New Forest McLaren dealership opens – and McLaren GT unveiled

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Opening of New Forest McLaren dealership and unveiling of McLaren GT.

Chris Adamson reports

(Photographs by Chris and McLaren).

Affluent south coast motorists are the target audience for the ninth McLaren dealership to open in Britain as the British sportscar brand heads towards its target of 6,000 world-wide sales by 2024 – last year they sold 4,816 units.

McLaren New Forest is located in the rural village of Bramshaw between Romsey and Ringwood rather than one of the bustling cities in the region – this is perhaps influenced by the fact that within a stone's throw you can find one of the country's busiest and long-established Ferrari and Maserati dealerships.

The new outlet falls under the banner of the family owned Harwoods group (which has been going for 85 years and already has Jaguar, Land-Rover, Audi and Aston Martin dealerships) and shares showroom space with its existing Bentley franchise which has been on the site for many years – previously under the Straight Eight name.

Harwoods let it be known some time ago that they would be interested in taking on the McLaren name and received the contract in February – McLaren Automotive is now represented by over 90 retailers (26 in Europe) across more than 32 territories globally.

"Having been welcomed into the McLaren fold earlier this year, it's an honour to open the doors to our new showroom and welcome new and existing customers with this fantastic display of cars from one of the most exciting brands in the automotive industry," commented Harwoods chief executive officer Archie Harwood on the opening night for 170

specially invited guests.

“I’m absolutely sure that by bringing Harwoods’ ethos of delivering memorable experiences to the McLaren brand, we will build on its success in the south of England,” he added.

Subject to a £2.2million revamp a few years ago, the modern showroom has space to display a selection of the latest models from McLaren and features a video wall and an interactive car configurator enabling prospective customers to create their own individual McLaren.

In addition to the latest hand-built models, the McLaren New Forest team will also be selling cars from the McLaren Qualified Programme for used vehicles.

Even before the showroom opened Harwoods had created a McLaren service centre at one of its other sites, an industrial estate at Testwood near Southampton. The addition of McLaren to their group has resulted in the creation of six new jobs within the company.

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McLaren GT

Pride of place at the McLaren New Forest opening was the brand-new McLaren GT, which is currently on a nationwide tour tempting potential owners to part with £163,000 for a luxury grand tourer.

Among McLaren's claims for its sleek and elegant carbon-fibre and aluminium GT are that the new stand-alone model has space for 570 litres or 20.13 cu.ft of luggage (the same as a Ford Focus). Of this 150 litres or 5.30 cu.ft are to be found under the bonnet in a very useful compartment that you can have fitted with McLaren luggage bags.

The rest is located under the pop-up full-length glazed rear tailgate and above the rear mounted power unit – in most other McLarens this is just a viewing window to look down onto the 4 litre V8 engine.

The other GT essential is that it will accommodate a set of golf clubs (or a pair of skis) – something it achieves by laying them length-wise above the padded engine cover that is trimmed in a new hardwearing non-slip space-age SuperFabric material.

The attention to detail on the ‘luggage compartment’ continues further inside where the cabin comes trimmed in a variety of materials including Nappa leather, Cashmere and thick

pile carpet – which adds weight but a generous touch of luxury for cross-continent journeys.

The kit list for the GT is also enhanced with a superfast infotainment system , top-end audio and dual zone climate control.

To create a smoother long-distance ride and to cope with modern city obstacles such as speed humps the GT stands taller than its stablemates – the ground clearance varying from 110 mm (4.33 in) to 130 mm (5.12 in) using the optional nose lift system.

This is in addition to being installed with McLaren’s extremely effective Proactive Damping Control suspension system that uses a double wishbone design paired with hydraulic dampers that continually react to changes in the road surface.

Finally to get you from the New Forest to the South of France the GT has a claimed range of

414 miles at an average of 26 miles to the gallon thanks to a 72 litre (15.84 gallon) fuel tank – to achieve this is going to need some very careful application of the right foot.

With the twin-turbo V8 pushing out 405 PS per tonne and 60 mph possible in a fraction over three seconds on its way to a post 200 mph maximum, the temptation of some of Europe's unrestricted roads is going to be too much to get anywhere near 400 miles on a tank.

VERDICT

Hopefully one day I may get to see just how far the McLaren GT will travel – but for now like most motoring enthusiasts I am going to have to do with just pressing my nose up against

the window of McLaren New Forest and dreaming of what might be one day…

Wheels-Alive Tech Spec. in Brief:

Vehicle: McLaren GT

Engine: 4 litre twin-turbo

Transmission: Seven speed sequential automatic with paddle shifts and comfort, sport and track modes

Power: 620 PS @ 7,500 rpm

Torque: 630 Nm (465 lb.ft) @ 5,500-6,500 rpm

Performance:

0-62 mph: 3.1 seconds

Top Speed: 203 mph

Fuel Consumption (Official Figures):

Urban: 19.4 mpg

Extra-Urban: 32.5 mpg

Combined: 26.2 mpg

CO2 Emissions: 270 g/km

Price (On the Road): From: £163,000