

RANGE ROVER EVOQUE CONVERTIBLE

Tim Barnes-Clay tests the first convertible Range Rover at its global launch in Courchevel, France





EVOQUE HSE DYNAMIC LUX CONVERTIBLE - DIESEL
 Max speed: 121 mph
 0-62 mph: 10.3 secs
 Combined mpg: 49.6
 Engine layout: 2.0 litre 4-cylinder turbo diesel
 Max. power (bhp): 178
 CO2: 149 g/km
 Price: £51,700

You've got to wonder why people spend so much on a lump of metal with four wheels attached to each corner. At first it almost seems a bit daft when all we want is a means of independent transport to get us around.

But the reason we spend so much of our cash on cars is that we are human, and we have emotions – and egos. Some of us like to prove to our families, friends, colleagues and people we don't even know, that we have 'done well'. Whatever 'done well' actually means.

I guess if we have a nice car in the Western world it is about self-gratification, too – and having an easy life. Let's face it; we would rather have a cool, plush motor to ride around in than a jalopy. And that desire for pleasure-seeking can override the practical side of us when we are choosing a car.



Some of us seem to say "whatever" to practicality anyway. I mean, good heavens, in the UK we buy more convertibles than many other countries in Europe. Why? Most of the time, this country is damp and overcast. Again, it comes down to wanting to feel good. Going roofless when there's a burst of sunlight in Britain generates a massive feeling of positivity. Well, it does for me anyway.

Speaking of open-top motoring, the all-new Range Rover Evoque Convertible has just been launched. The sport utility vehicle (SUV) takes some getting used to, but it grows on you.

As the fifth member of the Range Rover family unit – and the first ever convertible – Land Rover says the fresh model will play a key role in continuing Range Rover's 45-year success story, pioneering an all-new SUV sector. If industry experts' predictions about a 20 per cent growth in



the global SUV market over the next five years prove correct, then, indeed, the auto maker has nothing but sunshine heading its way.

The Evoque Convertible has a fabric roof that can be activated on the move – as long as the car isn't doing over 30mph. The five-layer rag-top will drop in 18 seconds and it will raise in 21 seconds.

Inside, the massive 10.2 inch InControl Touch Pro nav is attractive – and, more importantly, it works really well. Truly, the pinch-to-zoom function is as quick as an iPad's.

The Evoque will seat four-up and, for a soft-top, it has a decent 251-litre boot, too. The other nice thing is that the roof opens and closes quietly and it folds away tidily, instead of stacking-up on the tailgate.

You can choose either petrol or diesel, supported by turbo power. This is all hooked up to a slick nine-speed automatic gearbox, and all-wheel drive. The 2.0 oil-burner is the best for economy, managing 49.6mpg.

The diesel version does 0-62mph in 10.3 seconds, which is 1.3 seconds behind the Coupe, but both do 121mph. The 237bhp petrol is quicker, sprinting from 0-62mph in 8.6 seconds.

On and off-road, the soft-covered SUV seems just as accomplished as its tin-topped sibling – with identical clearances, and a shared 500mm wading depth. Indeed, at the car's media launch in the French Alps, the Evoque eased up and down – and through – everything requested of it – including snow.

I doubt many people going for a topless Evoque will bother with the off-roading bit – but it is nice to know the car is able to do more than just look good in our more affluent British suburbs.

The new Range Rover Evoque Convertible is being produced at Land Rover's Halewood plant, alongside the five-door and Coupe body styles, and it has just gone on sale in more than 170 markets worldwide.

Prices begin at £47,500, which is £5,200 more than a comparable hard-top Evoque Coupe.