

Mercedes S-class S350 BlueTEC L SE Line - First Drive REVIEW

Likely to be the best-selling model in new Mercedes S-class range, the S350 BlueTEC offers more of the same, nailing it on comfort and refinement



What is it?:

The new [Mercedes-Benz S-class](#) is the best car in the world. At least, that's what Mercedes-Benz aims it to be. And it was a phrase we were inclined to see the rationale behind it after our first go in the sumptuous new S-class courtesy of the range-topping S500.

But this S350 BlueTEC has to try and meet that bold aspiration ever more as it is almost certain to be the best-selling S-class, without doubt. It's all well and good nailing the range-topper, but this bread and butter model is the one that really has to meet its brief.

To help meet the brief, Mercedes has armed the S350 with a 3.0-litre V6 turbodiesel engine. It's the same engine as in its predecessor but armed with more power and torque, lower CO₂ and improved economy that are further improved thanks to the S-class's lower weight and improved aerodynamics.

What's it like?:

Superb. The best in the world. There's a question? How can that be defined? It's out on its own on as a world beater on those criteria. Not just the flagship for Mercedes-Benz, it is *the* flagship. Since the first generation S-Class made its debut in 1972, the S-Class has been the high-tech spearhead for technologies and safety features we now take for granted. ABS, airbags, traction control, stability control, active cruise control - all made their production-vehicle debut in an S-Class. And now we have a new one. While there are no significant 'firsts' with the new W222 S-Class, there's now more technology than ever before. So much, in fact, that an optioned-up S has twice as many lines of code in its various on-board computers than a modern airliner. Mere wires aren't enough to run this ship either, and the entire car is fitted with a fibre-optic network that's so fast and comprehensive. The rest of the dynamic package is typically excellent. And there's more luxury. Forget business class, with a few select options Benz's new flagship easily becomes more luxurious than a lot of first-class cabins. Let's delve in, shall we?

The ride quality is superb, it corners flatly and handles with confidence-inspiring stability rather than any great level of driver involvement. It could probably be made even better still if Mercedes' Magic Body Control (an incredible piece of engineering that can make speed bumps feel like they aren't even there) were to be offered, but it's only available on the big V8-equipped S-classes in Petrol guise. Having said that however, the BlueTEC without it hardly feels like a poor relation. While for most cars the focus is on the driver, in the S-Class the most important chair is in the back. To emphasise this, the first leg of our test 'drive' was made from the rear seat, with none other than [V8 Supercar](#) driver Karl

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Reindler up front manning the helm of our S 350 L BlueTec diesel. From the back, it's like being whisked along in a comfy lounge chair. 'S' is clearly not for 'small'. Not only does the long wheelbase model provide acres of legroom, but models equipped with power-adjustable rear seats (standard on long wheelbase; a cost option on normal wheelbase) provide up to 37 degrees of backrest recline.



The interior comfort is beyond reproach, the overall functionality and design is impeccable also. S-Classes are built with a bit more love than most other Benzes, and it shows in the quality of the leather dashboard's stitching, the quilted hide on the seats, the deep pile of the carpets and the solid 'thunk' of the door closing. Even the door bins are lined with plush carpet, now THAT is luxury. It's also worth mentioning the new infotainment software, which is accessed via the gigantic 31.2cm TFT screen in the dash (there's another immediately to its right, which displays the instrumentation). It runs on the new NTG5 architecture, and it's a sign of things to come for other Benz models. Gone is the clunky menu interface of the old Comand system, replaced by a more intuitive 'carousel' menu system and extremely slick graphics. It's a delight to look at and easy to use, but there's currently no sign of a touchpad controller (something [BMW](#) and [Audi](#) already have), nor a head-up display. Cabin ambience is given a big boost thanks to the standard LED cabin lighting (did we mention that there isn't a single incandescent bulb in the S-Class now?), which can light the interior in seven different hues. It looks great at night, and the LWB features LED piping that wraps around both rear seats rather than just the rear doors. But besides the ambience, the tech and the quality, there's one other attribute that's an S-Class hallmark: it's quiet. Sound suppression is so good that we had trouble figuring out what engine was up front. Turns out it was a diesel, but we only knew for certain when we got out and scoped the S 350 BlueTec badge on the bootlid.

Should I buy one?:

Definitely, especially if you are a luxury car customer who wants the most comfortable and refined car out there then the S-class is for you. The S-class nails its own for its grown-up manners and role as a businessman's express.

This is the one car you'd pick out of any class for a 1000-mile drive, or indeed passenger ride. It seems a bit improper to be discussing how an S-Class drives. After all, the S-Class is everything you'd expect it to be on the road. Powerful, unflappable, comfortable.

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The S350 BlueTEC is our pick of the range, because it mixes strong performance and superb refinement with comparatively low tax costs and impressive fuel economy.



The S 350's diesel engine does things in a hushed whisper (it sits on pneumatic mounts, don't you know), but it's also impressively torquey. Its 620Nm makes light work of shifting the S-Class' near 2-tonne weight, and with peak torque on stream from just 1600rpm it doesn't need to be worked hard at all. For most, the diesel will do everything they ask of it - all while delivering a claimed fuel consumption of 6.0 l/100km (we got 8.8 l/100km, but with a heavy and undignified foot at work).



If you crave a bit more power than the S 350's 190kW, then there's the 335kW 4.4 litre twin-turbo petrol V8 of the S 500. Closely related to what's used in the head-stomping E63 AMG S, the S 500 has 700Nm to match its 335kW, and that torque is delivered in an irresistible diesel-like fashion. All of it is available from as low as 1800rpm, which gives the S 500 tremendous low-down thrust. The standard air-suspension is cushy and floaty in comfort mode, which is better suited to cracked urban pavement than the undulating country roads we drove on.

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VERDICT | OVERALL

There might be fancier and more ostentatious large luxury saloons from the likes of Bentley and Rolls Royce, but when it comes to class and power, it's hard to think of anything other than an S-Class. It's one for Presidents and Prime Ministers, for the car parks of 'The Hague' and 'The UN'; those other marques are for the ostentatiously rich. Since its birth the S-Class has set the standard for luxury motoring. There's no hype here - the S-Class is well and truly the definition of luxury motoring.

Performance

4 out of 5 stars / 5 out of 5 stars

We've driven the S350 BlueTEC (which has a 3.0-litre V6 diesel engine), S300 BlueTEC Hybrid (a diesel-electric hybrid), S500 (a 4.7-litre V8 petrol), S63 AMG (a 5.5-litre V8) and the ultra-luxury Mercedes-Maybach S600 (a 6.0-litre V12). The S500, S63 and S600 are seriously rapid, but the much cheaper S350 BlueTEC also feels fast and flexible. Even the S300 Hybrid feels brisk, plus there are more powerful petrol-electric hybrids, badged S400 Hybrid and S500 Plug-in Hybrid.

Ride & Handling

5 out of 5 stars

The S500 we drove was fitted with Mercedes' optional Magic Body Control system (it's standard on the S63 and Maybach S600), which reads the road ahead so it can prepare the suspension for bumps and potholes you're about to hit. Given how effective it is, it's a little disappointing that it's available only on the more expensive petrol models, but cheaper cars with the standard air suspension still offer a smooth ride. Body roll is pretty well controlled and the steering is nicely weighted.

Refinement

5 out of 5 stars

The S350 is one of the most refined diesels we've ever driven, while the S500 and S63 emit an aggressive yet muted growl when you accelerate, but are virtually silent at a cruise. As you'd expect, the Maybach S600 is supremely hushed. The diesel hybrid breaks this good run, because its four-cylinder engine is noisy at idle and when revved. Every S-Class is superb at shutting out wind noise on the motorway; in fact, the only thing that disturbs the peace is some road noise on certain surfaces.

Conclusion

5 out of 5 stars

This model feels effortlessly fast and flexible, plus it's one of the most refined diesels we've ever driven. Even this relatively true value version feels very luxurious, and the longer wheelbase means there's masses of room in the rear seats. A definite BUY! To watch a video of the car please go to:

<http://www.whatcar.com/car-reviews/mercedes-benz/s-class-saloon/video/26190-2>

Mercedes S350 BlueTEC L SE Line

Base Price (Excluding Options) £65,650; **0-60mph** 6.6sec; **Top speed** 155mph; **Economy** 50.4mpg; **CO2** 148g/km; **Kerb weight** 1975kg; **Engine** V6, 2987cc, turbodiesel; **Power** 258bhp at 3600rpm; **Torque** 457lb ft at 1600-2400rpm; **Gearbox** 7spd automatic



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2014[14] MB S350 L BlueTEC SE-Line, 4 Door Saloon, 7 Speed Automatic. 3.0 Litre v6 24-Valve DOHC Turbo-DIESEL, 258BHP/620Nm. One Owner with F/MB/S/H and warranted 11000 miles from new. This exquisite S-Class oil burner, has been finished in unmarked BRIGHT Silver metallic with unblemished Anthracite soft nappa leather interior. There is no other high-end car that can impress more in combining sporty comfort with luxury and economy than the S350 L BlueTEC Turbo-Diesel. This latest incarnation within the S-Class range has been draped with so many tasteful design enhancement features that it would easily fill a sizeable novel. The S-Class is the flagship luxury saloon within the Mercedes-Benz range. As such it rivals models such as the BMW's 7-Series, Audi's A8, and of course the VW Phaeton. In this country nine out of ten S-Class buyers will opt for the diesel option so here is the good news - the latest version of Mercedes' 3.0-litre V6 oil burner slashes CO2 emissions to an incredibly low 148 g/km, becoming one of the biggest sellers and accounting for over 60% of its sales in this country. She is tough and she is strong. This extremely refined and frugal diesel is the most sensible choice by far when making a decision to purchase, resulting in the highest residual values of any luxury saloon. The modern diesel is now the undisputed king, powering the luxury car market. The performance potential of this turbo-charged 3.0 litre v6 24valve DOHC diesel power plant will induce sweat into the most able A8 3.0 Litre and/or the 3.0 Litre 730d driver. It packs such a bracing punch with its 258-BHP by courtesy of its staggeringly fierce a la 620-Nm torque that it gives her an exhilarating pace of 0-60mph in less than 6.6 seconds which is simply breathtaking. She is smooth and plush, and the ride and handling faithfully combines a cossetting comfort with decent feedback and control through her effortless steering. That is quite a feat in such a big car. She may be grand, but she shrinks around you, hugging you and making you feel as if you are driving a sporty C350CDI saloon. This six-cylinder cracker, with a burble that is truly addictive, results in an impressive 0-60mph that grows her way as soon as you hit passed the firewall in just 6.6 seconds with a top speed reaching in excess of 155mph. Now for a car that is well over two tons in weight you must admit she is no slouch and that is impressively agile performance pure and simple. Furthermore, this hugely capable and talented all-rounder, particularly in this DIESEL guise is arguably the best diesel luxury car today providing you with an excellent all round [combined] fuel economy of around 51.4mpg. Combine this with Mercedes-Benz's legendary engineering ingenuity and pioneering heritage, with the matching sportiness of its electronically controlled suspension, the new S350 L BlueTEC's modern body construction with its elegant interior and hand stitched leather décor and you then go and add to that ergonomically designed plush seats in beautifully soft black leather and you end up having in this S350, a car that is setting the highest standards in performance, luxury and driving excellence. When you then are comfortably settled behind her new design, re-shaped all-leather steering wheel with her plethora of buttons you cannot help but imagine you are about to pilot a 747 with enough on-board computing power to help you take-off graciously. With a myriad of manufactured options & extras so skillfully placed around the dashboard and centre console all desirably generating confidence instead of rivalry, sensation instead of sensationalizing. These are the real attributes that make the S350 L BlueTEC SE-Line, the true luxury DIESEL performance saloon of the 21st century. An incredible car with an unbeatable value. That is the ingenious of SINDELINGEN in living form, which is what makes an everyday reality of this Beauty with Driving Excellence. Why not be part of this incredibly enjoyable driving experience, and be part of Mercedes-Benz's world of luxury. A unique opportunity of experiencing and owning this stupendous driving machine conceived and built for the special in you!

SPECIFICATION

MAKE:	Mercedes-BENZ
MODEL:	S350 L BlueTEC SE-Line, 4Dr Saloon, 7 Speed Automatic.
Registration NUMBER:	KN14 VXU
Date of First Registration:	31st March 2014
COLOUR [Exterior / Interior]:	BRIGHT Silver Metallic [775U] / Black Anthracite NAPPA Leather [201A]
Number of Cylinders & TYPE:	M014 v6 24 Valve, DOHC Turbo Diesel [OM642]
Cylinder CAPACITY:	2987 cc
Horse POWER / Torque:	258 BHP [192Kw] / 457 Lbf-Ft [620Nm]
Chassis/Frame NUMBER:	WDD2221322A055981
Engine NUMBER:	642861 41 551628
OIL Type:	CASTROL Edge TurboDiesel [SAE OW-30; MB229.31/ MB229.51]
FUEL Type:	DIESEL Fuel OIL [SHELL v-Power Diesel ONLY]

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