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2011 Aston Martin Virage: New Model to Debut at Geneva



Joining the Cygnet and V8 Vantage S on Aston Martin's Geneva stand will be the Virage: a car "sitting between the DBS and DB9" as Aston put it, reprising a 'V' name from the late-80s.

While the 1988 Virage was an all-new Aston with a new chassis, heavily revised V8 engine and Heffernan and Greenley coachwork, its 21st Century namesake utilises the super-successful chassis architecture of current Gaydon production, and clothes it with another skilful variation on the DB9/DBS theme by Marek Reichmann.

The new car – which will be a Touchtronic, six-speed torque converter automatic only – is available in coupé and Volante (Aston-speak for convertible) form, and can be ordered from the worldwide dealer network right away. Prices will be confirmed at Geneva.



So what's new? Visually, the biggest change is at the front with the adoption of a brand-new single-headlamp bi-xenon unit. This, coupled with a five-bar grille, prominent extended-sill/frontal 'skirts' flanking a large, mesh-covered lower intake and splitter gives the Virage a different 'face' from the other members of the VH platform family.

At the sides, lower sill skirts extend the length of the wheelbase, running from behind the front arches back to widened, DBS-like rear haunches. Excluding wing mirrors, the Virage is 29mm wider than a DB9. The keynote strakes on the front wings now house LED side repeaters. At the back, the new car carries the familiar lower spoiler and twin-exhaust treatment.



Inside the Virage, the big news (that will raise a cry of “at last!” from Aston-owners worldwide) is the adoption of a Garmin satellite navigation system which replaces the venerable Volvo-sourced version first introduced with the DB9, and a feature on every model since. It’s still housed in the sloping central console and is operated using the existing joystick and facia buttons.

Sports seats are standard, although lightweight versions (sadly not available in North America) are an option, as is ‘2+0 seating’, first seen in the DBS. As you’d expect, the interior will be a desirable, Bridge of Weir leather-clad environment; the quietest yet, thanks to increased sound insulation on front and rear bulkheads and a generous extra layer of Thinsulate™ in the convertible’s fabric roof.



Dynamically, DB9 drivers will recognise the punchy 6.0-litre V12 in its 490bhp (slightly up on the DB9's 470bhp) form, but new for the Virage is revised tuning to deliver 85% of the engine's 570Nm (420lb ft) torque at just 1500rpm. As standard, braking for the Virage comes courtesy of CCM (Carbon Ceramic Matrix) discs, 398mm diameter/six-piston front, 360mm/four-piston rear. Until now, only the V12 Vantage and DBS have been CCM-disc equipped.

The Virage runs on new 20in, five-spoke 'fork' design alloy wheels with 10-spoke, forged diamond-turned rims an option.





From a chassis perspective, the engineers have integrated the five-setting ADS (Adaptive Damping System) used in the DBS. Sensors constantly monitor the behaviour of the car under acceleration, braking and cornering and, within a fraction of a second, adjust the damper settings to suit. Gentle driving will result in a more relaxed calibration, while the more press-on will find that ADS has unobtrusively - yet instantly - set the car up with stiffer dampers (therefore less roll) as a consequence. Pressing the glass ADS button on the fascia will override the system, to immediately ready the car to its most sporting state.

Likewise, the Dynamic Stability Control (DSC) can be set to 'On', 'Track Mode' (where a limited amount of wheelspin and slip is allowed) or 'Off' (you're on your own, matey). The Sport button is purely for the gearbox: once activated, the changes are quicker and a driver can hold the revs on the limiter without an automatic up-change.







The company has already gone to a lot of trouble in stiffening the chassis of first the V8 Roadster, and then the DBS Volante. For open cars, they are rock-solid over an uneven road. For the first time, these models' solidly mounted front sub-frames, and front and rear shear panels, are employed on a DB9-related convertible – which should lead to the best ride/handling combination yet. The coupé now has a rear shear panel fitted, too; another first.

So, in summary, the Virage offers: a fresh face to the two-door Aston family; CCM brakes as standard; the most refined active suspension set-up; a super-stiff chassis; new sat-nav; better sound-proofing and a more flexible engine. A 'new' Aston? Not really, but it could well be the best iteration of the 'DB9' yet.

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