

159 Selespeed



As a mark of continuity with the Alfa Romeo sports tradition, the Alfa 159 and 159 Sportwagon in Paris this month will see the new Selespeed robotised gearbox becoming available on the 185 bhp 2.2 JTS to their product range. The device can make gear shifts in sequential manual or automatic manner by means of a robotised hydraulic system and is extremely easy and intuitive to use. The driver is free to decide the best way to drive: for example, the lever may be used to engage gears sequentially or automatic mode may be selected (when the gearbox automatically selects the best ratio to engage, for better road awareness, a safe controlled drive and also comfort and convenience).

In sequential manual mode, higher gears are selected by pushing the gearlever in the direction opposite to the direction of motion, viceversa to change down. This emphasises the fact that this operating mode is typical of sporty gear shifts where the inertia of car and driver intuitively indicate how the gears should be used.

It is also possible to shift gears by means of a paddle on the steering wheel. This is fitted as standard with a Selespeed gearbox but it will soon be available as an option with automatic transmissions on top-of-the-range versions. The Selespeed gearbox also features a Sport key that may be activated in both manual and automatic mode. In the former case, the Sport mode reduces the gear shift time by approximately 20% by compressing the torque reduction and return stages. During automatic operation, engagement of Sport mode moves the gear shift points to higher speeds.

The 'Q-Tronic' automatic 6 speed transmission available on 150 and 200 bhp diesel engines and on the 3.2 JTS Q4, allows the car to be driven in automatic mode with all the functions typical of an automatic transmission (parking, reverse, neutral and drive) or in sequential mode by simply moving the selector. The 'Q-Tronic' name continues the Alfa Romeo tradition of using the letter 'Q' to indicate the most sophisticated technology developed by the Company: from the famous Quadrifoglio to the 'Q4' of the permanent four wheel drive to the very recent 'Q2' for the front wheel drive.

The term Tronic, on the other hand, tells us that the system is controlled by a smart electronic control unit that governs optimum gear shifts. This is how it works. Automatic transmission in itself ensures more effective use of engine performance and greater comfort, particularly around town. The Q-Tronic backs these advantages with very comfortable gear shifts, i.e. a reduction in the number of pulses felt by the driver.

The innovative system also allows those who do not wish to renounce the pleasure of a sporty drive to use the system in sequential manner in the same way as a gearbox with fixed ratios controlled in sequence: when the gearbox is pushed up ('+' sign), the gearbox shifts to the next gear up while when it is pushed down ('-' sign), the gearbox shifts down a gear. In this mode too, the system ensures the driver is able to maintain a sporty drive because, unlike sequential gearboxes offered by rival cars, the Q-Tronic does not force gear shifts at high speeds and the change may be made when the driver wishes.

As an exclusive feature on the 200 bhp 2.4 JTDM, the Q-Tronic also offers a Sport – Winter function that allows the driver to choose between two operating modes (Sport and Winter) in addition to the default setting. In detail, the Comfort mode active when the car is started with the lever in position D facilitates smooth gear shifts and balanced management of fuel consumption because gears are engaged at relatively low rpms. When the key beside the lever is pressed, the system changes to Sport mode. This lays the stress on performance and ensures a lively, entertaining drive because the gear shifts are set at higher engine speeds for a more sporty performance. When the same button is held down for longer, the system switches to Winter mode. This ensures maximum grip when the road surface is particularly hazardous, for example when the roads are snow-covered.

