

aston martin **VANTAGE 2018**

This super-tuned update on a British classic is the ultimate machine for sports car fans, writes Tim Barnes-Clay

The new Aston Martin Vantage is the stuff of dreams for those who love luxury sports cars. As a lad, I never thought I'd get to sit in an Aston, let alone end up being invited to test-drive one.

But life sometimes has a way of working out if you're prepared to put the graft in. I'm not necessarily talking about me; it's Aston Martin that should be patting its own back. The company has worked like a dog to get the new Vantage right – and it's paid off.

Why? Well, let's begin with the looks. It's awesome from the rear, with detailed lights and a rising rear spoiler. It's a little less lively at the front, although the Vantage's shark-nose is aggressively appealing. What really works, though, are the perfect proportions. The two-seater is sinuous – almost hunter-like in the way it appears poised to pounce on unsuspecting prey.





Fast Facts - 2018 Aston Martin Vantage
(as tested by Tim Barnes-Clay)

- * Max speed: 195 mph
- * 0-62 mph: 3.6 seconds
- * Combined mpg: 26.9
- * Engine layout: 3,982cc 8-cylinder turbo petrol
- * Max. power (PS): 510
- * CO2: 245 g/km
- * Price: £120,900

Under the metal, the up-to-date Vantage is like its sibling, the elegant DB11. Both models house the Mercedes-Benz-sourced 4.0-litre V8 lump. Mind you; the twin-turbo assisted engine has been tuned so that it feels like it's always belonged in Aston Martins. Stomp your foot on the accelerator and the car will shoot you from zero to 62mph in 3.6 seconds. It will then propel you to 195mph – if you're in a place you can do that without losing your licence, or your life.

Open the Aston up, and you're greeted with low-slung sports seats, but they're easy to get comfortable in. Behind the wheel, the Vantage is cossetting, and the overall cabin is far less clinical than a Porsche 911's. It's traditional, yet it's still thrilling. What's more, the Benz-derived switchgear is nicely incorporated, and the controls are intuitive to use.

As you might expect, the sports car isn't meant to be the most practical vehicle – there's not even a glovebox. And, as hinted at earlier, this is a motor without back seats, but you can just about get some golf clubs under the tailgate.

Practicality aside, the new Vantage is as close to perfect as you can get. Pushing

the Aston Martin-badged starter button brings the car to life with a roar. It's a fulfilling sound, particularly with the four-pipe sports exhaust attached. Driving off in Sport (the most relaxed of the three settings) and letting the eight-speed automatic gearbox do its thing, discloses a smooth change that's matched to a remarkably biddable ride.

Spool through Sport+ and Track settings, and the powertrain, damping and steering progressively alter the new Vantage's temperament to make it angrier, wilder and noisier. Whichever mode you opt for, fun is always on the menu.

On British tarmac, the Aston delivers confidence-inducing handling with immediate reactions – and the brakes do a top job of erasing pace. I drove the Vantage around the meandering highways and byways of the Cotswolds, and it excelled.

This state-of-the-art Aston Martin Vantage is the first to be spawned under the automaker's fresh leadership line-up – and you can tell. Yes, a 911 will give you better practicality, but the rival Porsche won't quite give you the feeling you get from driving a legendary British model.

