

Motoring New Car Road Test

Audi's e-tron Sportback is a sleek

Audi has given its e-tron a dynamic makeover in the form of the e-tron Sportback. But is it any good? **Jack Evans** finds out

AUDI has a bit of a knack for filling a niche. If you take a look at its current line-up of cars, you won't see all that many gaps in between the models – and to ensure that remains the case with the e-tron, it has introduced this: the e-tron Sportback.

Essentially a sleeker and more dynamically-styled version of Audi's latest fully electric SUV, the Sportback aims to broaden the appeal of the e-tron in general by giving buyers a slightly more coupe-like option. We've been behind the wheel to find out what it's like.

What's new?

The greatest change here is the styling, which brings a more raked roofline to the still-quiete-sleek-looking e-tron. But of course, there's a hugely impressive electric powertrain pushing the whole affair onwards – which we'll get to in a little more detail shortly – as well as a whole host of technological innovations which combine to make the e-tron feel exceptionally cutting-edge.

According to Audi, the Sportback offers a slightly 'bolder' take on the regular e-tron's design, which is why it's been formed to look as striking as possible from every angle.

What's under the bonnet?

The launch-spec e-tron models come in 55 quattro flavour which is, essentially, the most powerful version. There is an even more focused 'S' version set to arrive later, but this is definitely seen as a separate entity.

For now, this 55 model uses a twin motor set-up – one on each axle – which when combined with a 96kWh battery pack, produce 402bhp and an impressive 664Nm of torque. All-wheel-drive, it's capable of reaching 60mph from a dead stop in under 6.5 seconds, while an extra 'boost' mode – selectable by putting the gear selector in 'S' – shaves a second off that time.

Audi claims a total combined range of 241 miles, while thanks to 150kW charging capacity, an 80% top-up can be achieved in around half an hour. Fully replenishing a



■ The e-tron Sportback boasts a hugely impressive electric powertrain as well as a dynamic design

completely dead battery via a home wall-box takes around 14 hours.

What's it like to drive?

Get behind the wheel of the e-tron Sportback and, initially at least, you could be sat in any other Audi SUV. The bonnet feels slightly more scalloped, that's for sure – and this can make judging your corners a little difficult – but the car's large proportions and imposing nature will make it feel quite familiar to anyone used to driving an SUV.

Waft away and the electric powertrain is impressively silent, with little whine from the motors nor wind or tyre noise. The performance, as we've come to expect from EVs, is immediate and sharp, with full bursts of acceleration delivering genuinely impressive pace for such a large car. The steering does lack any real feel but it's solid and well weighted, while the ride isn't too bad either – though it does get a touch unsettled by larger bumps.

As a result of that more sloped roofline visibility out of the back of the car is somewhat diminished over the standard car, but your forward view is excellent.

How does it look?

Sleek, dynamic and imposing, the e-tron Sportback sure is a car which likes to make an entrance. Even our test car, in a

relatively subdued shade of silver, turned heads wherever it went. That could be due to the alien lack of engine noise, but we'd put some of the attention down to the e-tron's looks.

However, it doesn't look so out-there that those who like their EVs a little more understated will be put off. Certainly, you can see the linkage between the e-tron and the rest of the Audi line-up of SUVs through its large grille and relatively square proportions.

The light signature at the back of the car looks particularly striking, while the new digital LED matrix headlights up front give it a particularly striking 'face' when the sun sets.

What's it like inside?

It's fair to say that Audi has matched a high-tech powertrain with an equally technological interior. It's practically bristling with features and a variety of screens help to make the cabin feel particularly space-age. However, Audi hasn't forgotten the basics, with a good degree of space for those sitting in both the front and back of the car. There are plenty of storage areas too, with a huge central 'bin' proving a very useful addition.

The Sportback is exceptionally practical too. Its long wheelbase means you get a 615-litre boot which can be increased to 1,665 litres by folding the rear seats down. Though that first figure is slightly more than you get

in the regular e-tron, the seats-down size falls slightly behind the regular car's.

What's the spec like?

Our test car came in Vorsprung specification, which is a trim level at the very top of those available with the e-tron Sportback. As a result, it was kitted out with all manner of bells and whistles – while a host of optional extras boosted the car's price up by nearly £15,000.

The two-screen set-up for the infotainment system – which is the same as that seen in cars like the A6 and A7 is intuitive and responsive while being well positioned for use on the move. The Digital Cockpit – which we've seen become a regular feature in Audi models – remains clear and a great alternative to traditional dials.

Our test car also came with clever Virtual Door Mirrors – a £1,095 option on other trim levels – which replaces the traditional door mirrors in favour of cameras which then transmit a picture to small screens placed on either side of the cabin. They take some getting used to and, though working well in the rain, might not be worth the outlay. They're a clever technological feature and, for those with a keen want for the very latest kit, they'll likely be a ticked options box.

Verdict

The e-tron Sportback might be the latest

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new take on their electric SUV

Fast facts

- Model: Audi e-tron Sportback
- Base price: £69,850
- Model as tested: e-tron Sportback 55 Quattro Vorsprung
- Price: £85,050 from Jacksons Audi
- Engine: Dual electric motor
- Power: 402bhp
- Torque: 664Nm
- Max speed: 124mph
- 0-60mph: 6.3 seconds
- MPG: N/A
- Emissions: 0g/km CO2
- Range: 241miles



■ Thanks to 150kW charging capacity, an 80% top-up can be achieved in around half an hour



example of Audi's niche-filling abilities, but it's certainly an admirable and accomplished one.

Of course, its basis on the standard

– and very good – e-tron means that it has a great place from which to start, while the powertrain, technology and general fit-and-finish all feel well rounded,

just as you would expect from an Audi product.

For those that look at the standard e-tron and wish it had a little more drama, then

the Sportback will likely be a hit. For everyone else, there's a good chance that the standard e-tron will more than fit the bill.



■ The interior is bristling with features but still maintains a good degree of space



■ There are a variety of screens to make the cabin feel 'space-age'