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New Land Rover Discovery – First Impressions

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New Land Rover Discovery Breaks cover in the UK...

David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) has been comprehensively test-driving the latest version.

We've seen the pictures, read the Marketing and PR blurb, I've actually seen one in the flesh, but it was only last week, just as the all-new models were arriving with first customers in the UK, that I got behind the wheel of the new heavyweight seven seater models. These are built at Jaguar Land Rover's Solihull plant near Birmingham alongside the Range Rover and Range Rover Sport models.



Jaguar Land Rover's UK Managing Director Jeremy Hicks told me at the media launch last week that over 25,000 advance orders, more than 5,000 of them in the UK, have been received for the new Discovery, so it's more rounded styling lines and higher prices for the most popular versions do not seem to have dampened its appeal. He added that around 10,000 units of the new Discovery would be available to UK customers this year.

Prices actually start lower than the exiting Discovery due to the introduction of a 2.0 litre diesel engine option, and they start from £43,495, rising through three engine options and four core specification levels plus a 600 unit First Edition level, to £68,295.

The engine options are Jaguar Land Rover's new twin-turbo 2.0 litre Ingenium turbodiesel unit with 240 hp and, as before, the Ford sourced 3.0 litre V6 258 hp turbodiesel and 3.0 litre V6 340 hp petrol units. The core spec levels are S, SE, HSE and HSE Luxury.

Jeremy Hicks said that although in the short-term the 3.0 litre V6 turbodiesel engine will remain the most popular choice, in time the new 2.0 litre Ingenium diesel will become the best seller as it will bring new conquest customers to the Discovery brand, and the higher specification models are currently the most popular with early adopters.

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All the new Discovery versions have seven seats in three rows as standard, all have an automatic transmission, twin speed transfer box, air suspension, powered tailgate, cruise control, autonomous emergency braking, lane departure warning, heated windscreen and door mirrors and DAB radio plus of course Land and Range Rover's legendary computer regulated All Terrain Progress Control.

Likewise all have load space ranging from 258 litres (9.11 cu.ft) with all seven seats in three rows in use increasing to 1,137 litres (40.15 cu.ft) with five seats in use, up to a maximum 2,406 litres (72.25 cu.ft) with the middle and third row of seats folded flat. The braked towing weight remains at an impressive 3,500 kg (7,716 lb).



At 4,970 mm (16.31 ft) in length, 2,200 mm (7.22 ft) wide and 1,846 mm (6.06 ft) high the new fifth generation Discovery is positioned above the smaller Discovery Sport and below the similarly-sized but more expensive Range Rover Sport, so it in theory retains its appeal to customers more interested in interior space, practical use and unrivalled off-road abilities, rather than outright luxury and performance.

The original boxy Discovery was launched in 1989, first as a three door model followed by five door versions, offering unrivalled off-road performance, sturdiness, versatility and ownership status. It was positioned between the basic Land Rover, to later become the Defender, and the up-market plush and expensive Range Rovers. The Disco had to compete against the influx of Japanese large, capable, well-equipped and affordable SUVs, some offering seven front facing seats. And so over four generations the Disco has evolved but has remained a boxy shaped, practical, durable heavyweight workhorse with supreme 4WD off



road capabilities, all built on ladder frame chassis with seating for seven. Over 1.2 million have been sold to global markets. It has become the all-round purposeful vehicle of choice not only for rural families, farmers and the equestrian fraternity but for the Police and rescue services, for military use, for explorers, for TV and Radio mobile units, for film crews, the list is endless.

Today's more curvaceous and aerodynamic fifth generation Discovery is much different although it looks like a scaled-up version of the recently introduced Discovery Sport. There is no longer a ladder frame chassis but now it uses a monocoque one cell five door body. Around 85% of the body is constructed of aluminium of which 50% is recycled material. The new Disco weighs nearly half a tonne (480 kg) less than its predecessor and that results in better fuel efficiency and lower CO2 emissions. It may be 'light weight' but it's no 'lightweight' performer. It tows up to 3,500 kg (over 7,700 lb), it carries up to seven passengers, it offers up to 2,406 litres (72.25 cu.ft) of luggage space, it is equipped with up to nine USB ports, four 12-volt charging points and in-car 3G WiFi for up to eight devices, it offers greater ground clearance and it wades through water to a depth of 900 mm (nearly three feet) and it has autonomous reversing technology to help guide trailers into position. Of course it has the latest generation of on-board technologies and connectivity functions as well as the latest automatic Terrain Response system, including Hill Descent Control.

Will commercial users such as farmers, forestry workers, gamekeepers, equestrians and such like be willing to throw bales of hay/straw or chainsaws or wet gun dogs and sweaty riding tack in the rear, unlikely as it's become too posh for that. Also gone is the signature design twin tailgate with the opening upper and lower halves. Now we have a one piece lift-up powered tailgate but to offset that it has a slide out section of the load area floor to put the picnic hamper on, or to use as a seat for taking off those muddy wellies.

The interior remains roomy, with an increase in the wheelbase length providing ample room for three rows of stadium style seating. With its low waistline and large windows, all round visibility is good. The second and third row of seats fold completely flat. The middle row also slides back and forth to adjust legroom. The folding seats can be operated by switches in the



boot, on the rear door pillars, through the 10-inch InControl Touch Pro infotainment system or even by using JLR's InControl Remote smartphone App. On our test session, comparing the outgoing Discovery with its manual seat folding function against the new Discovery with its push-button seat lowering, the latter took only 27 seconds to lower all five second and third rows of seats, exactly half the time taken for us to manually fold down the seats of the old Discovery.



The latest Land Rover Discovery offers customers the option of the first ever 2.0 litre diesel engine to be used in the Discovery.

There is a choice of three engines, all mated as standard with smooth changing eight-speed automatic transmission, with permanent all wheel drive and a two speed transfer box. The engine line-up starts with the new version of Jaguar Land Rover's own Ingenium Sd4 2.0 litre, four-cylinder turbodiesel engine. This now has twin turbos, delivering 240 hp and 500



Nm (369 lb.ft) of torque with 43.5 mpg and CO2 emissions from 171 g/km. Top speed is 121 mph and zero to 60 mph takes 8.0 seconds.

Retained but uprated engines are the Ford supplied 3.0 litre, V6 Td6 turbodiesel with 258 hp and 600 Nm (443 lb.ft) of torque with a 39.2 mpg Combined Cycle fuel consumption figure and with CO2 emissions of 189 g/km. Top speed is 130 mph and 0-60mph takes 7.7 seconds.

Also from Ford production is the Si6 3.0 litre, V6 supercharged petrol engine with 340 hp and 450 Nm (332 lb.ft) of torque. The Combined Cycle fuel consumption figure is 26 mpg with 256 g/km of CO2 emissions. Top speed is 130 mph and the zero to 60mph time is 6.9 seconds. This unit in the UK will have only minimum sales appeal say Land Rover; it's more suited to the USA, Chinese and Arab States markets.

Land Rover doesn't talk about future model developments but expect their new forthcoming Ingenium family of petrol engines and hybrid technology to play an ever-increasing part in future engine options.

Land Rover for now still expects the majority of UK customers to order the 3.0 litre V6 turbodiesel unit, and this is the engine I mostly tried for my first test drive experience. It was matched with HSE Luxury trim and specification and weighed in at a hefty £64,195, but a huge list of optional features pushed the price up even further to £74,055. Our test driving took in the busy roads of Worcestershire and Herefordshire, and then the quieter winding and hilly roads of Mid Wales before returning to Eastnor Castle in Herefordshire, the long-term testing grounds for Land Rover which has extreme off-road driving facilities, most of them natural hazards rather than manmade 4x4 obstacle courses.



On road you can feel the new Discovery is more agile than its predecessor. It is designed for comfortable travel but with sportier handling. The air suspension gives a compliant ride as you waft along but there is slight body roll during cornering. However it is still noticeably more precise in its high speed handling than its predecessor, probably at least as good as the Range Rover. During our test driving we covered lots of road mileage with absolute ease and with a real-life fuel consumption of 31.4 mpg versus the official Combined Cycle figure of 39.2 mpg.

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Off road the new Discovery remains supreme, no other large premium SUV comes close to



having its abilities, not even the Range Rover although they have the same off-road drivetrain technologies. With its various clever computer controlled systems it clambers up and over rocks thanks to its class-leading 283 mm (0.93 ft) ground clearance and it has a 900 mm (2.95 ft) wading depth through water; deeper water will make the vehicle float. When it comes to deep mud, deeply rutted tracks and huge long steep inclines, and steep near vertical downhill sections, the computer-controlled systems and engine management and braking system combine for secure travel. If you get stuck it's more likely to be the lack of driving skill rather than the vehicle's fault. Weaving between trees on slippery slopes showed just how agile the new lighter-weight Discovery is.

We also had the opportunity to try the new Jaguar Land Rover twin turbo 2.0 litre diesel unit and to be fair there isn't so much difference in performance, albeit it offers less torque so it's not quite as gutsy and not pulling quite as strongly from low revs. At times it sounded slightly more vocal under hard acceleration. But on the open road at cruising speeds it is equally as hushed as the 3.0 litre diesel unit. There is little difference in performance overall and I can see this unit taking some sales away from the larger engine because of its lower price. During our on road test driving session this engine returned 30.4 mpg, less than the 3.0 litre V6 unit and considerably down on the official Combined Cycle figure of 43.5 mpg. This is due to the fact that with four cylinders it has to work harder than the very responsive and gutsy V6 engine.

Our test drive 2.0 litre diesel version also had the same HSE Luxury specification which costs £62,695, and with options the test car costs £74,200. At this point I should remind you that actually the new Discovery has prices starting from £43,495 with the new 2.0 litre diesel engine, and given there is little difference in performance on paper it could sway some existing and new owners to downsize to this smaller engine without losing too many of the new Discovery's class-leading abilities.

We can only presume that current hard-core loyal Discovery owners who liked the vehicle because of its mix of family and workhorse abilities will be taken care of with the arrival next year of the replacement for the now defunct Defender. That new replacement range we



understand will offer a mix of models blending workhorse and family transport SUV requirements, at more affordable prices and with a less plush interior, particularly the load area.

VERDICT

A worthy successor to the outgoing Discovery.

For: Starter price models are less than the outgoing range, improved refinement throughout, classier interior with improved specification connectivity functions and driving aids, improved on road driveability and handling, even better off road performance, the rounded styling will have greater appeal to a wider buying audience, as will the addition of a 2.0 litre diesel engine option to the range.

Against: Diehard existing owners might find the softer styling harder to accept and also the loss of the split tailgate function and the new load area which will be too plush for those that want a durable workhorse.



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Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Land Rover Discovery 3.0 litre Td6 HSE Luxury automatic.

Price: £64,195 (£74,055 as tested with options).

Engine/transmission: 3.0-litre, V6 turbodiesel, 258 hp, 600 Nm (443 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm, eight speed automatic, 4WD with two speed transfer box.



Performance: 130 mph, 0-60 mph 7.7 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 39.2 mpg (31.4 mpg on test on-road).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 189 g/km, new from 1 April VED First Year rate £800 then Year Two £140 flat rate plus £310 supplement for five years for vehicles costing over £40k, Benefit-in-Kind company car tax rate 37%.

Insurance Group: 42E.

Warranty: Three years/unlimited mileage.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,970 mm (16.31 ft), W 2,200 mm (7.22 ft), H 1,888 mm (6.19 ft), wading depth 900 mm (2.95 ft), kerb weight 2,230 kg (4,916 lb), braked towing weight 3,500 kg (7,716 lb), boot/load area 258 to 2,406 litres (9.11 to 84.97 cu.ft), five doors/seven seats.