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Jaguar XJ First Impressions – plus the latest product news from Jaguar Land Rover

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JAGUAR AND LAND ROVER ROLL OUT THEIR 2016 MODELS



Jaguar XJ R-Sport in predicted best-selling 3.0 turbodiesel form.



David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) reports, and takes to the wheel of the revised 2016 model year Jaguar XJ Saloon...

First, Jaguar Land Rover ('JLR') activities

It is that time of year when 2016 models are rolled out by most manufacturers eager for the publicity to get customers placing orders for their latest updated products.

High flying Jaguar Land Rover, known as JLR, is one such organisation and the two British brands have benefited hugely under the ownership of the Indian conglomerate of TATA.

One of the best summaries I have read about JLR came from their CEO Ralf Speth who said the firm "Needed certain growth but not utmost growth and it is a boutique for connoisseurs who want something different rather than high street". He added "We won't sell millions".

However JLR has trebled in size to almost half a million annual sales since TATA took over the company in 2008 and there is more investment and higher production capacity already in the pipeline. The all-new Wolverhampton based engine plant will gain a further £450 million investment to increase production of their new 2.0-litre diesel Ingenium engines and the expected new 2.0-litre petrol units. The workforce is scheduled to double to 1,400 employees as well. Currently a new Ingenium engine is produced every 36 seconds

Over the last five years JLR has taken its global workforce up to 36,000 employees, increasing to 40,000 in 2016 and they have invested more than £11 billion in new product creation and capital expenditure.

Although the UK is the cornerstone of Jaguar Land Rover's business, the company has recently signed a letter of intent for a potential additional production facility in Slovakia. The company also produces vehicles in China, India and Brazil as well as their three UK production plants of Castle Bromwich, Halewood and Solihull, plus the new EMC engine plant at Wolverhampton.



In 2014 JLR sold 462,678 vehicles globally – an increase of 9%. Of that Jaguar achieved 81,570 sales and Land Rover 381,108 sales. Around 80% of JLR production goes to 180 global markets. In the UK it is really good news because for the first 11 months of this year registrations of Jaguar models were 22,035 vehicles – an increase of 29% over the same period last year. Land Rover sales to date are 61,608 vehicles – a 17% increase. Who buys them? Well Jaguar has a 50/50 sales split in the UK between retail and fleet/user-chooser business customers. For Land Rover the ratio is 60/40 retail to fleet/business-user chooser clients.

Chris Newitt, JLR's UK sales director, told the media last week "We have a clear view for sales growth in addition to bringing new and exciting models to market. To do this we have in place a new strategy for our retail network. We have implemented an intensive training programme for dealership staff and a new corporate identity for all of our dealerships is being rolled out, which will be completed by 2018. This represents a £750 million investment by JLR and the dealer network."

So what's new for 2016 on the model front? The hero new models will be Jaguar's first ever SUV – the F-Pace, with ordering now open and prices starting from £34,170, with petrol and diesel engine options. First deliveries to UK customers will be in June 2016. Already there have been 100,240 web-based configurations by global customers for the new F-Pace and the launch limited edition of 200 units for the UK has sold out as collectors seem eager to own Jaguar's first ever SUV.

From the Land Rover stable will come the new Range Rover Evoque Convertible arriving in the Spring, with the option of 2.0-litre petrol and diesel engines, and with prices starting from £47,500.

To set the taste-buds in motion, JLR last week rolled out to the motoring media some of their other 2016 models. These were the recently introduced XF D-segment saloon, the XE C-segment saloon, the XJ standard and long wheelbase E-segment limousine saloons, the latest updated Range Rover Evoque and the relatively new Land Rover Discovery Sport



-both with their new JLR 2.0-litre Ingenium turbodiesel engines.

Having covered the recent media launches and written about the Jaguar XE, XF ranges and the Land Rover Discovery Sport, I opted to rediscover the Jaguar XJ and the best selling Range Rover Evoque models. The Jaguar XJ is first and the Evoque road test will follow in due course - but before 2016 arrives.

The 2016 Jaguar XJ luxury saloon...



Jaguar XJ's high performance 5.0 litre petrol-powered XJR.



The all-aluminium four door saloon with standard and long wheelbase options is the chauffeur driven luxury car of choice for UK politicians and business executives, plus a smattering of well-off celebrities and well-healed private buyers. It competes against the new BMW 7-Series and the existing, but soon to be replaced, Audi A8 as well as the Mercedes-Benz S-Class. The XJ range is manufactured at Jaguar Land Rover's Castle Bromwich Plant alongside the all-new XF saloon and F-Type sports car.

The current generation XJ was introduced in 2009 and from that time it has spawned the use of aluminium for bodyshell and suspension component construction. It has also provided the latest Jaguar visual identity - as used for the new XE and XF saloons. This provides a consistent family appearance much the same as the Audi, BMW and Mercedes brands. Now for 2016 the XJ gains what JLR calls "a mid-cycle refresh."

New Jaguar XJ prices start at £58,690 but with a wide range of models, engine choices and two wheelbase lengths, prices go up to £100,000. The 2016 range consists of Luxury, Premium Luxury, Portfolio, XJR-Sport, XJR and Autobiography. The powertrain range consists of 300hp 3.0-litre V6 diesel automatic, the 340hp 3.0-litre V6 petrol automatic, plus the 510 and 550hp 5.0-litre V8 supercharged petrol automatic. The main selling 3.0-litre 300hp diesel unit has been uprated with 700Nm of torque and CO2 emissions have been reduced by 6% to 149g/km - so VED road tax is £145 every year and company exec. drivers will pay 27% Benefit-in-Kind tax.

Other technical changes include fuel and CO2 saving electronic instead of hydraulic power steering, and all surface Progress Control which adjusts torque delivery on low friction surfaces such as ice or snow.

Visual changes for the new XJ include a larger and more upright grille and sculpted chrome blades in the outboard air intakes, all emphasising the car's mature but still sporting character.

The full LED headlights accentuate the 'quad lamp' design feature that Jaguar sporting



saloons have made their own. They are further enhanced with active front steer and static bend lamp functions and auto high beam assist. LED headlights also provide a colour temperature closer to that of daylight than Bi-Xenon lamps, improving visibility and driver comfort, and they are also more energy-efficient. Twin 'J-Blade' daytime running lights are a unique feature to XJ, befitting its status in the Jaguar saloon car range. The white light instantly and seamlessly changes to orange when the direction indicator is operated.

The LED rear lights feature a new J-signature tail and position light graphic, making the XJ even more distinctive. The rear bumper now features a glossy black valance and a slender chrome insert. New LED taillights and oval exhaust finishers complete the look.

The XJ's highly rated interior design has been taken to the next level. So luxurious has it become that the outgoing Portfolio trim is now used for the Premium Luxury model. The new Portfolio gains quilted soft-grain leather seats with diamond stitching and embossed headrests, and figured ebony veneer.





The Autobiography model, new to XJ in the 2016 model year and available only with the long-wheelbase body, can be identified on the outside by chrome front bumper air intakes and 20-inch Maroa wheels. Inside there are unique Autobiography Intaglio quilted semi-aniline leather seats with contrasting stitching, a leather headliner, rich oak inlay veneer, and illuminated stainless steel treadplates, air vents and boot finisher. Rear seat occupancy is provided by two individual seats with seat back movement and massage function and a rear seat entertainment system with two folding 10.2 inch HD screens.

Standard fit on the XJ is Jaguar's new InControl Touch Pro touchscreen infotainment system which offers door to door navigation. It remembers the user's favourite routes, it resembles the speed and functions of a PC or Tablet computer, it has seamless iOS and Android connectivity, Wi-Fi hotspot and a 26-speaker 1,300W Meridian Digital Reference audio system. Although standard for the XJ this new system is an option for other Jaguar models and priced from £1,200 to £2,560, depending on the model and the specification level.

Following other Jaguar models, the XJ gains an R-Sport version with new side sills, three-piece front splitter, side power vents and a rear spoiler. A gloss black finish enhances the grille mesh, rear valance and window finishers. Wheels are 20-inch Mataivia. The interior gains sports seats, R-Sport steering wheel and treadplates, Jet headliner and piano black trim or carbon fibre. The new R-Sport specification is expected to become the most popular choice with UK customers.



Catching up with the competition, the latest XJ now has a new set of driver assistance functions including lane keep-assist, adaptive cruise control with queue-assist, rear traffic detection, closing vehicle sensing, 360-degree camera system and semi-automated bay and parallel parking assist.

Enough of the luxury spec details and it was time to get behind the wheel of the likely best selling version, the 3.0-litre V6, 300hp turbodiesel with its standard fit eight-speed automatic transmission with the new and thought to be best selling R-Sport spec level and with the standard length four door body. This version weighs in at £70,975.

In its new EU6 emissions form power and torque have gone up from 275hp and 600Nm to 300hp and 700Nm and emissions are down from 159g/km to 149g/km. In the case of my test



car with larger 20-inch wheels the figure was 155g/km which means a VED road tax cost of £180 each year. Company car drivers will pay 29% in Benefit-in-Kind tax. Although the engine is more fuel and CO2 efficient, outright performance has not been squeezed, with a restricted 155mph top speed and the zero to 60mph acceleration figure is 5.9-seconds.

Officially the Combined Cycle fuel economy is 48mpg and during my brief test driving session using the busy roads in the Thames Valley and the winding country roads of The Chilterns the real-life figure was 38.8mpg.

Although a diesel unit there is only the slightest hint of engine noise inside the cabin and the huge torque propels this large saloon along with the utmost ease. The engine response is huge thanks to the high torque and the ZF torque converter auto gearbox provides seamless changes up and down the ratios in its normal Drive setting, and if desired move to Sport and the response is sharper but hardly needed.

The new electronic power steering is not short of response and driver feedback and it compensates well for road camber changes and poorer road surfaces. Ride comfort is luxurious although the suspension doesn't iron out all the potholes which plague our roads.

Speed, comfortable ride in a plush environment all wrapped up in an elegant sports saloon body shape, it all looks very good. That said in the standard length body the leg room for rear seat passengers is not that generous. It's not cramped – just not that ample – but it is better in the long wheelbase body. The headroom for both versions inside the rear section is good but the headroom is limited getting in and out of the rear seats. A mere mention by me but a potentially important consideration for the all important business chauffeuring clients who are being targeted by Jaguar and their latest XJ offering.

It would have been rude not to sample the most powerful XJ version, the XJR 5.0-litre, V8 supercharged petrol unit which delivers 550hp and 680Nm of torque. With its standard wheelbase configuration it costs £91,755 and comes with uprated suspension, adaptive dynamics and active differential control plus some XJR styling tweaks to differentiate it from



other lesser models.

This is one for owner drivers, not business chauffeurs, but affluent drivers who enjoy driving – fast at times but who want something that is accommodating for more speed restricted occasions such as driving in towns. The top speed is a relatively modest 174mph in this sector and zero to 60mph takes 4.4 seconds. It might not be the outright fastest in the luxury saloon supercar league but it is the most sophisticated in terms of providing power and comfort. Officially this version will return 25.5mpg in the Combined Cycle and my test driving returned better than that at 28.2mpg, which tells you that the roads were busy and hard driving opportunities severely limited. For the record the CO2 emissions are 264g/km so VED costs are in the top band at £1,100 for the First Year rate and then £505 thereafter. Company car execs will pay 37% Benefit-in-Kind tax. Only around 5% of XJ customers in the UK will go the 5.0-litre petrol engine route.



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VERDICT

Combining financial investment from the Indian TATA conglomerate with JLR's Britishness, the future now looks hot and spicy.

For: Refined executive travel, comfortable, high specification, distinctive Jaguar sports saloon family styling, responsive and refined engine so it's nice to drive.

Against: Tight headroom through the rear doors, SWB versions short on rear legroom in the sector.



MILESTONES AND WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC IN BRIEF:

Jaguar XJ R-Sport 3.0 V6 SWB 4-door executive saloon (expected best selling model).

Engine: 3.0-litre, V6 turbodiesel, 300 PS @ 4,000 rpm, 700Nm (516 lb.ft) of torque @ 2,000rpm.

Transmission: 8-speed ZF auto gearbox.

Performance:

0-60 5.9-seconds

155mph (restricted)

Fuel consumption: 48 mpg Combined Cycle (38.8mpg on test).

Dimensions: L 5,130 mm (16.83 ft), W 1,899 mm (6.23 ft.) H 1,460 mm (4.79 ft), boot 520 litres (18.36 cu.ft).

Insurance group: 48E.

Warranty: 3 years/unlimited mileage.

Price: £70,975.