

Motoring New Car Road Test

First drive: Audi's e-tron GT arrives

The e-tron GT sets the pace as Audi's most powerful electric vehicle, but what else does it offer? **Jack Evans** finds out

What is it?

EVERY car company needs a poster star. In years gone by, it might have been cars like the Lamborghini Countach or Ferrari Testarossa while, in more recent times, it is icons like the McLaren F1 or the BMW M5.

However, the days of the big-engined star car are numbered and nowhere is this more evident than with Audi's latest range-topper – the e-tron GT.

You see, the car we're looking at today stands as the flagbearer for Audi's electric revolution. You will find no monster V10 or V8 engine here, with electric motors and batteries in their place. But without an old-school engine, can it still succeed when it comes to drama and excitement? We've been behind the wheel to find out.

What's new?

Whisper it – but the e-tron GT sits on the same platform as Porsche's Taycan and, as a result, follows a similar route when it comes to propulsion. We've got a powerful combination of batteries and motors while an ability to charge at speeds of up to 270kW means that 62 miles of charge can be added in as little as five minutes – while going from 5% to 80% could take just 23 minutes.

Sitting as Audi's tip-top e-tron model also means that the GT benefits from all of the bells and whistles you could want, as well as Audi's famously reassuring quattro all-wheel-drive system.

What's under the bonnet?

The e-tron GT quattro uses a dual-motor set-up, with one sitting on the front axle and another at the rear.

Combined, you get 470bhp, though this increases to 523bhp for 2.5 seconds in boost mode when launch control is engaged. It means that the e-tron GT will crack 0-60mph in 3.9 seconds before reaching 152.2mph flat out.

Audi's quattro all-wheel-drive system is also incorporated for better traction, while our test car rode on adaptive suspension;



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entry-level GT cars will sit on standard aluminium suspension, however.

In terms of range, Audi claims that the e-tron GT will manage up to 295 miles from a single charge. Though we've already mentioned rapid charging, a full charge through a regular home wallbox can be completed overnight.

What's it like to drive?

The e-tron GT shuffles away from the line in a characteristically silent fashion. It is testament to Audi's attention to build quality that the silence from the powertrain is not interrupted by the merest squeak or rattle. You can tell that Audi has pushed hard to ensure that the hushed experience is kept that way.

Gather a little pace – which is not hard to do given the e-tron GT's zip – and one of the standout features is the ride. It is frankly sublime and, in comfort mode, does an excellent job of knocking back any road imperfections – of which there were many across our countryside drive route. The steering is oddly light for an Audi model, though this can be increased in weight through dynamic driving modes.

There is a small amount of tyre noise to contend with but the overarching impression you get from the e-tron is that it majors on that GT badging; this is a car that you would happily spend hours behind the wheel of. Though the performance on offer is lightning quick, you feel more obliged to lean on it gradually and revel in the refinement of the whole package at more moderate speeds.

How does it look?

The e-tron GT represents a real achievement in electric car design. It is innovative and striking but well resolved and lacking in gimmicks. This is a fully-fledged road car, rather than a concept that has just strayed onto the public road.

The front end of the car is angular and hard to miss as anything but an Audi model while, around the back, the car's scarab-like design and full-width light bar really do look the business – in our eyes, at least.

It is a long car, mind you, measuring in at 4.99 metres. That's slightly longer than a Range Rover Sport, for context, which means that you do need to bear that length

in mind when taking sharp corners or driving close to kerbs.

What's it like inside?

Slide in behind the wheel of the e-tron GT and it is immediately family Audi fare. The GT does away with the dual-screen set-up we've seen on Audi models like the A6 and Q7, instead resorting to a singular display. It means that the centre of the cabin feels decluttered, while plenty of high-end materials ensures that the cabin of this close-to-£80,000 car feels suitably premium.

Does it have the flair you would expect from a car that looks so terrific from the outside? Perhaps not. Though you can't argue about the fit and finish, we would like to see some exciting new features in here to truly showcase this car's next-generation appeal.

There is a decent amount of space for those sitting in the back, though headroom is impeded slightly by the sloping roofline. There is also a boot – though much of its space is taken up by the charging cables – and an additional front storage area.



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Audi says that a single charge will cover 295 miles

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as the firm's electric range-topper

Fast facts

- Model: Audi e-tron GT quattro
- Base price: £79,900
- Engine: Dual electric motor with 85.2kWh battery
- Power: 523bhp (boost)
- Torque: 630Nm
- Max speed: 152.2mph
- 0-60mph: 3.9seconds
- MPG: N/A
- Emissions: 0g/km CO2
- Range: 295 miles

What's the spec like?

There is an impressive level of equipment on board the e-tron GT. You get Audi's now de-facto Virtual Cockpit set-up, which places a 12.3-inch screen ahead of the driver. It's impressively configurable and relays key information such as speed, charge levels and range clearly and easily.

The 10.1-inch central infotainment system is simple to navigate, using menus and displays that we have seen on models across Audi's range. It is here that you are able to access the car's settings, too, giving you the ability to change aspects such as the ride and steering weight.

Verdict

The e-tron GT is a showcase of where Audi is heading in terms of electrification.



■ The Audi e-tron GT is 'innovative and striking but well resolved and lacking in gimmicks'

As we have seen, it is already making strides with more mainstream cars like the standard e-tron SUV so this flagship model shows real confidence in the tech-

nology. It is brilliantly deployed, too, with bracing performance and head-turning looks which galvanise the idea that electric cars can be just as exciting as their

combustion-powered stablemates. Think plug-in power is boring?

The e-tron GT proves that this simply is not the case.