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## TEST DRIVE

# Fashionably Late

## 2018 Alfa Romeo Stelvio Sport AWD

DAN LYONS | text  
Special to the Times Union

The (recently reviewed) Q5 luxury crossover is Audi's best-selling U.S. model. More than half of all Porsche's stateside sales come from utility models. The same market realities that drove Porsche and Audi (and others) to turn their attention to SUVs and crossovers has recently claimed its newest convert.



The Alfa Romeo Stelvio is merging into the heavily-trafficked compact luxury crossover segment for 2018. The lineup for the latest Alfa is three models wide: Stelvio (\$41,995), Ti (\$43,995), and Quadrifoglio (price TBA).

Given Alfa's "track" record (so to speak), it's not surprising that their take on this segment puts the emphasis on the S, rather than the U in Sport Utility Vehicle. The chassis is a modified version of that found beneath the Giulia sedan. All models

**2018 Alfa Romeo Stelvio Sport AWD**  
MSRP: \$41,995 · As tested: \$53,585

have a 50/50 weight distribution, and all are fitted with all-wheel-drive. The AWD setup has a RWD bias, capable of sending 100 percent of available power to the rear wheels, or pushing up to 60 percent to the fronts as needed, for maximum traction. Stelvio is unapologetically not geared towards off-road travel, though it would shrug off an unimproved road. Wintry travel should be a snap, given the four-wheel traction, even



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER

**THE NEW STELVIO** is Alfa Romeo's entry in the luxury crossover segment. Though the famed Italian maker's slant leans toward performance, the cat-quick Stelvio's all-wheel-drive can handle any winter road conditions with ease.

balance and a relatively low center of gravity.

My Stelvio tester was equipped with the Sport package (\$1,800), which includes 19-inch wheels shod with all-season tread, painted brake calipers (red, yellow or black), black exterior trim, aluminum sport pedal, foot rest and trim, a leather wrapped sport steering wheel with oversized, column-mounted, brushed aluminum paddle shifters and a sport tuned suspension.

With performance oriented brands, the optional, sport suspension is often tough on the tailbone. Not so here. The Stelvio's suspension on models with the Sport package is stiffer than the standard setup, though not uncomfortably so. Alfa's DNA drive mode offers three settings: normal, dynamic and eco. The difference between Normal and Dynamic modes is felt mainly in the latter's sharper throttle response and tightened steering feel. Stelvio

Stelvio enjoys a twisty road more than most in this segment, and is enjoyable to put through its paces.

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A large measure of that fun is owed to its drivetrain. Base and Ti models share a turbocharged 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine, matched with an eight-speed, ZF automatic transmission. While it pales in comparison with the Quadrifoglio's 505 horsepower plant, the 2.0 generates a healthy 280 horsepower and 306 lb.-ft. of torque. Alfa claims that these are class-leading numbers, along with a company-claimed 0-60 time of 5.4 seconds. Top speed is 144 mph.

In practice, the Stelvio is cat quick off the line. In "manumatic" mode, the transmission responds promptly to paddle requested gear changes, and downshifts include a blip of rev-matching throttle — a nice touch. The engine revs freely and I found myself banging my head on the 5,500

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