

Pikes Peak- SUV Concept Vehicle

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Pikes Peak quattro design study combines 500bhp with all-terrain capability and MPV versatility. Audi has drawn on its sporting success in two of the world's most famous races to develop its latest concept car - the Pikes Peak quattro - unveiled at the recent North American International Auto Show in Detroit. The name itself is inspired by the Pikes Peak Hill Climb Race held in the USA every June with up to 160 fearless drivers competing over a 12.4 mile course with 125 mph straights and 156 corners. Audi has won this event three times in the past and the new concept car could tackle this gruelling course and much more. Indeed the technology used in the 500bhp engine is derived from the Le Mans winning cars of 2001 and 2002. The Pikes Peak is described by Len Hunt, formerly Director of Audi UK and currently Vice-President of Audi North America, as three cars in one - "a high performance vehicle, a desirable sports utility and a flexible MPV." There are currently no plans to put the Audi Pikes Peak quattro into full production, although Audi executives said they would be studying public opinion "very closely". The design study is powered by a 4.2-litre V8, twin-turbo engine similar to the unit which powers the Audi RS 6 quattro, but with power increased to 500bhp, enabling an impressive 0-60mph acceleration time of just 4.7 seconds. The interior is also innovative. A four + two-seat configuration enables the Pikes Peak quattro to adapt from sports car to heavy-duty off-roader to a large people-carrier. Off-road competence comes from the car's variable-height adaptive air suspension and quattro four-wheel-drive. The ride height can be raised for rough terrain, but is automatically lowered when back on smooth roads. A glass roof provides plenty of light to the interior where six people can travel in three pairs of leather-upholstered seats, all of which are electrically adjusted. The interior also includes laser optics, a DVD entertainment system and Internet access. Technical details on the exterior include loop-pattern door handles which extend when proximity sensors detect that the owner wants to get in. The handles are also illuminated, while lights in the exterior mirrors are used to light up the area around the car. The Pikes Peak quattro's appearance is set off by massive five-arm double spoke wheels and run flat tyres which can be driven on after a puncture for up to 125 miles at speeds up to 50mph. Chairman of the Board of Audi AG, Martin Winterkorn, said the company had a very successful year in 2002 in all markets despite tough economic conditions. He added that there was still "enormous potential" for the brand. "We will be introducing a number of new models over the next five or six years - it has not escaped our notice that other German luxury car makers are still outselling us by two or three to one in some markets," remarked Mr Winterkorn. In 2002, Audi sold 560,000 cars in Western Europe, up 3.8 percent and the highest sales figure in its history. In the United States sales were up 2.9 percent to 85,700.

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