

Sauer S100 Pantera rifle

- it'll grow on you!

Con Kapralos



Sauer S100 Pantera in .308 Winchester as supplied.

The Sauer S100 range of sporting rifles is regarded as the German marque's entry-level statement of intent, made to cater to all tastes and budgets. Its stablemate, the Sauer S101 series, is aimed to compete with other high-end fixed barrel sporting rifles north of the \$2000 price point.

However, Sauer heeded the call to produce a rifle that would vie in the hotly-contested \$1000-\$1500 bracket. Such S100 models as the Classic, Classic XT, Ceratech, Cherokee and Atacama offer superb options and now there's a new variant of the Sauer S100 in a completely different league - in application, aesthetics and ergonomics - the S100 Pantera.

This is not a traditional hunting rifle and certainly not a long-range target rifle, rather a blend of the two superbly designed and engineered. From the outset its appearance puts you on the back foot but once you start to know the S100 Pantera, it grows on you.

Outdoor Sporting Agencies, the Australian JP Sauer & Sohn importer and distributor, was keen for a review to be done and sent *Australian Shooter* the rifle in .308 Winchester calibre, together with a new Zeiss Conquest V4 3-12x56 with rings and bases. Other calibres offered are .223 Remington, .300 Winchester Magnum, 6.5 Creedmoor and 6.5 PRC.

Barrelled action

The review rifle was disassembled for a closer inspection of the components. The action is made from cylindrical chrome moly bar stock and measures 220mm long x 34mm wide. Three sculptured flats on the sides and top, which run from a point 37mm from the front of the action to the rear, give the Sauer 100 a neat, formal appearance. The sculptured flat on the left has "SAUER 100" engraved into the surface, while the right side contains the ejection port. This, for the short-action .308 Winchester cartridge, measured 85mm x 15mm and allows unfettered ejection of fired or unfired cartridges when cycling the bolt. >



Sauer S100 Pantera in component form.

Sauer S100 Panthera rifle

The top of the action is drilled and tapped for scope mounting bases modelled on the Remington 700 pattern, though the Panthera can also accept Sauer's HexaLock scope mounting system. The bolt is a stout affair measuring 21mm in diameter and is highly polished. The bolt head comprises a three-lug arrangement with the lugs being the same width as the bolt itself. Case ejection and extraction is supplied from two spring-loaded plungers in the bolt face and a small claw extractor. The bolt handle flows with the tactical nature of the rifle, with the bolt knob being an oversized alloy cone-shaped unit. The bolt in its entirety is easily removed from the action by depressing a well-proportioned release tab on the rear left of the action.

The three-position safety behind the bolt notch operates well with the 'Fire', 'Trigger blocked-bolt unlocked' and 'Bolt and trigger locked' settings working smoothly, though I found the amount of travel the safety lever has to move to engage the 'Fire' and two 'Safe' settings a bit excessive at about 30mm throughout the three marks.

The trigger is fully adjustable from 1-2kg with a small Allen key through the base of the trigger body. The trigger broke at just on 1kg and is very crisp with virtually no creep or over-travel - a good trigger befitting an accurate rifle.

Looking at the bottom metal and magazine arrangement, it's pleasing to see a one-piece metal triggerguard/magazine well finished in the same black Cerakote style as the rest of the barrelled action. The magazine is a detachable polymer unit but can house five rounds of the .308 Winchester in a double-stack fashion. It sits flush with the underside of the stock and is removed by depressing a small release button front of the well.

The barrel on the S100 Panthera is cold hammer forged made by Sauer, chambered



The action is drilled and tapped to accept Remington 700-style bases.



The five-round polymer box magazine.

in .308 Winchester and measuring 51cm. It has a 19mm tapered profile with a series of flutes along its length. The review rifle had seen a bit of use and needed a decent clean to examine the rifling more closely. Once the bore was clean, it revealed a well profiled bore and rifling.

The muzzle is threaded (M17x1) to accept compatible accessories and the crown was of a neat recessed target profile. The barrel, together with the action, boasts

Sauer's 'Black Recon' Cerakote finish and complements the laminate stock perfectly.

The stock

To say this is the crux of the rifle is spot-on. Looking at it from afar you'd think it's another injection-moulded polymer unit, but closer inspection reveals it's actually laminated in black to mate perfectly with the 'Black Recon' Cerakote on the barrelled action.

The sculptured palmswell of the pistol grip, with extended radius, provides an excellent position for the hand, be it shooting free-hand, off the bench or prone. The grip like the fore-end is devoid of chequering but, being a rifle not really designed for carrying, it's not necessary. The fore-end is characterised by a series of three vented flutes either side of the barrel, which primarily aid in cooling the underside but also add to the aesthetics of the stock. The fore-end underside is flattened to give an increased bearing surface on a bench rest and twin QD sling swivel studs make it possible for a bipod and sling to be employed simultaneously.

Back to the business end of the stock in the butt and a twin-scalloped under-section



The adjustable comb.

Sauer S100 Pantera rifle

and fully adjustable cheekpiece make it possible to accurately place any rear bag under the stock and likewise perfectly set your cheek-weld for instant alignment of your master eye through the optic. Two threaded knobs on the right of the buttstock are used to tweak the cheekpiece to any spot required and, once tightened, it stays put.

To the rear of the buttstock a heavily curved sorbothane recoil pad, together with adjustable spacers, make it easy once again for length-of-pull to be fine-tuned for optimal long-range shooting precision, especially from the prone position. A single QD sling swivel stud near the toe of the buttstock is also provided.

The action bedding (termed 'Ever Rest' by Sauer) comprises an aluminium bedding plate in the stock floor forward of the magazine well which accepts a threaded stud anchored to the underside of the receiver. A slight step in the aluminium plate cradles a small section of the barrel knox-form and the rear section of the bedding plate steps down to form a shallow recoil lug.

The back of the laminate stock beds directly on a hex nut which not only retains the trigger assembly but accepts the rear action screw, which also secures the back part of the triggerguard. The forward action screw isn't an action screw as such but another hex nut which anchors the barrelled action to the stock via the front threaded stud, which the front triggerguard screw fastens directly into.



Table 1. Sauer S100 Pantera .308 Winchester - Accuracy testing at 100m

Ammunition tested	Best group (mm)	Worst group (mm)	Average group (mm)*
Hornady Steel Match 155gr BTHP	21	40	31
Hornady Match 168gr ELD	15	30	23
Federal Premium Gold Medal			
Berger 185gr Juggernaut OTM	18	30	23
Sako Racehead 168gr HPBT	16	29	22
Hornady TAP 168gr A-MAX	14	37	23
Winchester Varmint Special 130gr Woodleigh	13	22	17

**Average calculated from five three-shot groups*



Three flutes either side of the fore-end assist in cooling the barrel.

At the range

The supplied Sauer S100 Pantera was a demo-unit with a few 'scars' on its stock and the barrel quite fouled, warranting a complete barrel clean before heading to the range. A selection of .308 Winchester ammunition from Hornady was supplemented by a few of my favourite hunting and target loads. Over the course of several range visits, the S100 was evaluated at 100m to gain an initial accuracy assessment. Firing five three-shot groups, allowing the barrel to cool between each string, with a barrel clean between changes in ammunition brand, the rifle shot exceptionally well. I don't profess to be a bench-rest shooter but the resultant groups were testament that this firearm is one serious long-range rifle (see Table 1).

Once accuracy testing was complete the legs of the Pantera were stretched out to 300m, the maximum distance of that range. Shooting at a 6" metal gong, successive hits were possible once the elevation turret was dialled into the target and recoil was minimal, no doubt thanks to the purposeful stock profile.

So can the Sauer S100 Pantera double as a hunting rifle? In the .308 Winchester calibre supplied its manageable weight and compactness make that a possibility. It's no ultra-light mountain rifle but can be carried in the field without needing a trip to the physio. I'd have loved to put it through its paces pursuing deer but spare weekends for hunting are few and far between. ●

Overview

With a retail price of \$2470 the Pantera is superbly engineered and made to shoot accurately, not to mention doubling as a decent hunting rifle. For more, visit osaaustralia.com.au.

Specifications

Manufacturer: JP Sauer & Sohn, Germany

Model: S100 Pantera

Distributor: Outdoor Sporting Agencies

Action: Bolt-action, push-feed

Barrel length: 510mm (20") - Magnum calibres 560mm (22") 19mm tapered profile with fluting. Threaded muzzle (M17x1)

Calibres: .308 Winchester (tested) also available in .223 Remington, .300 Winchester Magnum, 6.5 Creedmoor, 6.5 PRC

Overall length: 985mm

Weight: 3.7kg

Metal finish: 'Black Recon' Cerakote finish on barrel and action

Stock: Black laminate with adjustable cheekpiece, adjustable length-of-pull, 'Ever Rest' action bedding

Magazine: Double stack, 5+1 rounds in standard calibres, 4+1 in Magnum calibres

Trigger: Single stage, adjustable from 1-2kg

RRP: \$2470

One of several targets shot at 100m.