
First Drive: Aston Martin V8 Vantage N420

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Celebrating the company's success since 2006 with production-based V8 Vantage race cars, Aston Martin has launched a small run (limited to 420) of road cars aimed at the more focused driver: those looking for an even rarer Aston.

We've just driven the car, and for anyone considering a new **V8 Vantage** we strongly believe this is the one to go for. So what do you get?

An awful lot, actually, as the car comes as standard with a new sports exhaust system, sports suspension, the brilliant lightweight seats (not available in Federal markets, though) with the 'racetrack stitch pattern' of the **V12 Vantage**, 19in 10-spoke forged alloy wheels with gloss black and diamond turned finish, N400-type sills, much Alcantara and many items (front splitter, rear diffuser and side-strakes) in tasteful, semi-matt carbonfibre. See the full list at the foot of this page.



The **V8 Vantage N420** is available as a coupé or roadster, with either a 6-speed manual or Sportshift, semi-automatic transmission. Alcantara is only available in the coupé, though.

The engine, the latest 4.7-litre, 420bhp V8, is unchanged – enough to give a 180mph capability with 0-100km/h (62mph) coming up in 4.8 seconds. With the extensive use of carbonfibre, the lightweight seats and lighter wheels, the N420's weight is shaved by 27kg: a handy reduction.



As an option, buyers can choose from **Aston Martin 'Race Collection'** paint schemes, mostly called after the pet names given to works entries at the **'Ring 24 Hours'**. So you could have **'Rose' Yellow**, **'Kermit' Green** or **'Elwood' Blue** - or just play it safe and go for traditional **Aston Martin Racing Green** with yellow accents on the nose and cant rails. The contrasting colours are painted, by the way, not stickered, a process which adds considerable time to the regular hand-finishing of the cars.

The other alternative is **'Asia Cup'**, a classy white/black combination you see here on this car.



The combination of **Obsidian Black**-trimmed lightweight seats and the standard-for-N420 **Iridium interior package** (with graphite instruments) is a seductive one. It's also a comfortable one and we can't help feeling sorry for our American cousins denied the sexy lightweight seats. I like Alcantara-trimmed steering wheels; you get excellent grip with heightened feedback when pressing on. The interior has an air of purpose without in-your-face carbonfibre and 'chrono' dials.

It's an **Aston**, after all.



This particular **N420** was a Sportshift car. I haven't driven one for a while (**N400**, I think, the last time?) but it combines nicely with the sports suspension and general tenor of the new car. Up- and down-changes are smooth (with 'blipping' under deceleration to flatter the driver), as long as you treat the system with respect.

A slight 'lift' when exploring the upper reaches of the rev-band is essential - but the change is pretty quick.





A useful feature of Aston's take on the robotised manual is that it will 'creep' in first gear, too, like a torque converter automatic.

The suspension gets the most from the car and is well-complemented by a sports exhaust that is neither intrusive nor contrived. I covered some miles on a motorway and, at everyday, restricted speeds, there's a nice, busy hum from the drivetrain. "Purposeful," I suppose you could say.



Don't think that this is a track-day special or hardcore racer – it's definitely not. Just think of it as a way of letting someone else choose the best options from the catalogue, adding in a few normally unobtainable items and, if you get your calculator out, you might find it saves you a few bob, too.

Plus there's the limited-edition aspect of it all – specify '**Kermit' Green** and you could be in exclusive company, one of the very first V8 Vantage racers made by **Aston Martin**.

Like the cockpit of the new **N420** - not a bad place to be.



Production of the **Aston Martin V8 Vantage N420** begins in July 2010, with deliveries commencing in August and prices starting from £96,995 in the UK.

Full Specification:

Exterior -

- * Carbonfibre splitter and diffuser
- * Carbonfibre side strakes
- * Black bonnet and side strake meshes
- * N400 sill design
- * 19in 10-spoke forged alloy wheels with gloss black and diamond turned finish
- * Front parking sensors
- * Optional race car collection livery (painted, adding 22 man-hours on top of the original 50)

- * Graphite sports exhaust tailpipe finishers

Powertrain and chassis features -

- * Limited edition numbered engine bay plaque
- * New sports exhaust system
- * Sports suspension

Interior -

- * Lightweight seats (not available in Federal markets)
- * Sports steering wheel in Alcantara (not roadster)
- * Carbonfibre N420 sill plaque
- * Seat inserts in Alcantara (coupé) or leather (coupé and roadster) with racetrack stitch pattern
- * Iridium interior with Piano Black or Double Apex Alloy fascia trim
- * Alarm upgrade
- * Cruise control
- * Bluetooth telephone system
- * Auto-dimming mirror



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