Jaguar F-Type Convertible First Impressions

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Jaguar F-Type Convertible – Transport of Delight?

Written and photographed by Chris Adamson

Ever since the demise of the iconic E-Type almost half a century ago, Jaguar has been

attempting to recreate the sporting aura that gave a fresh and original injection of energy into the famous, quintessentially, British brand.

With the rear-wheel drive Ian Callum penned F-type (the name is a big giveaway) Jaguar just might have got there because this is an aspirational vehicle that not only looks great it also sounds fantastic…. but more of that to come.

Created from a confection of crisply contoured lightweight aluminium panels it all comes together in a fluid, almost organic silhouette of eye-catching delight.

The long front with its droop noise, gaping open-mouthed grille and bonnet grilles oozes Jaguar heritage, while the short curved raised haunches of the rear with slim-line tail lights add something dynamic and different – if making the overall concept seem slightly out of proportion.

What the rounded rear does achieve is a surprising amount of luggage space (200 litres or 7.1 cu.ft) even with the fabric roof tucked neatly away behind the occupants.

Accessing the F-Type means popping out the concealed door handles (the last time I recall using one of these it was on a Ford GT40) and stepping over the low sill into a snug, wrap-around cabin, which, for a compact soft-top, offers a generous amount of adjustment on the figure hugging sport seats.

Ahead is a convenient and conventional set of instrumentation and controls but the design team has opted to set these into a contemporary (that means exposed aluminium) rather than a traditional setting so there is a noticeable absence of wood.

Everything is dominated by an eight inch central colour touch screen that does a lot of work for the driver.

Jaguar stays with tradition when it comes to the hood installation, using a fabric affair rather than a sectional tin-top. This inevitably helps the weight, while the quick automatic operation (12 seconds at up to 30mph) means you don’t have to miss a second of the British summer when it does appear.

Lots of insulation ensures that any buffeting is kept to a minimum and even when the top is down, the F-Type is remarkably wind free.

If you are spending north of £55,000 you expect your new acquisition to be well equipped and the F-Type doesn’t skimp here.

The long kit list includes: leather trim, thick pile carpets, electric 14-way seat adjustment, DAB radio, touch screen infotainment system with remote control, Bluetooth connection, tyre pressure monitor, rain sensing wipers, Xenon headlights, rear parking aid and satellite navigation.

If all this isn’t enough, then for an extra £5,500 (as spent on the example I tested) you can

add in bonuses such as: Heated seats with memory function, heated steering wheel, dual zone automatic climate control with auto recirculation, cruise control, keyless start and entry, parking sensors, adjustable lights and, in this instance, Italian Racing red colour scheme complete with matching seat belts.

On the Road

Press the starter button and the F-Type begins by emitting the merest of purrs as the six cylinders and 24 valves start to turn over and warm up from a gentle nap.

Turn your attention to the accelerator and suddenly the vocals dramatically change into a deep roar as if the slumbering big cat has spied a passing gazelle – and this is even without the active exhaust of the more powerful versions.

The example I am let loose in is a mere kitten being the (340 PS) 3 litre V6 Supercharged version – the 500 PS) 5 litre V8 range topper must be almost deafening.

Those who are expecting Cheetah-like instant acceleration may be slightly disappointed, the V6 is more of a considered rather than a frantic performer so that it lopes along to 62 mph in a whisker under six seconds.

This means the F-Type is going to hunt down its prey in long strides rather than sudden bursts, as it slots through the slick, quick action, six-speed manual transmission.

For those drivers who demand a more direct approach there is a Dynamic setting to speed up the gear shift, throttle and steering responses, although I have to say this doesn't exactly transform the performance to a noticeable degree.

Fuel economy isn't likely to be a deal-breaker for anyone considering the F-Type but it is good to know that with engine stop-start this premier sports car will get to close on 30mpg.

Ride quality, using a standard sports suspension set-up (active on the sporty models) is firm and assured, like any well muscled feline should be. In action it feels relaxed and well within the capabilities of the chassis (borrowed from the XK), with no evidence of fidgeting across the road surface and no shake within the body.

This is helped by the 50/50 weight distribution on the V6 with just a hint of oversteer as the rear-wheel drive F-Type digs into corners, its haunches looking to push it through the curves as the road ahead jinks and bends.

If there is a small chink in the F-Types armour it is the electric power assisted steering, which isn't as direct and responsive as I would have liked. Even in dynamic mode it comes across as a little lifeless and heavy for my taste – more work to be done here I would suggest.

Verdict

With the F-type, Jaguar has almost, if not entirely, succeeded in creating a worthy successor to the E-Type. For preference I would like to see the mechanics give that steering a touch more input to really round-off what is an impressive and extremely enjoyable convertible to have the pleasure of being acquainted with.

Wheels-Alive Tech Spec. in brief:

Vehicle: Jaguar F-Type Convertible 3.0 V6 Manual

Engine: 2995cc/V6 Supercharged.

Transmission: 6 speed manual; rear wheel drive.

Power: 340 PS @ 6,500 rpm.

Torque: 450 Nm (332 lb.ft) @ 3,500 to 5,000 rpm.

Performance:

0-62mph: 5.7 seconds.

Top Speed: 161 mph.

Fuel Consumption (Official Figures):

Urban: 20.9 mpg.

Extra-Urban: 37.2 mpg.

Combined: 28.8 mpg.

CO2 Emissions: 234 g/km.

Price: (Basic) £56,745/(As tested) £62,375.