Range Rover Evoque (2016 model year) First Impressions

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2016 MODEL YEAR RANGE ROVER EVOQUE FIRST DRIVE

by David Miles (Miles Better News Agency)

The Range Rover Evoque for 2016 gets a mid-life refresh, but most importantly those updates include the use for the first time of Jaguar Land Rover's own 2.0-litre Ingenium turbodiesel engines, which replace the previous Ford manufactured 2.2-litre units.

First launched to great acclaim in 2011, the stylish Evoque became the brand's best selling model range globally and in the UK. For 2016 the Evoque continues in five door and three door coupé forms, at prices ranging from £30,200 to £51,800, and with 2.0-litre petrol and diesel engine choices. An Evoque convertible based on the coupé arrives in the range in the Spring of 2016 at prices ranging from £47,500 to £52,400, also with petrol and diesel power units.

At the recent UK media launch for a variety of Land Rover and Jaguar 2016 model year vehicles I opted to test the Evoque five door, five seater mid-sized SUV as it is some time since I had tried this best-selling model.

The main reason for doing so was that it is one of the first SUVs in the Land/Range Rover family to receive the new JLR Ingenium 2.0-litre turbodiesel engines which are available in 150 and 180hp forms. There is also a 2.0-litre turbocharged 240hp petrol unit as well. The 150hp diesel has a manual gearbox and 2WD, the 180hp turbodiesel and 240hp petrol models have 4WD as standard and only come with automatic transmissions.

A potential competitor for the Evoque, in addition to the Audi Q3, Mercedes-Benz GLC and BMW X1 models, is the Land Rover Discovery Sport with five and seven seat versions. This range, launched in January 2015, was the replacement for their long-serving Freelander models. The Discovery Sport, also for the 2016 model year, receives the 150 and 180hp Ingenium diesel engines instead of the old 2.2-litre Ford units. The 150hp unit has a six-speed manual gearbox and the 180hp engine offers the choice of manual or eight-speed automatic transmissions and all versions are 4WD. Discovery Sport prices start from £30,695 and go up to £46,00 so it has price on its side and it is roomier.

However back to the latest Evoque, which with the new in-house JLR diesel engines is claimed to be 18% more fuel and CO2 efficient than the original models, with improved residual values, lower running costs and extended service intervals. The latest range includes in its model line-up fuel/CO2 efficient E-Capability variants which carry a distinctive blue Evoque badge. This 150hp turbodiesel Ingenium unit has 2WD, six-speed manual gearbox with CO2 emissions of just 109g/km and a Combined Cycle figure of 68mpg – making it the most efficient Land Rover ever. For those who don't need all wheel drive and either use this Evoque for the urban 'yummy mummy' school run or for business the VED road tax is very low at £0 for the First Year rate and then £20 thereafter. Company car drivers get away with 19% Benefit-in-Kind tax.

But the mainstream sales are for models with the 180hp engine and 4WD, where CO2 emissions start from 125g/km depending on the spec. level chosen, and the official fuel consumption is 59mpg. So VED is £0 and then £110 thereafter and BIK tax is 23%.

For the few owners who want petrol power the 240hp 2.0-litre turbo petrol models will officially return 36mpg and produce CO2 emissions of 181g/km so VED road tax is £350 and then £225 for the Year Two rate onwards. Company car tax is 31%.

WHAT'S NEW?

So what else is new with the 2016 Evoque? The core specification line-up, depending on the model chosen, is Pure, SE, HSE Dynamic and Autobiography plus 15 option packs for fine-tuning to meet owner's requirements. Styling revisions included a new front bumper with wider air intakes, new grille design, and a revised rear roof spoiler with integrated stop lights. This vehicle is also the first Land Rover to feature full LED adaptive headlights, depending on the model, and it has a hands-free tailgate operated by waving a foot beneath the rear bumper. Overall the Evoque still continues with its high rising waistline, plus lowering coupé roofline to the rear, and it remains chunky from the waistline down – making it look fashionable in some people's eyes, but in reality not as practical as the Land Rover Discovery Sport.

Inside the changes include new seats and door casings, revised instrument binnacle and more choices of new colours and material finishes. An all-new eight-inch touchscreen with InControl infotainments functions displays compatible smartphone apps as they appear on the mobile device.



For 4WD models there is the latest version of Land Rover's All-Terrain Progress Control. This constantly monitors and adjusts vehicle settings, optimising traction and progress in all conditions, plus it has the all important Hill Descent Control for serious off road work.

The Evoque's off road capabilities are renowned but mostly the mid-sized sporty SUV appeals to those UK owners who like its 'street-cred' styling. Its home maybe on the streets but it remains highly capable off-road and given the recent weather it has a wading depth of 500mm.

As I am currently testing a Land Rover Discovery Sport with the new Ingenium 2.0-litre 150hp turbodiesel engine, at the recent press event I tried the new Evoque with the 180hp version of the same engine, with its nine-speed automatic gearbox and 4WD. More specifically in the HSE Dynamic specification form that carries a hefty price tag of £42,300.



The Evoque has never been short on style but beauty is in the eye of the beholder. To me it looks out of proportion and rear and rear quarter visibility is restricted because of the small windows. What cannot be argued about are its off-road capabilities which are well in keeping with larger heavyweight Land and Range Rovers. Where it is not so hot is with its on-road ride and handling. It provides a firm and choppy ride and it doesn't feel that agile; it feels like an off-roader which at heart it is. However the fashionable end of the mid-sized SUV market has moved on and the Audi Q3 and BMW X1 SUVs are much better for on road

handling and ride comfort but they of course are not that efficient in the rough. It seems UK customers are happy to put up with less than impeccable road manners but enjoy the Evoque's styling and 4×4 abilities, even if they never set a wheel off the tarmac.

The new JLR 2.0-litre Ingenium turbodiesel engine is the major advantage the 2016 Evoque has over previous versions in terms of outright performance and overall refinement. In addition to more power/torque, better mpg and lower CO2 emissions the major service interval have been extended from 16,000 to 21,000 miles.

The 180hp unit produces a massive 430Nm of torque from just 1,500rpm but there is a lull between pressing the accelerator and the power being delivered at times, and then the power comes in with a surge even when driven in the normal Drive mode rather than the more aggressive Sport mode. Mated with the standard fit nine-speed automatic gearbox, gear changes up and down the ratios are not always that smooth. It seems more refinement is called for in the electronic mapping of both the engine and transmission. There is no doubt the engine is strong and responsive, its power delivery just needs to be more progressive.

Officially this engine/transmission combination with the HSE Dynamic specification, which includes firm riding large 20-inch wheels, will return 55.3mpg in the Combined Cycle and on my test drive using the busy roads around Marlow and the winding country lanes of The Chilterns, the figure was a real-life 43.1mpg. With CO2 emissions of 134g/km VED road tax is £130 every year and the Benefit-in-Kind company car tax rate is 24%. Top speed is 121mph and zero to 60mph takes just 8.5-seconds giving it real pace to go with its fashionable sports styling.

VERDICT

For: Desirable fashionable styling for some people, high quality/specification interior, strong new engine, good residual values, brilliant off-road capabilities, extended major service intervals.

Against: Aggressive engine power delivery and snatchy gearshifts at times, choppy on-road ride, limited rear seat head and legroom, restricted rear quarter visibility, pricey.



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

2016 Range Rover Evoque HSE Dynamic, 5 door, 2.0 litre 180 bhp turbodiesel automatic, 4WD.

Engine: New Ingenium 2.0-litre, 4-cylinder, direct injection turbodiesel, 180 bhp, 430 Nm (317.1 lb.ft) of torque from 1,500 rpm

Transmission: 9 speed auto, 4WD

Performance:

0-60mph: 8.5 seconds

Top speed: 121 mph

Fuel consumption: 55.3 mpg Combined Cycle (43.1 mpg on test)

CO2 emissions: 134 g/km, VED road tax £130, BIK company car tax 24%

Insurance group: 38

Warranty: 3 years/unlimited mileage

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,365 mm (14.32 ft), W 1,900 mm (6.23 ft), H 1,635 mm (5.36 ft), boot/load space 420 to 1,445 litres (14.83 to 51.03 cu.ft), braked towing weight 2,000kg (4409lb)

Price: £42,300.