Jaguar E-Pace – First Impressions

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Chris Adamson puts Jaguar's new compact SUV through its paces...

(All words and photographs by Chris).

As Jaguar's first successful entry in the SUV market the F-Pace set pulses racing and buyers rushing to open their cheque books – now the smaller E-Pace is doing much the same thanks to its smart good looks and attractive entry price.

The designers have attempted to combine a bit of Jaguar heritage in the way the E-Pace looks (most notably the vertical front grille but also the curved rear end that is a small nod to the E-Type) with cutting edge aerodynamics such as the sloping rear roof that tapers into

the body lines at the rear, flat wheel arches, deep air vents and muscular rear haunches.

The result is a very pleasing combination that manages to disguise the bulk of the vehicle and make it appear smaller and more compact than it is.

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It has a strong road presence both front and rear that moves it away from the run of the mill all-terrain vehicles we are used to seeing.

Exterior touches designed to lift the E-Pace out of the crowd include chrome side vents, grained black door cladding, satin black door surrounds, twin tail pipes, long tailgate spoiler and metal tread plates.

The R-Dynamic as tested here is identified by a unique front bumper, gloss black front grille with chrome surrounds and 20inch alloy wheels.

Jaguar interiors have always been among the best around (when not using left over Ford parts) if a bit old fashioned, often with the use of traditional materials but in this case, first impressions are that Jaguar is finally moving into the 21st century.

The use of a restricted palate of materials, textured plastics, chrome and occasional swatches of leather make for a harmonious cabin that feels sophisticated and upmarket and it is also very comfortable.



An extensive equipment list (as has become a regular feature of Jaguar's) includes rain sensing wipers, automatic LED headlights, two-zone climate control, 10 inch Touch Pro, cruise control and a rear view camera.

To this, the R-Dynamic adds in folding heated door mirrors, remotely operated powered tailgate, 18-way perforated electric leather sports memory seats, Smartphone Pack, 380V Meridian sound system with 12 inch interactive driver display, traffic sign recognition, park assist, Adaptive Cruise Control, Navigation Pro, Connect Pro and a Wi-Fi Hotspot.

If this isn't enough you can specify options such as privacy glass (£335), panoramic roof

(£970) surround camera system (£310), heated front seats (£310), ambient interior lighting £310) an electric deployable towbar (£970) and even a digital TV (£870).

Passenger accommodation wouldn't look out of place in a Jaguar XJ with plenty of room for five full formed adults.

The 60/40 split rear seats open-up what is already a class-rivalling 484 litres (17.09 cu.ft) of luggage space – more than enough for two sets of golf clubs.



On the Road

From the engine options the 240 PS four cylinder turbo diesel I tested seems like a good compromise between performance and economy.



Jaguar claims a sprint time of a fraction over seven seconds which seems very ambitious as the E-Pace has a lot of weight to carry around, but the unit feels responsive and willing enough, while being quiet and refined in operation.

The eight-speed automatic transmission is simplicity itself and takes a lot of the pressure off the drive while being given well-spaced ratios that react well to right foot encouragement.

Average fuel economy, assisted by automatic stop-start technology, promises that this model should be capable of something like 45 mpg which is good in the class if it can be achieved.

Jaguar has promised saloon car-like handling from the E-Pace and, yes, it does feel quite settled and stable at high speeds and through corners, but isn't perhaps as pin sharp as some of the opposition, but then again it is a multi-role vehicle and this always brings compromises.

I didn't get a chance to put the E-Pace to the test over serious off-road conditions (and anyway its very unlikely to be venturing far off the black stuff in regular use) but it is packed out with lots of all-terrain technology.

All Surface Progress control, Hill Launch Assist, selectable JaguarDrive Control, Dynamic Stability Control, Traction Control and Low Traction Launch are just some of the kit list that should pull the E-Pace through a British winter.

Verdict

Jaguar hit a sweet spot, an untapped new market for sporting SUVs and the E-Pace reinforces this with style and substance; on top of this it has an attractive price point, a generous specification and, of course, it has the all-time appeal of the Jaguar badge.



Wheels-Alive Tech Spec. in Brief:

Jaguar E-Pace Diesel HSE R-Dynamic

Engine: 1999cc four cylinder turbocharged diesel

Transmission: Eight-speed automatic

Power: 240 PS @ 4,000 rpm

Torque: 500 Nm (369 lb.ft)

Performance:

0-62 mph: 7.4 seconds

Top Speed: 139mph

Fuel Consumption (Official Figures):

Urban: 39.2 mpg

Extra-Urban: 51.4 mpg

Combined: 45.6 mpg

CO2 Emissions: 162 g/km

Price (On the Road), from: £48,650