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Maserati Quattroporte SQ4: Going off piste...

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Maserati has taken a leaf from German books by offering a four-wheel-drive 'SQ4' version of its Quattroporte saloon – allowing all that Italian luxury to venture further than previously possible...

The first-generation Quattroporte might be remembered for its unconventional body – which carried plenty of passengers and their luggage in the type of sporting luxury for which Maseratis have become famous. However, if the party's destination was a ski slope, they would be out of luck: the rear-wheel-drive luxury liner would be consigned to the roadside, its occupants forced to watch better-equipped groups head to the summit.

First full-time 4WD Maserati





That's remained the case up until now – but that'll soon change with the introduction of the SQ4 and its namesake four-wheel-drive system. The newest Italian diva uses the familiar 8-speed auto mated to the also-familiar 3.0-litre V6 biturbo found in its RWD siblings. Producing 404bhp, the SQ4 should be able to keep up with all but the most potent xDrives and Quattros, with 0-62mph dispatched in 4.9 seconds. And while the engine might not be as symphonic as a naturally aspirated V8, the characterful snorts and crackles make it easy to accept the loss of those extra cylinders.

Italian elegance inside



Inside the SQ4, occupants remain untroubled by the V6's under-bonnet activities. Cosseted by a silky ride, they'll soon settle into the wide, well-bolstered seats, taking in the atmospheric appeal of the leather, wood and touches of chrome. In fact, you could find that once you do get to the summit, your passengers might be quite happy staying exactly where they are.

When you finally manage to usher all occupants into the lodge, return to the car park and you might find the Quattroporte has an admirer or two. Among the usual German machinery found at these heights, the Italian certainly makes a bold statement with not only its extrovert design, but also its up-to-date technology. It's certainly no off-the-shelf saloon; rather, it's the automotive equivalent of practical haute couture.

Photos: Maserati

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