

# Motoring New Car Road Test



■ Alfa Romeo's Stelvio QV is impressively agile for an SUV of its size

## Inside story on Alfa's updated QV

THE Stelvio Quadrifoglio (QV) is a car which has laughed in the face of other so-called 'performance SUVs'. With some of the most immersive handling and performance from a car of its type available today, the QV has always come up trumps when it comes to how engaging a fully fledged four-wheel-drive can be to drive.

Yet its interior has often left people feeling cold. Whereas rivals such as the Porsche Macan or Mercedes-AMG GLC63 have delivered the quality and wow-factor you expect in this segment, the Stelvio hasn't quite managed to do the same. So Alfa has seen fit to change that through a raft of updates which it hopes will bring cabin quality into the same league as the way the QV drives.

### What's new?

As already mentioned, Alfa has delved inside the cabin to improve the Stelvio's fortunes while also giving the exterior of the car an extremely light update. Mechanically, the Stelvio remains identical to the older QV; Alfa knows that the way the car drives wasn't the issue, so naturally has kept things just the same.

The Italian firm has also refined the way the Stelvio feels to drive by improving its NVH – noise, harshness and vibration – levels, which it hopes will give the car a more luxurious, soft-edged approach for times when you just want to settle in and enjoy the drive.

### What's under the bonnet?

You'll find the same 2.9-litre biturbo V6 under the skin of the Stelvio QV, sending 503bhp and 900Nm of torque through an eight-speed ZF automatic gearbox to all four wheels via Alfa's Q4 system. It's because of these sizeable power figures that the Stelvio will crack 0–60mph in just 3.5

The Stelvio QV is often seen as one of the most dynamic SUVs in the segment. Can some key updates, particularly in the cabin, help it even further? **Jack Evans** finds out

seconds (quicker than its Giulia QV stablemate, in fact) and rocket on to 176mph flat out.

Economy-wise, things have taken a bit of a dive as a result of more stringent WLTP testing. MPG is down from 28.8 to 24.6, while CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have risen from 222 to 261g/km.

### What's it like to drive?

The Stelvio QV is one of those cars which feels far smaller to drive than its relatively large exterior proportions would lead you to believe. The steering is quick – verging on nervous for a car of this type, in fact – which lends it a lot more agility and poise than you'd expect from an SUV. The acceleration is whip-crack fast, of course, with each downshift accompanied by a theatrical warble. The shifts themselves are quick and efficient, too, with the excellent metal shift paddles making each cog change a pleasant experience.

The ride is also good, toeing the line between supportive and supple well. The brakes too are excellent, with decent pedal feel and progression helping to make slowing the car down an efficient process.

### How does it look?

In terms of exterior revisions, the changes to the Stelvio QV are minimal. The rear lights have been given a smoked effect, while the badging at the back has been blacked-out too. New 21-inch alloy wheels

are available too, while the front grille gains a gloss black finish.

It's still a very appealing car to view – in our opinion, of course – and one which remains instantly recognisable as an Alfa Romeo. And for those to whom the Stelvio doesn't look quite special enough, there's a new range of accessories from Mopar to help tailor the car's look to individual requirements.

### What's it like inside?

It's in the cabin where things have been given the most amount of nip and tuck. There's a new leather-trimmed steering wheel and this is matched by a new leather gearstick which replaces the old – and rather unpleasant – plastic-backed version. The infotainment system has been updated – though we'll get to this in more detail shortly – but it's been placed in a more user-friendly location.

Because of its size, the Stelvio remains a practical SUV option too. There are 525 litres of seats-up boot space to play with – pretty much on-par with rivals – but this can be extended by folding down the rear seats.

### What's the spec like?

Equipment levels remain good in the Stelvio, but it's the way that the systems work which has been finessed for this latest version. The infotainment, for instance, has been redesigned to offer an

### Fast Facts

- Model: Alfa Romeo Stelvio Quadrifoglio
- Base price: £64,833 from Motor Mall
- Engine: 2.9-litre biturbo V6
- Power: 503bhp
- Torque: 900Nm
- Max speed: 176mph
- 0–60mph: 3.5 seconds
- MPG: 24.6
- Emissions: 261g/km CO<sub>2</sub>

easier and more streamlined operation. While the old system was rather clunky and over-complicated, the new one utilises far more straightforward software, which makes performing simple tasks – such as setting the navigation or pairing your phone – much easier.

A full range of driver assistance systems have been fitted too, bolstering the Stelvio's safety credentials. Features such as adaptive cruise control, active blind spot assist and lane keep assist are all fitted as standard, which should help the QV to stand in even better stead towards the family buyers at which it is targeted.

### Verdict

The tweaks and edits which have been made to the Alfa Romeo Stelvio Quadrifoglio only help to make it an even more enticing package. The cabin may not quite be able to rival key German competitors, but the updates make it a far more pleasant place to spend time.

The performance and the way the car drive still dominate the experience as a whole, and if you're after an SUV which will rival many more performance-orientated cars in the way that it drives, then it still remains one of the best on sale today.



■ Exterior revisions have been minimal



■ The 2.9-litre engine produces 530bhp



■ There are a new leather-trimmed steering wheel and gearstick in the cabin