

# AUDI S5 SPORTBACK

Power, tech and a touch of class combine in Audi's souped-up Sportback, writes Tim Barnes-Clay





**T**here are lots of high performance luxury cars on the motoring market – and the Audi S5 Sportback is just one of them.

The latest S5 is the most powerful version of the all-new Audi A5 Sportback – and the most expensive. But it is worth it for its brute-like power alone. It's almost a wolf in sheep's clothing. I say 'almost' because the car can't help but flex its rippling muscles under its steel clothes.

Indeed, the appearance of the new S5 Sportback is subtle yet appropriately beefy. The air inlets, bumper and side sills feature distinct contours. Many of the S-specific styling additions are painted in graduated tones of matt grey. Aluminium inlays emphasise the design inside, while the exterior mirror housings gleam in an aluminium look. The rear bumper incorporates a black honeycomb grille, aluminium diffuser trim and four tailpipes. A spoiler lip in body colour decorates the separating edge of the luggage compartment lid. The beautiful beast is also utterly classy – as all Audis are. It states, in an unpretentious way, that you are a success – after all, this is not a cheap car.

It comes with all the usual safety kit you'd expect of any modern car. This Audi S5, like its siblings, has been built to take a hammering and is bound to stand the test of time. On the road, the car is an animal – and a glorious one at that. The flagship Audi S5 Sportback draws upon a new V6

turbocharged TFSI powerplant to deliver a substantial 354PS and 500Nm of torque from 1,370 to 4,500 rpm. From a standing start, it will flash past 62mph in just 4.7 seconds and can reach an electronically-limited top speed of 155mph.

Of course, the S5 Sportback features quattro as standard, as well as an eight-speed tiptronic transmission that can freewheel for further efficiency gains when you ease off the accelerator pedal. When the car pulls hard, your lips stick to your teeth, but when you enter corners hard, you won't break into a sweat because the car's grip is like superglue. As an option for the S5 Sportback, Audi complements quattro all-wheel drive with another dynamic technology component – the sport differential. During high-speed driving, the sport differential literally pushes the S5 into the curve, nipping understeer in the bud. When turning into or accelerating in a curve, most of the torque is directed to the outside wheel.

As with the calmer Audi A5 Sportback, the new S5 Sportback has grown considerably inside. The interior length has gained 17mm, the shoulder room in the front up to 11mm, and the rear knee room 24mm. The chic materials and colour schemes and outstanding build quality in the cabin are characteristic of Audi. The arrow-straight architecture of the instrument





panel creates a sense of roominess. The optional ambient lighting, with 30 colours to choose from, induces a fitting interior mood, too.

From a practical point of view, with 480 litres of luggage capacity, the Audi A5/S5 Sportback is among the best in its market segment. The rectangular-shaped layout of the luggage compartment makes it outstanding in terms of practical use. What's more, the rear seat back splits 40:20:40 as standard – and with the seats folded, the latest Sportback can hold 1,300 litres worth of luggage.

Behind the wheel, everything is intuitive. As an alternative to the standard-fit analogue instrument dials, the Audi virtual cockpit, with its various display options, brings you added convenience. The large, high-resolution TFT monitor (12.3 inches) presents richly detailed graphics. There's also an optional head-up display that throws all relevant information onto the windscreen as easily comprehensible symbols and digits. This basically enables you to keep your eyes firmly on the road as you indulge in the Audi's power.

The all-new Audi S5 Sportback has almost too many other cabin toys to list. Audi's flagship infotainment version is MMI navigation plus with MMI touch. It includes such features as 10 GB of flash storage, a

DVD drive, Audi connect services and an 8.3-inch monitor. Audi MMI navigation plus works in close co-operation with many of the assistance and safety systems. The Audi smartphone interface integrates iOS and Android phones in an environment specially developed for them in the MMI. The Audi phone box connects smartphones to the on-board antenna to provide superior reception quality. It also charges the smartphone inductively, without any wires. The Bang & Olufsen Sound System, with innovative 3D sound, opens up the spatial dimension of height and gives you the sense of sitting in a recital hall. Its amplifier supplies 755 watts of awesome power to 19 loudspeakers.

If the Audi S5 Sportback's talent for titillating the senses is not enough, its average fuel economy figure of 37.7mpg is to be applauded. Driving from Kettering in Northamptonshire to London – a journey of 70 miles – I averaged 32mpg. That's not bad, considering how enthusiastic my right foot can get.

Expect to pay £47,000 for an Audi S5 Sportback. It's not bad at first glance, but, realistically, you'll be forking out thousands of pounds more when you indulge in the options list. Still, how much you spend on a well-made, entertaining car like the Audi S5 Sportback is entirely up to you.