

2000 AUDI S4

The long-awaited S4 has finally arrived. The Audi S4 is an A4 with a sport suspension, 17-inch wheels, a six-speed manual gearbox, the requisite Quattro all-wheel drive system, and above all, a spirited 2.7-litre biturbo V-6 that generates a whopping 250 horsepower.

Interior and trunk

The doors open 90 degrees to facilitate access, but a few contortions are necessary to get out from the rear because of the narrow door openings. Audi wisely places the front door handles nearer the front where they are easier to reach when the doors are wide open.

Typically German, the seats are firmer than some might like. The front seats are very supportive for long hours of driving. However, they do not have a memory function, and the power controls are hard to reach when the doors are shut. The driving position is very good but tall individuals will find that even with the seat at its lowest position, the steering wheel hides part of the instrument panel. The sunroof uses up a lot of headroom. The brake pedal and accelerator are a bit close, as drivers may discover when wearing winter boots.

The rear bench provides comfortable accommodations for two, with good headroom for people of average height. The central armrest houses a first-aid kit and has a pass-through for a ski bag. The 60/40 split seat back folds to expand the capacity of the roomy trunk.

Safety and convenience

For a number of years now Audi has been recognized for the quality and care devoted to materials and assembly, and the S4 is no exception. The cabin is quiet though road noise occasionally filters through.

Instruments and controls are impeccably positioned. The cup holder, however, is high and too shallow to be really useful. Abundant storage provides plenty of room for loose items. Whether you like it or not, nearly all the controls have red lighting at night.

The automatic climate control system is one of the best around, handling Quebec winters with ease. The heated seats warm up quickly. Audi should change its headlight washer system so that it does not automatically switch on with the windshield washers when the headlights are on. The driver should be able to decide when the headlights need washing.

Safety-conscious Audi has equipped the S4 with six air bags (two front, two side and two head), anti-lock brakes, traction control and locking head restraints. Visibility is good but the headlights should be brighter. Xenon headlights are unavailable, even as an option.

Engine and transmission

With 250 horsepower and 258 pound-feet of torque, acceleration is powerful and instantaneous right from 1,850 rpm, making the S4 a hard car to beat off the mark. Just how smoothly and progressively this power is transmitted to all four wheels lends credence to Audi's claim that this

is a luxuriously powerful car. The biturbo engine is so flexible that accelerating at 1,500 rpm in sixth gear doesn't bother it one bit.

The six-speed gearbox is very pleasant to use. The clutch is progressive but firm to a point where someone who does a lot of city driving might want to consider the five-speed Triptronic.

On the road

German engineers really know how to set up a suspension to deliver just the right mix of compliance and firmness. The S4's firm ride is never a menace to comfort because it never reacts harshly on bad pavement. The S4 has a very tenacious grip in turns and is agile and pleasant to drive. The smooth blend of compliance and firmness is a constant reminder that this car is just as sturdy as it is sophisticated.

Steering is not very communicative but it is well tuned, stable, precise and responsive. Four-wheel discs provide powerful stops but the sensitive brake pedal takes getting used to.

The mechanics at the CAA-Quebec test centre reported that the S4 is sturdy and impeccably assembled. Even the engine compartment is special, neat and well laid out.

Conclusion

The S4 is all about what a sports sedan should be. Luxurious, powerful, agile and perfectly at ease in everyday driving conditions, the S4 is proof that you don't have to compromise comfort to get exceptional handling and spirited performance.

2000 AUDI S4

FOR

Flexible, powerful engine
Smooth ride
Roadholding
Careful assembly
Comfort
All-wheel drive

AGAINST

No driver's seat memory
Headlight washers
Unavailability of xenon headlights
Access to seat adjustments
Headlight brightness
Gas, brake pedals too close

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Engine: 30-valve, 2.7-litre bi-turbo V-6
Torque: 258 lb.-ft. @ 1,850 rpm
Suspension: fully independent
Length: 448.3 cm
Height: 141.8 cm
Weight: 1,630 to 1,680 kg
Towing capacity: n.a.

Horsepower: 250 h.p. @ 5,800 rpm
Transmission: 6-speed manual; 5-speed auto.
Brakes: 4-wheel disc
Width: 184.8 cm
Wheelbase: 260.7 cm
Tires: 225/45R17
Air bags: two front, two side, two head

Fuel consumption:

- Transport Canada rating: city: 13.6 L/100 km (21 mpg); highway: 9.1 L/100 km (31 mpg)
- Test result: 12.5 L/100 (22 mpg)

Fuel tank capacity: 62 litres

Acceleration: 0-100 km/h : 5.6 seconds 60-100 km/h : 2.7 seconds

Competition: Mercedes C43 AMG, Saab 9 Viggen, Volvo S70 T5

Maintenance (amount may vary from dealer to dealer):

Frequency: 6 months/12,000 km; total to 100,000 km: \$490 (3-year/80,000-km free maintenance)

Warranty:

- Full basic coverage: 3 years/80,000 km
- Powertrain: 3 years/80,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 3 years/80,000
- Perforation damage: 12 years/unlimited mileage
- Emissions control system: 3 years/80,000 km (full coverage); 8 years/130,000 km (catalytic converter, electronic control module and on-board diagnostic device)

Factory replacement parts:

Rear bumper: \$551

Front brake disk: \$224

Brake pads: \$358

Muffler: \$663

Front fender: \$381

Average insurance premium (Quebec City, replacement cost endorsement, claim-free insurance record, female driver or male driver 30 to 40 years old): \$920 to \$1,359

Price according to trim line:

\$56,000

Main options:

Convenience group: \$1,675

Bose sound: \$920

Six-CD changer: \$750

Ski bag: \$210

On-board navigation: \$1,600

Price as tested: \$58,805

Freight and preparation: \$950

Dealers: Quebec: 7; Canada: 36

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