

# Corsa VXR Nürburgring

THE MIGHTY team from Luton have raised the bar for hot hatches once again. In the 80s there was the Nova GTE – no boy-racer wanted to be seen without one. Then of course the 90s saw it morph into a Corsa, dressed up in all sorts of popular guises.



The little car's name hasn't changed but this year sees Vauxhall unleash its most potent Corsa ever, the new VXR Nürburgring Edition. The pocket rocket went on sale at the end of May and, according to the company with the famous Griffin badge, it will knock all other cars in its class into a cocked hat for performance and dynamics.

At the heart of the new Nürburgring model is a re-worked version of the Corsa VXR's 1.6-litre turbocharged engine, which now produces 205PS at 5,750rpm (up from 192PS) and 250-280Nm of torque (up from 230-266Nm). A modified engine management and turbocharger system, sports exhaust, and the ability to run on 98-octane fuel - have all contributed to the rise in power.

To harness the special edition's new-found clout, Vauxhall has fitted it with loads of gadgetry to ensure that its 205PS doesn't go up in a cloud of tyre smoke. The technology also reins in understeer caused by excessive throttle loads during cornering, or changes in the texture of the road surface.

But perhaps the cherry on the cake is the capable Corsa's chassis, which received its final sign-off at the Nürburgring's notorious Nordschleife, or North Loop. Specially made springs and dampers for the new model reduce the ride height, allowing an even higher degree of control and involvement.

Complementing this are Brembo brakes, ABS, Traction Control and Electronic Stability Control. All the systems have all been recalibrated to take into account the Nürburgring model's set-up.

It takes just 6.5 electrifying seconds to get to 0-60mph and with a top speed of 143mph, the Corsa Nürburgring will deliver all the driving thrills you'd expect from a car sporting the legendary German track's name.

The Corsa VXR Nürburgring Edition is on sale now, priced at £22,295.



**PROS & CONS**

- ✓ Performance
- ✓ Excellent chassis
- ✓ Exciting
- ✗ Costly

**FAST FACTS**

- Max speed: 143 mph
- 0-62 mph: 6.5 seconds
- Combined mpg: 37.2
- Engine: 1598 cc, 4 cylinder, turbo petrol
- Max. power (PS): 205 at 5750 rpm
- Max. torque (Nm): 250-280 at 2250 rpm
- CO2: 178 g/km
- Price: £22,295 On the road

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By Tim Barnes-Clay, Motoring Writer





# Jaguar XJ 3.0 Diesel Portfolio

OVER 1.27 million cars were made in the UK last year, making it easier than ever for car buyers to choose a British-built model.

Motor manufacturers such as Warwickshire-based Jaguar saw production increase, thanks to the success of the luxury new XJ and XF models. Thankfully, sales figures were impressive enough for Jaguar's owners, Tata Motors, to confirm its two UK plants will remain open to cope with demand. With that heartening news in mind it seemed appropriate to visit Jaguar's home in Gaydon, where I was lent the XJ 3.0-litre diesel Portfolio.



Looks-wise, Jaguars are renowned for their elegant, sporting lines, and the all-new XJ, with its fluid, contemporary style doesn't disappoint. The strong, muscular lower half of the car is contrasted with the slim and graceful quality of the roofline, which takes inspiration from the original 1968 XJ saloon. The front of the car very imposing with a large grill and an aggressive, shark-like face - rather like the new BMW 5-

Series. At the rear, the car has a pure, sculpted shape, with an absence of unnecessary ornamentation. The sheet metal of the back panel retains its pure form, with a single leaping Jaguar motif making a strong, confident statement. The LED light clusters wrap stylishly over the rear wings, and feature three dramatic red, vertical strips. It's all extremely attractive.

Step inside the XJ and the overriding impression is a sense of personal space - a feeling enhanced by the clean, simple form of the leather-wrapped instrument panel sitting low across the vehicle. At the sides of the cabin, a bold architectural wood veneer sweeps forward from the doors to meet at the front of the car, emphasising the XJ's powerful, dynamic character. This linear, modern use of wood helps to create a truly welcoming environment.

Behind the wheel, you are greeted by the rotary control of the JaguarDrive selector, which, on start-up, rises into your palm. Then 3D animations materialise in the virtual instrument cluster and on the central touch-screen. But the weirdest thing is that there is no physical instrument cluster display. Instead, a high-definition screen, which uses beautifully detailed virtual instruments, provides all of the functions performed by traditional dials. It creates a real sense of theatre, but more importantly it works well.

Under the bonnet, the XJ oil-burner benefits from a powerful and efficient 3.0-litre V6 powertrain, coupled to a six-speed automatic transmission. The lump, boosted by twin turbochargers, propels the car from 0-60mph in just 6.0 secs. It feels every bit as fast behind the wheel as it suggests



- ✓ Very Attractive
- ✓ Powerful
- ✓ Refined
- ✗ Expensive

PROS 'N' CONS



FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 155 mph
- 0-62 mph: 6 seconds
- Combined mpg: 40.1
- Engine: 3.0L V6 twin turbo diesel
- Max. power (bhp): 271 at 4000 rpm
- Max. torque (lb/ft): 443 at 2000 rpm
- CO2: 184 g/km
- Price: £66,515 On the road

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it is on paper; it's an awesome sensation – reminiscent of taking off in a plane.

But it isn't all about power; on the move in the Midlands-made big cat, the low level of road-rumble means you can chat with your passengers without the need to shout. There's a little bit of diesel rattle at idle, but even when you push your right foot down, there's not much more than a low grunt from the twin exhaust pipes. In fact, it's very difficult to tell it apart from a petrol-powered car once it's cruising.

Indeed, the all-new XJ makes every journey a special occasion, both for you and your passengers, but this level of sophistication doesn't come cheap. You'll have to splash out over £55,000 for the very basic diesel model, and you'll need to have even deeper pockets if you want to drive the higher up the range XJ Portfolio.

# Mercedes C-Class Coupe

WHAT MORE dynamic way to celebrate the invention of the automobile? The C-Class Coupé sees Mercedes-Benz, now in its 125th year of corporate history, entering a new market segment and for the first time offering a compact, classic coupé.

Aimed at the 35-45 age range, the new coupé beguiles the onlooker with its compact proportions and low silhouette. Typical coupé features include the short front overhang, long bonnet, steeply raked windscreen and long, stretched out roof. The cabin extends far beyond the rear axle over the rear window in its flat position to a sportily short tail end.

At the front, the new coupé shares the same styling as the latest C-Class and yet still has its own twist. The front view is dominated by the prominent radiator grille surround including the bumper. The centre air intake opens upwards, forming a visual base unit for the radiator grille which has the double-louvre style typical of a coupé. Two chrome louvres extend left and right either side of the central star, tapering off at the outer edges and creating a sporty, arrow-shaped horizontal sweep which gives the front end a pronounced V-shape.

From the rear, the new C-Class Coupé looks sportily short. Because the roof flows beyond the rear axle with the steeply raked rear window and fluid C-pillars, the appearance of length is reduced. A wide chamfer at the top of the boot lid, which is based on the side panel, highlights the rear's compactness. Inside, the C-Class Coupé is a fully fledged

four-seater featuring sporty, comfortable integral seats. If desired, the backrests in the rear can be folded down to make the boot larger. The dashboard instrument panel features a strong, high-quality design and, as standard, the coupé comes with the new generation of three-spoke steering wheel with its chromed central spoke that first appeared on the new CLS.

There is a choice of three petrol engines and two diesel powerplants to power the C-Class Coupé. They are all equipped with direct injection and the ECO start/stop function as standard. Also, all the engine variants are classed as BlueEFFICIENCY units, showing that they are particularly efficient and environmentally friendly in their use of fuel.

The C 220 CDI BlueEFFICIENCY AMG Sport Coupé oil-burner, on test here, is available with 6-speed manual transmission and is capable of 55.4mpg. My demo car had the 7G-Tronic Plus 7-speed automatic transmission with Speedtronic cruise control, variable speed limiter and steering wheel gear shift paddles fitted. The optional 'box makes the whole driving experience rapid and smooth as silk - yet the car still returns 53.3mpg. This corresponds to 139 grams of CO2 per kilometre, compared to 133g/km for the manual.



Motoring  
Bristol MAN

If all that isn't enough to make you want to splash your cash on the new Merc model, then the knowledge that it is a safe car will do the trick. With seven airbags as standard, belt tensioners and belt-force limiters for all seats, the C-Class Coupé is not just a sexy, classy motor; it is a very protective car to be in should the worst happen.

By Tim Barnes-Clay, Motoring Writer

✓ Dynamic  
✓ Economical  
✓ Safe  
✗ Costly

PROS AND CONS

FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 144 mph
- 0-62 mph: 8.1 seconds (with 7G-Tronic Plus 7-speed auto)
- Combined mpg: 53.3
- Engine: 2143 cc twin turbo diesel
- Max. power (bhp): 170 at 3000 - 4200 rpm
- Max. torque (lb/ft): 295 at 1400 - 2800 rpm
- CO2: 139 g/km (with 7G-Tronic Plus 7-speed automatic)
- Price: £32,580 On the road (without optional auto gearbox)

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# Peugeot 308

THE NEW Peugeot 308, launched in the UK in May, has a fresh look, pioneering technology and CO2 emissions from just 98 g/km.



By Tim Barnes-Clay, Motoring Writer

Since its original creation in 2007 over 900,000 308s have been sold worldwide and, in this country, over 84,000 vehicles have been bought, making it the second most popular Peugeot model.

The new 308 has been unleashed into the UK market with all the up-to-the-minute styling elements already seen on the executive flagship model – the 508. It is available in three body styles; Hatchback, CC and SW, and four multi-model trim levels; Access, SR, Active and Allure. A range topping hatchback and CC (Coupe Cabriolet) THP 200 version is also available in a single GT trim level.

A subtle face-change at the front, incorporating the latest LED headlamps and running lights gives the New Peugeot 308 a well-dressed and contemporary appearance. All the dynamic and emotional strengths of the original Peugeot 308 have been kept and bolstered further with the introduction of more cost-effective engines and Peugeot's innovative micro-hybrid e-HDi Stop & Start system.

The French car-maker's e-HDi Stop & Start wizardry is the latest generation technology and, combined with Peugeot's class leading 1.6 litre HDi FAP 112 Euro 5 diesel engine, reduces CO2 emissions to 98 g/km. This engine option is available with either a six-speed manual gearbox or a six-speed electronically controlled manual gearbox (EGC). This gives the 308 the lowest emissions in its class.

To ensure the New Peugeot 308 is as 'green' as possible, other factors affecting CO2 emissions have also been

optimised; overall weight has been reduced by 25 kg across all models and 16" ultra low rolling resistance tyres have been fitted.

All variants feature air conditioning, ESP (Electronic Stability Programme), ABS (Anti-Lock Braking System), and an assortment of other safety technologies, including child security, remote control central door locking with deadlocks, and six safety airbags.

The Peugeot 308 1.6 e-HDi 112 Active SW (Sports Wagon) - that's an estate car to you and me – was the car I drove. The revised motor has an impressively refined engine and the fuel saving e-HDi Stop & Start technology works well; you almost forget the engine has stopped when you're waiting in a queue of traffic.

Behind the wheel, the car is easy to drive and it eats up the motorway miles effortlessly. It is also very agile when nipping around town. My only criticism is that the suspension is a bit spongy and the 308 oil-burner is not exactly fast (0-62 mph in 11.9 seconds), but the 62.7mpg average fuel economy, roomy interior, panoramic roof and accommodating load space more than make up for it. My test car also had a pair of removable third-row seats, transforming the 308 SW into a seven-seater – handy if you have lots of kids.

All things considered, I'd recommend the new 308. It's practical, comfortable and very economical. It also looks fabulous with its new LED running lights. If you have a large family and you want a relatively affordable, cheap to run new car – then a Peugeot dealership might just be the place to start looking.

**PROS 'N' CONS**

- ✓ Efficient
- ✓ Easy to drive
- ✓ Good load space
- ✗ Soft suspension

**FAST FACTS**

- Max speed: 115 mph
- 0-62 mph: 11.9 seconds
- Combined mpg: 62.7
- Engine: 1560cc, 4 cylinder, turbodiesel
- Max. power (bhp): 110 at 3600 rpm
- Max. torque (lb/ft): 210 at 1750 rpm
- CO2: 120 g/km
- Price: £19,915 On the road

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