



Audi A3 Cabriolet & S3 Saloon

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Audi A3 Cabriolet Sport 2.0 TDI (Scuba Blue) - enjoying the ride in the New Forest!

Audi introduced the new Audi A3 Cabriolet to the UK media at a launch event in the New Forest in mid-March, just after the 2014 Geneva Motor Show. This attractive newcomer brings the tally of Audi models in the UK to 48 in total. The eight models in the A3 line-up include the 3-door, Sportback, Saloon and Cabriolet in both the A3 and S3 lines. The company claims that they have no direct competition in the segment as their closest rival, the BMW 1-Series, is nearing the end of its lifecycle. What is certain though, is that this new Cabriolet is certainly a much more mature vehicle than the model that was first seen on UK roads in the spring of '08 (60,000 units sold between 2008 and 2013).



Audi A3 Cabriolet Sport 1.4 TFSI (Glacier White)

The new Audi A3 Cabriolet, which Audi point out is a proper soft-top with a fabric roof and not a folding metal unit, is a significant upgrade to the earlier model and represents a complete ground-up development. The Cabriolet chassis has been taken from the shorter saloon line and not the Sportback model. Everything about this new model is better, lighter or more economical and being longer than its predecessor, it has a larger boot, which can be further increased in size by folding down the rear seats. The car's weight has been reduced thanks to Audi's hybrid chassis construction, which comprises both aluminium and steel while the body is 30kg lighter, an important factor in any cabriolet style vehicle.



Audi A3 Cabriolet Sport 1.8 TFSI (Glacier White)

A choice of engines available in the Audi A3 Cabriolet include a 140PS 1.4 TFSI and a 180PS 1.8 TFSI (petrol turbo fuel injection) and a 150PS 2.0 TDI. The 1.4 TFSI engine offers cylinder-on-demand technology, where not only two of the cylinders are shut off when the need is detected, but the relevant valves are closed too, resulting in a significant fuel saving. Although the 180PS 1.8 TFSI engine is the least economical of the three options, it is the smoothest and perhaps the engine of choice in the range, and is mated to Audi's 7-speed S tronic gearbox.

This new Cabriolet model, which boasts a drag coefficient of just 0.30, is 28mm wider, 15mm lower and 183mm longer than its immediate predecessor, resulting in a smoother and more stable ride. For once the British late winter/early spring weather cooperated beyond all expectations as a balmy 17°C was measured, making top-down driving not only more pleasant, but also mandatory.



Audi A3 Cabriolet Sport 1.8 TFSI (Glacier White)

As a high-end alternative, customers can specify LED headlights in their new Audi A3 Cabriolet. With a colour temperature of around 5,500 Kelvin, the light resembles daylight, which is less tiring for the eyes, and the light-emitting diodes have been designed to last the lifetime of the vehicle. Adaptive headlights (which follow the course of the road according to the steering angle) with Xenon Plus are both standard features on the S line and S3 quattro models.

Google services (Google Earth and Google Street View) and social media (Facebook and Twitter) are available through the system's 4G/LTE connectivity, making Audi the world's first manufacturer to implement this system in cars. The target market for the Cabriolet, is the young entrepreneur (perhaps in their 30s) or the young family wanting a snazzy second car, with the customer profile split, expected to show a female bias of 60/40. Audi anticipates selling around 3,500 units per year of which the S3 model represents about ten per cent of the Saloon car figure.



Audi S3 Saloon 2.0 TFSI quattro (Misano Red)

The S3 is an altogether different animal, being powered by a 300PS 2.0 TFSI engine (1984cc) and driven through a 6-speed manual or S tronic 'box. Under the bonnet the high-performance four-cylinder engine has been overhauled, and now relies on the same technologies as the 1.8 TFSI, making this an extremely reliable unit. Advancements include dual injection, integration of the exhaust manifold in the cylinder head, two adjustable camshafts, the Audi valve-lift system, innovative thermal management with a rotary valve module, a turbocharger with an electric wastegate valve, a regulated oil pump, reduced internal friction and a thin-walled crankcase.



Audi S3 Saloon 2.0 TFSI quattro (Misano Red)

The six-speed S tronic can be controlled via optional shift paddles on the steering wheel, and offers the automatic modes D and S in addition to manual mode. Launch Control delivers the engine's power to the road with defined tyre slip upon driving off. Top speed is a governed 155mph, but even with such phenomenal performance capabilities, it can still return consumption figures of 40.4mpg combined for the manual and 40.9mpg for the S tronic. Performance and ride is as expected, quite extraordinary, and the exhaust bark has been carefully engineered to resemble a high-powered sports car. The 0-62mph comes up in a blistering 4.9 seconds for the S tronic model.

Prices for the Audi A3 Cabriolet start at £25,790 OTR for the 1.4 TFSI (140PS) SE model, rising to £32,420 for the 1.8 TFSI (180PS) S line model. The S3 starts at £33,240 OTR or £34,720 OTR for the S tronic option. Deliveries will commence from April 2014.

Written by Glen Smale



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