

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

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Audi allroad

VEHICLE DRIVES

LAUNCHES: HYUNDAI SANTA FE • LEXUS LS FLAGSHIP
CHEVROLET: SONIC RS • MALIBU TURBO • SPARK • TRAVERSE • EQUINOX
AUDI ALLROAD • BMW 328i • MITSUBISHI OUTLANDER
TOYOTA HYBRIDS: PRIUS PLUG-IN • CAMRY HYBRID • PRIUS V

VEHICLE SNEAK PEEKS

MERCEDES-BENZ SL AT STARFEST
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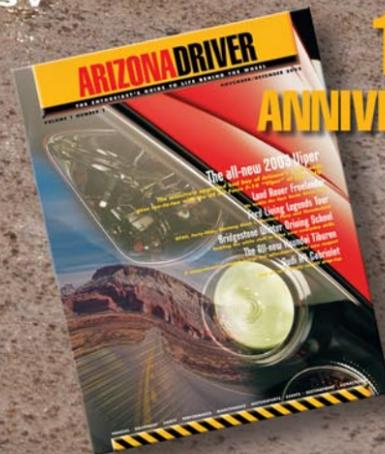
MARLIS WILLIAMS '32 FORD ROADSTER

SPECIAL EVENTS

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VEHICLES • EQUIPMENT • SAFETY • PERFORMANCE • MAINTENANCE • MOTORSPORTS • EVENTS • DESTINATIONS • ATTRACTIONS

Going with the flow, most anywhere you go

by Joe Sage

Audi actively avoided the SUV craze for years. While pinning down the start of that craze is open to minor debate—there were Broncos, Blazers, Land Cruisers and Wagoneers for many years before SUV was even a term—the Ford Explorer hit the market in 1990 (as a 1991 model). Audi had brought us quattro all-wheel drive ten years before that, first in a competition coupe, then in a high-dollar production version of that coupe (a halo for a brand previously known in the US by its undistinguished front-wheel-drive Audi Fox), and ultimately in an ongoing series of more affordable and widely accessible models, starting with the

Audi 4000 quattro in the early-to-mid '80s.

Concurrently, American lifestyles were evolving. Population was booming, peace and prosperity largely reigned, and increasing numbers of people were heading to once remote locales—ski resorts, coastal areas, Western ranchlands—for recreation or as permanent residents. Although the Sunbelt was also growing strongly, people in seasonal climates wanted and needed vehicles that could tackle their terrain and weather, ready to roll—through mud, rain, ice and snow year-round, without having to use snow chains, and with the comfort of a family sedan. Too much to ask?

From Audi, the solution was quattro all-wheel drive, in various flavors. Due to its innovative set of differentials—side-to-side and front-to-rear—plus a lower center of gravity, an Audi quattro sedan could often outperform a big 4x4 pickup in most normal conditions (everything except maybe five feet of new snowfall).

It took Audi years to develop the huge following it has today in North America, so when volumes were smaller, offerings would vary. In some years, there might be an Avant (wagon) version of a 4000 or 5000 (later called 80/90 and 100/200, then later A4 and A6), sometimes with quattro all-wheel drive. Once the performance-oriented S models arrived in the early-mid '90s, sometimes there would be an S in Avant form, though not all non-S Avant wagons had quattro all-wheel drive.

Audi continued to calculate that the quattro lineup (including Avant quattro wagons) could more than handle the job for customers in challenging climates, and that they would be more than satisfied with these vehicles. Many were. And the company continued to hold off on SUVs—until they succumbed in the mid 2000s. The Audi Q7 SUV was introduced at shows in 2005 and went

into production in 2006 as a 2007 model. The widely presumed and highly anticipated Q5 followed in 2009.

But in the years before the Q7 came to market—from 1999 to 2005—the Audi allroad filled the bill. And it did so quite effectively. The original allroad (Audi uses a small “a” for allroad, much as they use a small “q” for quattro) was based on the midsize A6 Avant, but with adjustable-height suspension (providing up to 8 inches of ground clearance), larger wheels, ruggedized undercarriage, and body cladding (with wider wheel arches) that actually served a purpose on gravel or sanded-snow roads. Any Audi quattro does well on not just snow, but dirt or gravel and the transitions among all the various surfaces. The original allroad version was engineered to be tougher than the rest.

But big chunks of the US market were still asking for one thing: an SUV. Audi's allroad solution made a good case, until those customers walked across the street. So the allroad was discontinued here after 2005, as the Q7 took over that niche. (The A6-based allroad has continued in Europe, with a new one introduced at the



KEEP RIGHT >>

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

ENGINE.....2.0L turbocharged inline-4 w FSI direct injection.....211 hp / 258 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION.....8-speed Tiptronic with sport and manual shift modes
DRIVETRAIN.....Front-engine, quattro AWD
FUEL MILEAGE.....20/27 city/hwy, 23 comb
WHEELS.....18" 5-arm Rotor-design
TIRES.....245/45 all-season

TECHNICAL: ABS, ESC, electromechanical speed-sensitive steering, raised dynamic five-link front suspension, raised trapezoidal-link rear axle, underbody protection.

COMFORT/CONVENIENCE: Panorama sunroof w sunshade, roof rails, halogen headlights, foglights front/rear, rain/light sensors, heated power mirrors, leather seat surfaces, 12-way driver and 8-way passenger power seats, 60/40 folding rear seat, luggage cover, aluminum inlays, auto climate, concert radio w premium sound, AM/FM/SAT/CD/SD.

SAFETY/SECURITY: Driver adaptive airbag, front passenger two-stage airbag, front seat-mounted side airbags, curtain side airbags, alarm system and ignition immobilizer, 3-point seatbelts, child seat anchors.

WARRANTY/MAINTENANCE: 4-year/50,000-mile warranty, 12-year corrosion warranty, 12-month/5000-mile first service included, 4-year roadside assistance.

BASE PRICE ("Premium")\$39,600
BASE PRICE ("Premium Plus")\$42,900
BASE PRICE ("Prestige")\$48,800
 (See our test car's build, following page)





Geneva show this year as a 2013 model, but we have no word on its North American possibilities.)

And so it has gone for the past several years. Now the Audi allroad is back, but with some differences.

The new A4-based allroad

The first big difference in the new Audi allroad is that it's based on the A4, not the A6. This is not as big a difference as it may sound. Since 2005, the A4 has grown in size to significantly close the gap with the A6, while its weight is almost the same as an A6 was about ten year ago (see our comparative chart in the Nov/Dec 2011 issue, Audi A6 3.0T). The A3, meanwhile, is getting closer in size and weight to an A4 of several years back.

The other difference is in the car's adaptations from what would be standard Avant form (if there were currently a standard Avant). The new Audi allroad still has quattro's sizable traction benefits, and it has cladding to fend off some gravel. It does have 18-inch wheels (and 19-inch wheels will also be available), but so do the upper trim levels of an A4 sedan. The suspension is raised a bit from a standard A4, giving a respectable 7.1 inches of ground clearance—but it no longer has the adaptive suspension of the old A6-based allroad and does fall a bit short of the 8-inch benchmark.

Some longtime allroad aficionados may be disappointed with the less aggressive off-road nature of the new allroad. But the approach makes sense, now that the stable includes the Q7 and Q5. And it makes sense in a market that includes plenty of wagon fans, targeted all the better with the extra panache of allroad.

The change to A4 size makes the most sense of all.

The Audi allroad distinguishes itself

The new allroad debuted at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit last January, so it's now working its way into its first full winter on the roads.

The new allroad's 2.0T 4-cylinder TFSI engine puts out 211 hp and 258 lb-ft of torque, matching the torque of the older, larger allroad's 2.7L twin-turbo V6, but not its 247 hp—though the new one is lighter, and its 6.5-second 0-to-60 time beats the old car's 6.8 seconds. The new allroad is also more fuel efficient.

Though there is not a standard Avant for comparison in 2013, the allroad still carries distinguishing features: a single-frame grille with vertical chrome bars, stainless steel skid plates and side sills, and raised aluminum-optic roof rails. Cladding on lower bumpers and wheel arches comes in a matte finish as standard, but are available in full matching body paint.

The allroad is 0.6 inches wider and 2.3 inches taller than the 2012 A4 Avant and has 1.5 inches more ground clearance. The new allroad has a longer wheelbase (110.4 inches) for ride comfort, and it provides more headroom for front passengers. The vehicle boasts 27 cubic feet of cargo space with rear seats up, or a full 50 cubic feet with the seats folded down. An optional power tailgate is available to access this space.

For better or worse in our sunstroke climate, the allroad includes a standard Panorama glass sunroof. The interior includes heated 8-way power front seats (or 12-way for the driver, depending upon package fitment) and an optional 505 watt Bang & Olufsen audio system. Steering wheel shift paddles are available.



Safety and convenience electronics are plentiful, including adaptive front lights, Audi side assist (radar-based blind spot monitoring), and an optional driver assistance package, with adaptive cruise control, active lane assist and speed-sensitive steering. Active lane assist invokes steering correction if you start to wander outside your lane markings without having signaled.

Audi is a world pioneer in factory-installed wireless internet, the basis for their Audi connect™ system. Already offered in several larger models, it is now available on all A4 and A5 models, including the A4-based allroad. This enhances the navigation system by adding Google Earth and real-time SiriusXM Traffic, combining to provide a semi-virtual satellite view of your situation. Audi connect also features real-time localized weather, news, fuel prices and Google Local Search for restaurant and hotel hours, pricing and customer reviews. Registered users can log on to Google Maps and download up to 50 destinations. And a rolling WiFi hotspot allows up to eight devices to simultaneously connect.

Casual observations behind the wheel

We readily agree with the choice of a 2.0L turbo for this car—we've driven such an engine in a number of larger cars over the past year, and they've delivered well. And we wouldn't want any less fuel mileage: the allroad delivers 20/27 MPG city/highway, 23 MPG combined. We do wish for the usual: a manual transmission. While that is available on a number of A4 sedans (but not all), the allroad lineup is 100 percent Tiptronic.

As we cross some speed bumps, we note that after each one we are very aware of the engine and transmission, as we feel the drivetrain strain a little bit to get us back on track. As a driving experience it feels up to the job, though at first it feels as though it's pushing its limits a little bit. Once we hit freeway speeds, we acknowledge that the allroad has all the pep and



response it needs. What we had noted as a strained sound (almost like a power steering pump that's low on fluid) we now attribute to sound effects only. We conclude sound is better than silence, for the sake of sportiness, though we would work on that sound.

Among the interior appointments, we note once again that both the backup camera and the electronic parking brake in this Audi are top notch—hard for others to top. Controls and instrumentation overall are also up to Audi's usual very high interior standards.

As we share the roads with a great many SUVs and crossovers, we reflect on the advantages of the Audi allroad. If your daily drive—or even your extreme weekend fantasy—involves several feet of snow or mud and a trailer, you may need a full-bore 4x4. But if you're after utility, capacity and an above-average level of weather and surface readiness—as important on sand, gravel and rain-drenched streets as in the snow—with the advantage of flat-tracking low-profile cornering (while still delivering a respectable 7-plus inches of ground clearance), you may find the new Audi allroad preferable to a crossover 90-plus percent of the time. ■

OUR TEST ALLROAD

BASE (see prior page).....	\$39,600
BRILLIANT BLACK.....incl	
BLACK INTERIOR.....incl	
FRONT FILLER PANEL.....incl	
PREMIUM PLUS: auto-dim mirror w compass, heated/folding mirrors out, music interface/cable, Bluetooth phone prep, driver info system w trip computer, heated front seats w driver memory, HomeLink garage door opener, xenon plus lighting w LED DRLs, three-zone climate control, power tailgate.....	3,300
MMI NAVIGATION PLUS: CD/DVD/HD radio, MMI Navigation plus w voice control, color driver info display, parking system w rear-view camera, Audi connect w online services, Bluetooth streaming audio.....	3,050
AUDI ADVANCED KEY	550
DESTINATION CHARGE	895
TOTAL	\$47,395