

Aston Martin Vantage S

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ASTON MARTIN is one of the most revered automotive brand names on the planet. So, getting a chance to drive one of the beautifully crafted cars from the British motor manufacturer has to be on the wish list of many.

Well, luckily our wish came true very recently. We were invited to the global headquarters of Aston Martin Lagonda at Gaydon in Warwickshire, to sample one of the hottest models on the block - the Vantage S. Was it glorious, exquisite and powerful? Of course it was.

The 'S' is the most significant outward indication that the car is different to the already acclaimed Vantage. Basically the engineering team at Gaydon looked at every single performance attribute of the standard model, from engine and transmission to suspension, steering, brakes and tyres, and considered what was required to make this car deserving of the coveted 'S' badge. The result is

a pure driver-focussed package that exploits and emphasises the sporting nature of the iconic Vantage.

The 4.7 litre V8 engine has been modified to deliver peak power of 430bhp at 7200rpm and torque of 361lb/ft at 5000rpm, representing an increase of 10bhp and 14.75lb/ft respectively. In addition, the car features a new automated manual seven speed gearbox. It is one of the best features of the car because it enhances the acceleration feel and gives you increased control. Driver interaction with the gearbox is made as simple as possible to allow you to concentrate on the road ahead. Two column-mounted paddles allow an up or a down shift through the gears, and you can always locate them with ease no matter what position the steering wheel is in.

As well as selecting gears manually with the paddle-shift, you are also able to select the 'D' button on the facia to

engage automatic mode. This acts like a traditional automatic gearbox changing gear at precisely the right time, making light work of urban traffic and motorway driving. But the Vantage S' sporting character really comes into its own when the 'Sport' button is depressed. It gives you faster gear changes and it prevents the car changing up to the next cog when the revolution limit is reached.

The default 'normal' provides a more progressive throttle response suited to more everyday situations. The Vantage S also features a unique exhaust muffler specifically tuned to aurally define its sporting intent. In 'Sport' mode the car produces a wonderful crackle. It's a sound that is utterly magnificent.

Step inside and the tailored Vantage S' cabin hints at the car's dynamic capabilities, defined by a distinctive three-track stitch detail on the doors and on the seats. A folded leather design runs along the sewn tracks, echoing the gills of a shark. And, needless to say, the sumptuous seats cosset you, providing support during high-spirited driving, while remaining comfortable on long journeys.

The Vantage S coupe is hand built entirely in England and, unsurprisingly, it has an exceptional character.

Of course, it is far from cheap; but, price-tags aside, you'd have to have a heart of stone not to fall in love with this glorious machine.

PROS

- Looks
- Power
- Refinement
- Excitement factor
- British

CONS

- Expensive

FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 189mph
- 0-62 mph: 4.6
- Combined mpg: 21.9
- Engine: 4735cc V8
- Max. power (bhp): 430 at 7300rpm
- Max. torque (lb/ft): 361 at 5000rpm
- CO2: 299g/km
- Price: From £102,500

