



New Audi A5 Cabriolet

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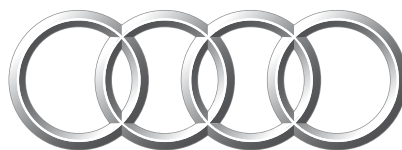
Once upon a time, no-one would consider an open top car. Make such a suggestion and the almost universal comment would be - "What with our weather?" In fact the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders claims almost 5% of all new registrations are convertibles, which is almost twice as many as two years ago. Surprisingly, even though our weather hasn't actually changed all that much, it is said the British buy more convertibles per head of car buyers than in any other European nation.

This convertible's immediate predecessor was a coupé launched in 2007 to take on a couple of similar vehicles from BMW and Mercedes-Benz. It had a mixed reception from the cognoscenti,

but the buying public ignored all that, and it sold steadily.

The Audi A5 Cabriolet has now been launched to replace the A4 cabriolet that is on its way out. Two petrol engines and one diesel are available at launch. There is the 2.0-litre petrol TFSI four-cylinder model that produces 208bhp and 190lb-ft. of torque. The alternative is a 3.2-litre TFSI V6 that produces 261bhp with 179lb-ft. of torque. Last but by no means least is the 3.0-litre V6 diesel that produces 236bhp and 271lb-ft of torque.

The V6 is a smooth, muscular unit that will whisk you from 0 to 62mph in just 6.9 seconds, does a claimed 32.8mpg and emits 199g/km. The smaller,



Audi

2-litre version is only marginally slower with 0 to 62mph easily achieved in 7.5 seconds. Consumption is better however at a claimed 41.5mpg with fuel emissions of CO2 at the rate of 159g/km. Performance for the diesel is most impressive (in my opinion), it will take you from 0 to 62mph in 6.4 seconds, smoothly, quietly and, even with the top open, more discreetly than any diesel I have driven. It also produces 41.5mpg but emits slightly more than the larger of the petrol engines with just 179g/km.

I have always admired the look of Audis. They all seem to have that certain something and the A5 is no exception. It looks solid, the panels fit perfectly and the paint job on the test car was flawless. The soft top is double layered for acoustic perfection, opens in just fifteen seconds and closes in seventeen, even at speeds of up to 30mph. Inside it is fitted out as you would expect of any quality car, with soft-to-the-touch plastics and sumptuous leather.

The ride in any of the models is extremely smooth. They're not the fastest off the block but neither are they sedate, just extremely comfortable. Four good sized adults can sit in state and enjoy a pleasant spin, roof open or closed. Bumps and uneven surfaces (typical of today's roads) are ironed out impeccably. You can opt for the S line trim level of course, which includes sport suspension. The stiffer springs and dampers produce a firmer ride, not so it becomes uncomfortable though!

I said the inside was up to Audi's usual standard and I meant it. The interior is spacious and well put together. The driver's position is good with supportive seats, a good variety of adjustments and a steering wheel that adjusts for both reach and rake. Foot pedals are comfortably positioned. There's lots of leg room in the back, niches and crannies for odds and sods and a boot that while admittedly has to accommodate a roof that, when it's down, still allows 320 litres or space. With just one passenger (up front), you can do without the back seats, close the roof and utilize 750 litres of cargo space.

A full list of safety equipment is provided as you would expect, including; front and side airbags; daytime running lights; sensors that control the metal bars that pop up behind the rear seats in the event of a rollover. In addition there are anti-lock brakes; traction control; and a Thatcham Category 1 alarm and immobiliser. Unfortunately I can't give you the NCAP rating because it hadn't been tested at the time of writing. It is comfortably expected to rate highly, in line with the outgoing A4 with which it shares a platform.

Prices start at £29,800 and rise to £40,390. The 2.0-litre is in Band G for road tax (£150 p.a). The 3.2-litre is in Band J (£215 p.a). And the 3.0-litre diesel will be in Band I. (£175 p.a).

Who will buy one of these beautiful cars? Anyone with a spirit of adventure without the discomfort. Anyone who seeks a prestigious car without the affectation. Anyone who values great engineering and design.

Simon Taylor

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The image shows the cover of the Lincolnshire Poacher magazine, Summer 2009 issue, priced at £2.50. The cover features a large dragonfly on a green background. The title 'LINCOLNSHIRE Poacher.' is at the top. Below the title, it says 'Summer 2009' and '£2.50'. A list of articles includes 'DRAGONFLY', 'AN UNGUARDED MOMENT', and 'THE WRONG WATCH'. A large blue circular graphic with the text 'Order your subscription now!' is overlaid on the cover. The website 'www.lincolnshire-poacher.net' is visible at the bottom right of the cover.

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