info, fuel range and economy, temperature and more. On the Prestige model, trip computer data, cruise control distances, and navigation data are added.

Without the \$1100 Convenience Package in the base Premium model, you don't get Audi music interface with iPod cable, Bluetooth, garage door opener, and driver info system. The optional Bang & Olufsen system offers 505 watts and 14 speakers. We've listened to both, and 180-watt 10-speaker standard system sounds good, considering the cost of the Bang & Olufsen.

There's good cargo space, with 27.6 cubic feet behind the rear seats and 50.5 cubic feet with the rear seatbacks folded. But not that good; the Subaru Outback blows the allroad away, with 71.3 cubic feet. Same with rear seat legroom; the allroad has the same as the A4 sedan, 35.2 inches, while the Outback offers 37.8 inches, on a wheelbase that's shorter by 2.5 inches. Meanwhile, the Ford Edge offers the same cargo space as the allroad, plus 39.6 inches of rear legroom, with an overall length that's actually 1.7 inches less.

The floor hump in the center will keep an adult from riding there, but kids can endure it. A nice touch is LED footwell lights. The rear headrests don't get in the way of the driver's rear visibility in the mirror.

## **Driving Impressions**

Quattro all-wheel drive is great, and has been for decades. It isn't just for traction in snow, ice and rain, it improves the handling on dry pavement too. However if you live in the dry flatlands, you could live without it.

Until a wheel starts slipping, 60 percent of the drive goes to the rear wheels, for ideal driving dynamics and balance. The differential locks, for best low-speed traction. Only Subaru has the all-wheel drive chops to match Audi quattro.

We drove the allroad for much of one day in Colorado, and challenged its powertrain, brakes and handling on freeway and mountain two-lanes. The ride is especially pleasing, with no rough moments transmitted to driver or passenger over patchy pavement.

When we needed speed to make it to the Denver airport in time, the little engine sucked on its turbocharger boost and delivered for us. It loved it. It's not often you can call a 2.0-liter engine long-legged, but that's how the allroad feels. The 8-speed transmission is a double overdrive, so 7th and 8th gears are for high speeds and fuel mileage, with lower rpm.

Meanwhile at the lower end, the torque is strong at 258 foot-pounds, and its range is exceptionally broad, so there's acceleration at any time. The allroad squirts from 0 to 60 mph in 6.5 seconds, which is only .1 slower than the A4 sedan, despite the extra weight.

Fuel economy, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, is 20/27 mpg City/Highway, or 23 mpg Combined.

Tiptronic 8-speed automatic is fast-shifting and obedient with the paddle shifters, and has rev-matching downshifting. It will take hard downshifts, and won't change gears unless you ask it to. That's quite special for this category of car, whatever the allroad category is.

The brakes felt good when we used them on downhill curves hard enough to make them smell. They're not quite bomb-proof, because we did hit the point of fade, but until then the pedal gave good feedback. Discs are ventilated in front, where most braking occurs, but not in rear.

Most of the suspension pieces are forged aluminum, as is the front crossmember and also the hood. The rear suspension is based on the larger A6 sedan, with trapezoidal links and separate spring and shock mounts that allow a lower floor but more suspension travel, a win-win situation.

The optional Drive Select system with dynamic steering and variable damping calculates shock rates 1000 times per second. We didn't get a chance to drive an allroad with Drive Select, but we can say from past experience that, from a mechanical standpoint, it's hard to go wrong with programmable modes because they present such a wide spectrum of ride, handling and power.

## Summary

The all-wheel-drive Audi allroad uses an impeccable powertrain with a luxury interior, and provides style, comfort and technology for a premium price. It's hard to find flaws, but might also be hard to justify value when comparing it to other vehicles that offer similar features for less money.

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