

MOTORING



ELEGANCE: From celebs to chauffeurs and diplomats to David Beckham, the S-Class is the definition of a refined executive car and nothing else matches what Mercedes have achieved.



By Ollie Fletcher

S-Class' of old have traditionally been a glimpse into the future, showcasing technology which appears 10-15

years later on average family cars: previous models have claimed the titles of first car to have ABS, airbags, satnav and three-point seatbelts to name a few.

So what does this latest model have to offer? Well for a start it's the most technologically advanced car on sale right now. It's the first car with no light bulbs – instead it uses over 500 LEDs for exterior and interior lighting (saving 0.05 litres of fuel per 60 miles).

'Magic Body Control' is an option which scans the road ahead and creates a 3D image and dampens the air suspension accordingly. The result is a silky smooth ride even on our pothole infested roads.

On A-roads and motorways the car simply irons out any bumps in its path and maintain a perfect ride so your client doesn't spill their champagne picked out from the fridge in the rear armrests (the leather armrests can also be heated or cooled at the touch of a button). The rear seats can be reclined to 45° - just like you're flying first class.

Mercedes S-Class

If you specify the 'Driving Assistance Package', you get radar-guided cruise control, steering assistance to help you stay in lane, blind spot notification, 360 camera plus more.

All this means that technically the car could drive itself, but legally you can only depend on the system for a few seconds before you hear a loud beep and have to regain control.

It's very well equipped in standard form too. Gone are the old fashioned analogue displays, this is 2013!

"...This is the car of the future you can drive today..."

The dash looks like Mercedes have rammed two iPads into it. One for all the instruments and driver information, the other for everything else including navigation and media which is controlled by a simple control panel in the centre console. The car also has its own Wi-Fi hotspot.

But it's when night falls that things start to get really cutting-edge.

The S-Class has been fitted with infrared night vision since 2005 but even now it still seems like witchcraft.

In short you can change the main speedometer to a screen showing what lies ahead as seen through the infrared camera mounted at the top of the windscreen, further than the headlights can see.

Now, however, if the system detects a pedestrian or animal in the path of the car, it will highlight a red box around it on the screen, and the LED headlights will pick out the person or animal and briefly fire a strobe spotlight to make them aware of the car.

The bizarre thing is that the night vision screen isn't distracting – you simply glance at it like you do the rear-view mirror. My favourite option has to be 'Air-Balance'.

It lets you plug your favourite aftershave into a dock in the glovebox and wafts the scent through the car. Whatever next!

Engines range from a V6 turbo diesel in the S350 to a massive 6-litre twin-turbo V12 in the range-topping S65 AMG which develops 625bhp, and with prices ranging from £62,650 to a whopping £175,000 respectively. There's also a petrol hybrid available.

This is the car of the future you can drive today.