All-New Jaguar F-Pace SUV First Impressions

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The All-New Jaguar F-Pace Performance-orientated Crossover.

Reviewed by David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

Long awaited and with long waiting lists, Jaguar's first ever SUV/Crossover range, the F-Pace, has been introduced at prices for the main models starting from £34,170 and rising to £51,450. It is probably the most important car in the brand's long history as no major premium brand executive car manufacturer can now afford not to offer such a vehicle.

So Jaguar is following the likes of Audi, BMW, Mercedes, Volvo, Bentley, Porsche and Maserati and not forgetting Jaguar's partner Land Rover, in venturing into the fastest growing sector of the new car market.

The F-Pace comes at a good time for Jaguar Land Rover (JLR). At the UK media launch this week Ken McConomy, Head of PR, said, "100,636 JLR cars were sold in the UK last year, an increase of 25%. For the first quarter of this year sales are up by 19% with 44,535 registrations and one JLR vehicle is sold in the UK every two minutes. When it comes specifically to the Jaguar brand we had 23,897 UK sales last year which was an increase of 23%, and registrations for the first quarter of this year are up by 50% to 11,074 units."

Jaguar's current success has been driven by the XE and XF sports saloons.

Now comes the model range with the potential to transform the Jaguar brand. At this week's media launch Dave Baker, Product Marketing Manager for F-Pace said, "It is already the fastest selling Jaguar of all time; customer demand is massive. Currently, depending upon a dealer's pre-order stock availability, we are talking of a waiting time of between six and eight months, and the first deliveries to customers are taking place this month".

But JLR executives don't talk about sales projections… All we were told was that the 200 units of the First Edition version for the UK market are all sold out. This model has a very high specification and is powered by a 3.0 litre, V6 300 hp turbodiesel engine with an eight-speed automatic gearbox and all-wheel-drive (AWD), all for a price of £62,275.

So how many F-Pace units will be produced for global sales? An industry expert says between 60,000 and 80,000 units a year. How many will be sold annually in the UK? The best indication is that Jaguar has a target of achieving a 5% share of the SUV market for medium sized models, so that equates to around 8,000 vehicles. Jaguar used the BMW X4 SUV for price and specification parity and the Porsche Macan for driving dynamics.

F-Pace in Detail

Jaguar describes the F-Pace as a performance five door Crossover, designed and engineered to offer the agility, responsiveness and refinement that all Jaguars are renowned for. Jaguar is very keen to promote the fact that the F-Pace DNA comes from their F-Type sports car models, rather than the XE or XF sports saloons.

The F-Pace is no transplant from the Land Rover brand, although two of its competitors will be the Range Rover Evoque and the Land Rover Discovery Sport.

With two turbodiesel and one petrol engine options, the UK specification choices are Prestige, R-Sport, Portfolio, and S. The very limited First Edition versions are all sold. There is of course a wide range of extra cost options for fastidious personalisation reasons. Jaguar

says the R-Sport level will be the most popular version in the UK.

The F-Pace uses Jaguar's lightweight aluminium architecture, similar to that of their XE and XF sports saloons. The wheelbase and track dimensions of F-Pace are not shared with any other Jaguar. The light, stiff body structure comprises 80% aluminium and is the only aluminium-intensive monocoque structure in the segment. Additional weight savings come from the composite tailgate, and magnesium for parts such as the cross-car beam. The F-Pace is manufactured at Jaguar Land Rover's Solihull Plant alongside the Jaguar XE sports saloon.

The F-Pace is 4,731 mm (15 ft 6.26 in) long with a 2,874 mm (9 ft 5.15in) wheelbase and offers the sleek profile and short front overhang characteristics of modern Jaguar design, together with a relatively spacious interior. Jaguar says rear knee-room is class-leading although three children would be accommodated easily with the 40/20/40 split three rear seat layout and perhaps only two adults with ease. At the rear is roomy 650 litre (22.95 cu.ft) boot.

There are some styling hints from Jaguar's F-Type sports coupe, such as the powerful rear haunches, front bumper vents and distinctive tail light graphics. At the front is a bold signature design front grille, and the muscular bonnet hints at the performance potential of the three engines on offer.

The body's high torsional stiffness enables the F-Type derived double wishbone front suspension and integral link rear suspension to perform in a sporting manner. Together with Torque Vectoring as standard and an electric power-assisted steering system, tuned to give the best possible feel and response, the all-new F-Pace was designed to set the benchmark for ride and handling – claims Jaguar.

Even the entry-level model benefits from monotube dampers as standard, but for even better ride and handling the electronically-controlled Adaptive Dynamics system measures body and wheel movement 100 and 500 times a second respectively, ensuring optimum

damping forces in all conditions.

For the most enthusiastic drivers there's Configurable Dynamics, first used in the F-Type, and allows individual settings for the throttle, automatic transmission, steering, and, where fitted, the Adaptive Dynamics system.

Interior Aspects

The interior is classic modern-day sporting Jaguar theme – although nicely designed, I didn't think the materials were as 'plush' as I would have expected. There were areas of hard plastic and the man-made leather type finishes on the fascia and door panels didn't sit harmoniously with the real leather trim elsewhere. Depending on the spec level chosen there are available heated and electrically-reclining rear seats, the brand's InControl Touch Pro infotainment system and 10.2-inch tablet-style touchscreen, or the higher spec 12.3-inch HD virtual instrument cluster. Other driver support systems include a stereo camera at the heart of the Autonomous Emergency Braking system which now features a pedestrian detection function – a Jaguar-first. The stereo camera also enables Lane Departure Warning, Lane Keep Assist, Traffic Sign Recognition, an Intelligent Speed Limiter, and Driver Condition Monitor systems.

Key information such as vehicle speed and speed limits can be projected directly into the driver's line of sight by the laser head-up display. The high contrast colour images can also show cruise control settings and turn-by-turn navigation instructions.

The InControl Touch Pro system has a powerful quad-core processor and solid-state drive which runs on ultra-fast Ethernet. Useability is relatively intuitive, the graphics sharp and responsive. The navigation system can save the driver time by learning their commute route, offers true door-to-door guidance and can even advise others of the arrival time. Navigation can also be shown full-screen or in 3D in the 12.3-inch HD virtual instrument cluster.

But being a Jaguar it is what's under the bonnet that counts in terms of running costs and taxation, as well as performance potential. The best-selling power unit will be the Jaguar Land Rover Ingenium 2.0 litre 180 hp turbodiesel unit with a manual six-speed gearbox and RWD (rear wheel drive) or with AWD (all wheel drive) and an eight-speed automatic gearbox. There is also a 3.0 litre, 300 hp turbodiesel automatic AWD and 3.0 litre 380 hp supercharged petrol automatic AWD version. Jaguar expects the 2.0 litre diesel unit to account for 85% of UK sales, the 3.0 litre diesel 10% and the 3.0 litre petrol 5% – and most customers will choose an automatic transmission. The likely best selling single F-Pace model will be the 2.0 litre diesel AWD, automatic with R-Sport specification, priced at £40,360.

The 4×4 system was developed for the F-Type AWD version. It supplies drive to the rear wheels in normal conditions but the torque on-demand system can transfer up to 50% torque to the front wheels for extra traction on all surfaces and in all weathers.

Additionally the F-Pace AWD models use Adaptive Surface Response developed from Land Rover's Terrain Response technology, which identifies the type of surface and optimises the mapping of the powertrain and Dynamic Stability Control system. It has been enhanced by a third mode designed for deep snow and gravel.

Driven...

At the media launch I tried the best selling version, the 2.0 litre, four cylinder Ingenium turbodiesel with 180 hp and 430 Nm (317.2 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm. This model had the eight-speed automatic gearbox and AWD, and with R-Sport specification was priced at £40,360.

This JLR own brand engine and transmission option we know well from the Range Rover Evoque, Land Rover Discovery Sport and the Jaguar XE and XF saloons. This engine is no sports unit. It gets the job done although it doesn't live up to the F-Pace's sporting credentials. The 3.0 litre V6 turbodiesel is far more responsive and relaxing to drive.

The 2.0 litre turbodiesel with AWD has a top speed of 129 mph and zero to 60 mph takes 8.2 seconds, but it didn't feel that quick. It appeals because of the official low 139 g/km CO2 emissions with AWD, which means VED road tax is £130 each year and company car drivers will pay 27% Benefit-in-Kind tax.

The Combined Cycle fuel consumption is officially 53.3 mpg and on my test driving around Cotswold A/B roads plus winding country lanes the figure was 39.7 mpg. On a similar route the 3.0 litre diesel returned 32.3 mpg as a real life figure but the vehicle price – at £51,450 with the only high S level spec available – is high, as are taxes.

In most situations the 2.0 litre diesel unit was quietest at lower revs, but under acceleration it sounded harsh before returning to a more refined soundtrack once cruising speeds had been reached. Generally the eight-speed auto gearbox provided smooth changes, but like the same combination used for the Evoque and Discovery Sport, under harder acceleration changes from first to second and second to third gears were harsh sometimes.

The balance of the F-Pace felt really good, with sharp steering plus plenty of cornering grip, and overall it was agile and nimble. It also felt sure-footed on mud-covered farm tracks. The only negative performance came from the very hard and unsettled ride. My test car was fitted with the optional 20-inch alloy wheels which cost an extra £1,200 rather than the

standard 19-inch alloys. I definitely wouldn't advise that move and save money and instead I would choose the £960 Adaptive Dynamics system and Adaptive Surface Response option. One of the provisions in the option is the ability to adjust the suspension settings for a more compliant ride and that is a must. Without it the ride is just too firm.

Verdict

There is no doubt that the F-Pace is a hugely valuable addition to the range, broadening its customer base, so expect to see loads of them being used for business as well as the school run. Jaguar forecast a 50/50 UK sales split between retail and business customers and a significant number of drivers in the retail sector will be females.

For: A very valuable addition to the Jaguar brand, huge sales potential, bold athletic exterior styling and a practical interior, large boot/load space, agile and generally good to drive, huge must-have kerb appeal, well-equipped, projected highest in class residual values.

Against: Very firm and unsettled ride without the adaptive suspension option, pricey, interior finishes are not as plush as I expect from a Jaguar, so-so engine performance.

MILESTONES AND WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC. IN BRIEF:

Jaguar F-Pace R-Sport 2.0d 180 hp AWD automatic. (Expected best selling model).

Engine: 2.0 litre, 4 cylinder, Ingenium turbodiesel.

Power: 180 hp.

Torque: 430 Nm (317.2 lb.ft) from 1,750 rpm.

Transmission: 8-speed auto, on-demand AWD.

Performance:

0-60mph 8.2 seconds.

Top speed: 129 mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 53.3 mpg (39.7 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 139 g/km, VED road tax £130, BIK company car tax 27%. Insurance Group: 29.

Warranty: 3 years/unlimited mileage.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,731 mm (15 ft 6.26in), W 1,936 mm (6 ft 4.22 in), H 1,652 mm (5ft 5.04in), boot/load space 650 to 1,740 litres (22.95 to 61.45 cu.ft), braked towing weight 2,400 kg (5,291 lb), 5 doors/5 seats.

Price: £40,360.