



WHISTLER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

2021 AUDI E-TRON SPORTBACK

Story | Benjamin Yong



With staycations and road trips appearing to be the holidaying norm moving forward, choosing the ideal vehicle and destination becomes essential. In the case of beautiful British Columbia, is there a better pairing than the all-electric Audi e-tron and the outdoor mecca known as Whistler?

Roughly a two-hour drive from Vancouver's vibrant downtown, the area receives approximately three million visitors annually and boasts many activities in addition to the winter sports it's built an international reputation on. We took the "green" cross-over on a weekend getaway up into the mountains earlier in the year to discover some of the best the resort has to offer.

DRIVE

The e-tron is the first fully zero-emissions Audi product. Introduced in 2018, a sleeker fastback variant dubbed the Sportback followed the original SUV, which we had the chance to test over a few days. Almost tailored for the unpredictable west coast climate, the "coupe" styled utility vehicle features two powerful electric motors — one installed at each axle delivering an electric version of the company's signature quattro all-wheel drive — generating 355 horsepower and 414 pound-feet of torque.

Blessed with sunny weather during our adventure, the environment was ripe to test the Boost

Mode that, when activated, temporarily increases the output to 402 horsepower and 490 lb-ft of torque. This is good enough to get the 2,000-kilogram-plus e-tron from 0 to 100km/h in a scant 5.5 seconds.

Blasting along an empty stretch of highway, the binary acceleration happens in seemingly instantaneous fashion. Smiles continued around the high altitude bends thanks to a near 50:50 weight distribution ratio, as well as standard adaptive air suspension constantly adjusting the damping level to provide taut handling or a comfortable ride depending on the individual situation — one passenger compared the latter to floating on a cloud.

Coated in cool Plasma Blue Metallic paint exclusive to the limited Edition One model, there are all sorts of neat design elements: cue the contrast silver Singleframe grille, big gold-colour brake calipers and 20-inch blade-spoke alloy wheels. The interior of the top Technik trim loaner was quite futuristic: LED illumination everywhere you look, haptic feedback aluminum control buttons and a massive 12.3-inch virtual cockpit plus display showing a variety of customizable information like battery life and remaining travel distance.

Speaking of the battery, the e-tron utilizes a high-capacity 95-kilowatt-hour lithium-ion battery advertised with a range of some 350 kilometres.



Fully licensed and open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, there are a number of standouts such as the ahi tuna poke and chips starter containing avocado, jalapeno, pickled onions; or the impossibly tender 10-ounce Certified Angus Beef strip-loin steak served with a side of fingerling potatoes, seasonable vegetables and red wine jus.

PLAY

Daylight is no longer a prerequisite for a trek through the magnificent forests of Whistler. Vallea Lumina takes visitors on a multimedia night walk, comprised of immersive lighting, sounds, videos and even holograms used to tell the story of a father and daughter who mysteriously vanished in the woods, along a 1.5-kilometre trail on nearby Cougar Mountain.

A joint project between Montreal-based entertainment studio Momentum Factory and local tour operator The Adventure Group, the experience is fun for all ages and not too physically demanding although wearing comfortable close-toed shoes are recommended. Driving from the village takes about eight minutes, or hop on the complimentary shuttle. And either before or after the short hike, warm up in front of the fire pits and grab a snack and a souvenir at the concession stand outside the entrance. ▼

Try as I might, I couldn't do better than 247 kilometres between plug-ins, though the steep routes and spirited driving obviously played a factor. A full top-up at a 240-volt Level 2 charger takes approximately nine hours, however Whistler Village has a single public DC fast charger that can cut that time down to just 30 minutes (80 per cent capacity). The base Audi e-tron Sportback starts at starts at \$89,100 in Canada.

STAY

Nestled away up in the Coast Mountains is the four-star Westin Resort & Spa, a stone's throw from the village. Recently renovated in 2018, the family friendly hotel has over a 100 rooms — including two-bedroom suites with a balcony and loft units — all featuring full kitchens, fireplace, soaker tub and trademark "Heavenly Bed."

In terms of amenities, guests may enjoy the use of a well-stocked fitness room and unique indoor/outdoor hybrid pool and hot tub. Underground parking is available on-site for a fee, and a select number of spots have adjacent 120-volt outlets for (albeit slow) EV charging.

EAT

An abundance of restaurants exists at the resort, but why venture out when Grill & Vine offers fine dining right inside the Westin? The contemporary eatery highlights fresh, sustainable ingredients in its creation of Pacific Northwest-centric dishes.

