



Audi Q7 (2005 - 2015)

Noble Creature

Review | A nag is a solid, strongly built animal designed to work, whereas a race horse is a muscular, athletic animal shaped to perform. It's the same with cars. Off-roaders are the working man's car manufactured for the mud, whereas SUVs are more precisely a luxury car made for enjoyment. But the Audi Q7 has raised some doubts. The size is of industrial proportions; the engine capacity exceeds that of most lorries; and its luxuriousness is not inferior to that of a limousine. Is the Q7 a workhorse or a much nobler creature?

It certainly drives like an Audi! Even so, the Q7 belongs amongst the absolute giants of off-roaders such as the Hummer H2 and Land Rover Range Rover. With its length of more than five meters, the Audi is even so the absolute record holder. However the Q7 does not drive like some unmanageable battle ship. The steering is direct, response alert and road handling good. The Q7 is not only disarmingly simple to drive, but is also extremely manoeuvrable for a car of this size.

This is partly due to the air suspension, which according to the situation adjusts the nature of the suspension. On open roads, the suspension is solid and the shocks are short. The Q7 drives like a sporty Audi. On poor road surfaces, the suspension is softer providing the necessary comfort. Off-road, the Q7 can be raised to provide extra ground clearance if required.



Race horse

The Audi Q7 is large and heavy, but there are engines out there which are just as large and heavy. The mission of this test drive is to try the new 4.2 litre diesel engine, which has been available in the Q7 for a couple of months. This engine is a real first-class bruiser. Although the Audi Q7 and Volkswagen Touareg share the same technical base, this 4.2 litre V8 provides even more power than the Volkswagen 5.0 litre V10. The Audi can produce 326 pk and a torque of 760 Nm.

The impact of all that power is simply addictive. A little nudge on the accelerator is enough to shoot off. The bonnet rises up, the Q7 rears like a wild horse and disappears into the sunset. The sprint from 0 to 100 km/hr is cleared in 6.4 seconds. With its high positioning, it feels all the more powerful and after a couple of metres an invincible feeling takes control of every Q7-driver.



However quickly it drives, the powerful V8 still has loads more power under the bonnet and is able to force its passengers back into their seats just one more time. The brakes stand up well against all this ferocity, since with the same ease the Q7 comes to a standstill.

Gently

Of course it can go slowly as well, but it does feel noticeably less pleasant. In particular with a cold engine, the standard automatic six gear version is restless, with an uncertain and hesitant response to the accelerator.



Such behaviour is problematic with off-roading, as a perfect engine sensation is necessary to keep the car balanced between slip and grip. The Quattro four-wheel drive and the rest of the transaxle have been adapted for off-roading, but in reality the Q7 is particularly suitable for snow and iciness. Also the standard tyres are not suitable for off-road use.

Exterior

One of the many reasons people choose Audi is for its design. The Q7 provokes the same reaction. Since the proportions tally, it looks as though the Q7 is a lot less large than its colossal competitors. In relation to the bonnet, the wheels are just as high as an ordinary car. Consequently, the Q7 radiates a certain refinement and resembles a substantial estate car.



Once out on the parking lot, it is painfully clear how large the Q7 actually is. Beside the Q7, the average mid-sized SUV appears to be a sweet city car. The Q7

is too long and too broad for an average parking space. This pain is however tempered with parking sensors and a camera, where coloured lines are projected over the image on the rear-view camera. Cleverly, the remaining space surrounding the car is shown via a schematic reproduction of the car.



A real must is the "Adaptive Cruise Control", which keeps the car at a distance. In reality, it manages to even drive automatically in a traffic-jam! With a light in the side mirror, "Side Assist" informs you whether there are any vehicles in your blind spot. "Advanced Key" makes life easy with key-free access with driver preferences of the car stored on the key.

Luxury

On the inside the Q7 feels like a first-class limousine. As the name already surmises, the Q7 is halfway between the Audi A6 and A8. The interior is overwhelming. Everything has been laid out spaciouly if not oversized. For example, the storage compartment between the front seats is larger than the glove compartment of an average car! The finish is, as expected of Audi, immaculately. The advantage of the Verano leather interior of the test car is that after a day at the stables the car is so easy to clean.

The equipment leaves little to be desired. At least that is if sufficient compartments are ticked on the option list. The price in the brochure is no more than the start of the negotiation process. The real indulgence starts with ProLine+, S-Line and other packets. However, avoid the Bose audio system. The bass crashes and the treble is obtrusive, causing the sounds to wear you out very quickly. Fortunately, a better sounding B&O audio system will be available shortly. Also the performance of the rain sensor is subject for improvement.

Space

The leg room in the rear is almost comparable to that of Audi's limousine: A8. The Q7 is available as a five-seater, 4+2 (two luxury rear seats, broad central console and in the boot two folding child seats) or 5+2 (generous rear seat and in the boot two folding child seats). In all cases, the term "child seat" must be taken literally: these are not designed for adults.



The driving characteristics remind you of a sports car more than they would of an off-road vehicle. The tyres are meant for comfort at high speeds. Also the engine character and the gear ratios are not tailored to off-road driving. On the other hand, the Q7 drives just as sportily and dynamically as other Audi's. With the new 4.2 litre diesel, the performances are simply overwhelming. There is no doubt: the Audi Q7 is no old nag, but a noble racehorse. ■

If required the lid of the boot opens electrically. The luggage space is equipped optionally with all kinds of cleverness, resulting in an optimal use of the space. When the Q7 is equipped with air suspension, the car can be lowered several centimetres to facilitate loading and unloading just with the touch of a button.

As if that is not enough, the Q7 can pull a trailer with a maximum of 3,500 kilograms (3,200 kilograms for 4+2 and 5+2 models). The trailer hook is even electrically controlled; again with the press of a button this folds in and out.



Conclusion

The Audi resembles an off-roader, but this is far from the truth. This is a very roomy limousine which due to its high positioning offers more comfort than Audi's luxury saloons. Moreover the Q7 offers not only room to four adults, but also another two children and a truck load of luggage.



Specifications

Audi Q7 (2005 - 2015) 4.2 TDi S-Line

Size and weight



Length x width x height	509 x 198 x 174 cm
Wheelbase	300 cm
Kerb weight	2.450 kg
Trailer	750 kg
Trailer - braked	3.200 kg
Fuel capacity	100 l
Luggage space	775 l
Tyre size	255/55R18

Engine and performance



Capacity	4134 cc
Cylinders / valves	8/4
Max power	326 PS @ 3750 rpm
Max torque	760 Nm @ 1800 rpm
Drive	four wheel drive
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	6.4 secs
Top speed	236 km/h
Average mileage	11.1 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	14.9 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	8.9 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	294 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 50,590
Price base model	Â£ 38,725