



Audi A1

One for all

Car review | Whether it is for the money or the environment, almost everyone has to take a step down. Makers of small, economical cars benefit from this. Now, even a premium brand like Audi now rises to the occasion by introducing a new, small car. This also brings an Audi within reach of a larger group of potential buyers. Does the A1 drive like a real Audi?

What makes an Audi unique? It starts with modern, sleek design and an immaculate build quality. On this point the A1 convinces from the very start. When seen right from the front, the A1 has the same self-assured looks as the larger Audis.

From the side, the arch around the roofline in a contrasting colour sets the car apart. However, this arch is an optional extra and that makes the A1 a real Audi as well. The standard trim level is very poor and the optional extras are as costly as they are with the bigger models.



For example, the "1.4 TFSI Ambition" driven here costs £18,280, yet the "on the road price" including options is over £25,000. Even with this amount of options the specifications aren't impressive. For example: the combined audio and satnav costs £3,000 and even then an iPod connector is an option.

Another little premium car, the Toyota iQ, costs half the price of the A1 and offers a higher trim level! For

the price of a fully loaded A1, faster and more exciting cars are available. The fastest Renault Clio, Vauxhall Corsa or Volkswagen Polo are all cheaper than this basic Audi A1. During several photo sessions the test car got a lot of attention from Audi fans. They said the price or any comparison to other cars is completely irrelevant. This is an Audi and the real devotee will gladly pay for that. The Audi rings on a car have the same magical value as an apple on a phone.



Comfort

Another trademark of Audi is the high comfort level combined with a sporty undertone. The latter is easy to achieve; because of its short wheelbase the A1 is more agile by nature than any other Audi. Also, the test car is fitted with wide tyres and huge rims, which make the car react instantly to any movement of the steering wheel. The Audi A1 is based on the Volkswagen Polo and that will handle just as well when fitted with a similar set of wheels.

The Audi A1 doesn't have better sound insulation than the Volkswagen Polo either. By nature the Polo is an exceptionally quiet, solid and grown up little car and Audi did not manage to improve on that.

Although the A1 has very firm suspension, the car doesn't deliver the sheer driving pleasure of a MINI or Citroën DS3. Roadholding is excellent and safety is key, but a grin on the face of the driver is nowhere to be found. Just like any other Audi, the A1 has no more than a sporty undertone; comfort is still number one.



Performance

The test car has a 1.4 litre turbo engine. This powertrain is not available on the Volkswagen Polo, making the Audi A1 a bit more exclusive. The "1.4 TFSI" performs very well. In fact the performance of the A1 matches that of some of its larger brothers! In city traffic the 122 PS / 200 Nm petrol engine is spritely, while its compact measurements make the A1 easier to handle (and park!) than any other Audi.



On the highway the A1 has a pleasant surprise in store as well. Even speeds as high as 100 mph are pleasant cruising speeds. At this speed the car still feels stable and noises from the engine, tyres and wind are limited. The top speed of 126 mph can be achieved without any drama. On the German Autobahn the A1

has the same "Überholprestige" (overtake credibility) as the bigger models, so many will make space for this small, speeding Audi.

Fuel economy

As stated before, a compact car is mainly chosen for its low fuel consumption. The performance of the A1 isn't its most important feature: fuel economy is even more important. Luckily this is where the A1 really shines.



This is thanks to the (again, optional) "S-Tronic" gearbox. This automatic gearbox comprises of two smaller gearboxes: one for the odd and one for the even gears. When one actually transfers the power from the engine to the front wheels, the other already engages the next gear. The moment the driver requests the next gear only the other gearbox is activated, rather than releasing the clutch, selecting another gear and engaging the clutch again.

On top of that, an "S-Tronic" gearbox has seven (!) gears and therefore it has a more suitable ideal ratio for any situation. This makes the vehicle both quicker and more frugal. A start/stop mechanism decreases fuel consumption in city traffic.



Audi promises that the "1.4 TFSI S-Tronic" does 54 miles per gallon and this can easily be achieved in real life. Driving a bit quicker, it will do 42 miles per gallon. So although the A1 is very expensive to buy, it is rather economic to run and that is good news for the stylish yet economical driver.

Conclusion

The final judgement on the Audi A1 is twofold. Those who are not Audi fans will regard the A1 as an overpriced version of the Volkswagen Polo. The standard trim level is poor and the almost necessary options are very costly. For the price of a reasonably specced Audi A1 many faster, more exciting and more luxurious cars can be found.

Those who do love the Audi brand will see the A1 as the ideal addition to the current model range. While the A1 may be expensive compared to other brands, the A1 now makes an Audi more affordable than ever before. Also, the A1 has the same high build quality and mature feeling as all other Audis. Handling is fine and this small car covers long distances with great ease. The performance of the "1.4 TFSI" is excellent, while fuel consumption is very modest. With the right extras the A1 offers all the luxury the bigger models do. Therefore, the A1 gives a genuine Audi feeling and makes that available for all. ■



Specifications

Audi A1 1.4 TFSI S-line S-Tronic

Size and weight



Length x width x height	396 x 174 x 142 cm
Wheelbase	247 cm
Kerb weight	1.200 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Fuel capacity	45 l
Luggage space	270/920 l
Tyre size	215/45R16

Engine and performance



Capacity	1390 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	122 PS @ 5000 rpm
Max torque	200 Nm @ 1500 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	8.9 secs
Top speed	203 km/h
Average mileage	5.2 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	6.5 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	4.4 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	119 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 18,280
Price base model	Â£ 13,145