

If you go back forty-something years (you could go farther), the Audi lineup was simple, basically two, the 4000 and 5000. Now, with more sizes, plus SUVs, EVs, S and RS variants and more, there are forty-something models. Yet through it all, the Q7—driven here—remains as one of the longest-standing originals, at least since 2006.

Audi Q7 can be seen as a larger three-row equivalent of Q5—one of their all-time hottest sellers—or vice versa), with heft, proportions and styling that can appeal even to those not needing its additional seat-count. Against the complexity of the overall lineup, the Audi Q7 still telegraphs a

message of a well-established pure Audi.

Even within the familiar Q7, variables have become complex. Three powertrains spanning either two or three trim levels, each, bring a total of seven Q7 and SQ7 variants (see sidebar). The base Q7 45 has a 261-hp turbo-4; Q7 55 (ours) a 335-hp turbo-V6; and SQ7 a 500-hp biturbo V8—all with an 8-speed Tiptronic automatic. Base prices span a 60 percent range, from \$60,500 to \$96,900. Ours, although not an SQ, approaches the top end as built.

Audi styling generally evolves gradually, conservatively, to the point that most generations remain visually quite current for years longer than typical. A bigger leap, though still in an evolutionary way, was the joining of upper and lower grilles over 20 years ago into one notably huge trademark

shape—the Audi Singleframe—which has stood the test of time and inspired many competitors.

While grille sizes and shapes have evolved, the overall feel has remained. The newest iteration, especially on our sample, is a stunner, as it shifts its feel from shiny-elegant to burly, augmented by new vertical bars, the two-fisted strength of its radar-lidar-camera packaging and, on ours, a Black Optic Package. At least with our deeper paint, this combination makes the long-dominant, often silver frame shape blend more, into one overall powerful front presence. (This overall direction arguably seems to both distinguish the gasoline Audis from the EVs, while also fitting in with them more.)

The Q7 is an unmistakably larger vehicle. It's a look and feel equally suited to transporting the corporate board, dropping off three rows of kids safe and sound at soccer, giving a potent punch when driving solo, or heading out on road trips or outdoor

adventures where ground clearance, tow capacity and cargo volume shine. Quite a package, all in one.

We're longtime fans of Audi's quattro all-wheel drive, mixing metaphors to describe it, at its best, as having the grip and accuracy of a cat riding on rails. That largely remains the case, even in their bigger beasts, although you may find lane-keep assist fighting against it in this (unless you turn it off, which is a common enough scenario).

Although the eight-speed automatic performs well, you will have a bigger grin on your face if you switch to manumatic before a traffic light turns green, then hit the paddles, 1-2-3-4 through a turn, ensuring that you are the master of the machine.

We generally don't track fuel mileage in detail, but we do tend to catch noteworthy readouts, and this one caught our eye at just over 10 mpg, then even dipping into single digits. Too much exuberant use of paddles or quattro curve-hugging? But those are plusses, even essentials, to the experience. This data is worthy of a deeper dive.

The user interface, in fact, makes many things

worthy of a deeper dive, as they have themselves become more complex. One puzzle of note was the start button, which seems to echo the purposely atypical implementation of power-on-off in an Audi e-tron EV, while also deviating from it, leaving room for uncertainty. (E.g. we put it in park, turned it off, but then upon exiting were told to put it in park, and the radio was still playing. It could take multiple cycles to clear all this. Bugs? Or features? Working as intended? We could not quite be sure.)

What is confirmed new is that the Q7 and SQ7 can now download apps for Spotify, Amazon Music, YouTube and other third parties, then run natively in the MMI. Online navigation and traffic light information are now also free for three years.

The Q7 is founded upon all you've known and loved about Audi for a long time, wrapped in a stylish, premium and in this case burlier package, a good 21st century luxury Mad Max amalgam. It holds a vital position in the Audi lineup, including among the e-tron EVs. There is still a pure Audi in there, layered with evolutionary differences. ■

Pure Audi TO A POINT

BY JOE SAGE



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Bratislava, Slovakia
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD	Hungary / Hungary
PARTS CONTENT	Slovakia 35%, Hungary 20%, US/Canada 1%
SEATING	seven
ENGINE	3.0L 24v DOHC 6-cyl, alum alloy, valvelift system, var valve timing
COMPRESSION RATIO	11.2:1
HP/TORQUE	335 hp / 369 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	8-spd Tiptronic automatic
DRIVETRAIN	quattro AWD
0-TO-60	5.5 sec
SUSPENSION	F/R: five-link independent steel spring
STEERING	electromechanical progressive
BRAKES	F: 14.8; R: 13.8
WHEELS	(pkg) 21-in 5-double-spoke module design, matte gray finish
TIRES	(pkg) 285/40 R21 109H all-season
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	199.6 / 117.9 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	na
TURNING CIRCLE	41.0 ft
HEADROOM (F/2/3)	39.9 / 38.8 / 35.0 in
LEGROOM (F/2/3)	41.7 / 38.8 / 29.2 in
CARGO CAPACITY	13.6 / 68.1 cu.ft
WEIGHT	5137 lb
TOW CAPACITY	(braked max) 7700 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	premium / 22.5 gal
MPG	18/23/20 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE ... (Q7 55 Premium Plus)	\$65,800
PREMIUM PLUS INCL 20-in wheels, Bang & Olufsen sound, LED interior lighting pkg plus, top view camera system w virtual 360 view, wireless phone charging pad	(incl above)
PAINT: Waitomo Blue metallic	595
INTERIOR: Saiga Beige	incl
PRESTIGE PKG: HD matrix-design LED headlights w Audi laser light, comfort adaptive air suspension, head-ups display, individual contour front seats w vent & massage	12,100
BANG & OLUFSEN AUDIO: advanced sound system with 3D sound	4900
BLACK OPTIC PKG (Q7 55): 21-in 5-double-spoke module design wheels, matte gray finish, Anthracite Gray Audi rings, black exterior trim (door blades, grille, roof rails, window surrounds), dark chrome exhaust tips	2100
ALL-WHEEL STEERING	1350
TRAILER HITCH	750
DESTINATION CHARGE	1195
TOTAL	\$88,790

2025 AUDI Q7 LINEUP

Q7 45 TFSI quattro	2.0L I-4 turbo, 261 hp, 8-spd Tiptronic
Premium	\$60,500
Premium Plus	64,300
Q7 55 TFSI quattro	3.0L V6 turbo, 335 hp, 8-spd Tiptronic
Premium	\$65,800
Premium Plus	69,600
Prestige	77,900
SQ7 TFSI quattro	4.0L V8 biturbo, 500 hp, 8-spd Tiptronic
Premium Plus	\$90,800
Prestige	96,900