



Range Rover Evoque Convertible

Tops off for Summer!

With Summer approaching it may soon be time for convertibles to come out to play, we review our top five.

We all know how unpredictable the British weather can be. That is why it can seem odd that the UK is one of the largest markets for convertible cars. However, their popularity is due to our fresher climate: in warmer countries, having a vehicle's roof down can make for an uncomfortably hot drive, with sunburn a real likelihood, too. Therefore, motor manufacturers have long acknowledged the attractiveness of soft-tops in Britain, and the range of these cars on sale here is very wide. From luxury limo-like rides to cost-effective smaller models, if you want the wind-in-your-hair you're spoilt for choice. Our top five list offers a glimpse at the best convertibles on sale today.



BMW 4 Series Convertible

Range Rover Evoque Convertible

The all-new Range Rover Evoque Convertible has just been launched. The car takes some getting used to, but it grows on you. It has a fabric roof that can be activated on the move, as long as you are not doing over 30mph. The five-layer rag-top will drop in 18 seconds and raise in 21. The car 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. On and off-road, it is just as accomplished as its tin-top 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. We doubt many people going for a topless Evoque will bother with the off-roading bit – but it's nice to know it's able to do more than just look good in our affluent British suburbs.

BMW 4 Series Convertible

BMW's 4 Series convertible is the open-topped version of the Bavarian brand's 3 Series saloon. It has a folding

metal roof which provides better security and a more serene ride when the roof is in position. The downside is that the BMW's top will only operate on the move at 8mph. However, the 4 Series convertible is a brilliant vehicle to drive, even if the additional heft of the metal roof and its intricate hinged mechanism makes it a tad less stimulating than some BMWs. The build quality of the car and its cabin materials are outstanding, though – as are the powertrains that come with the BMW 4 Series. The engines include some of the finest diesels on the automotive market. Regardless of the fact that it's slightly



Audi A5 Cabriolet

less thrilling to handle than the coupe, BMW's 4 Series convertible is still a truly sought-after car.

Audi A5 Cabriolet

Audi's A5 Cabriolet is one of the more 'mellow' drop-tops on the motoring market. It is an extremely comfortable car that offers a hushed and silky driving experience, together with decent practicality for a soft-top. The German car's foldaway fabric roof can be dropped at up to 30mph and takes 17 seconds to stow away. What's more, if you tick the 'acoustic roof' optional extra box, the Audi A5 Cabriolet delivers even more sound suppression and luxury. The A5 Cabriolet has a wide range of commanding petrol and diesel power

units and, while the drive is conventional and robust rather than arousing, the car with the four rings has a charm all of its own, thanks to a first class cabin and sturdy build quality.

MINI Convertible

The MINI Convertible is now in its third generation and has been around for several years in hatchback form, but it is a first for it to be built using the third-generation platform. The MINI looks like a star. There is a genuine impression of BMW about the way the car's cabin has been screwed together. It's all very well finished, with high-class trim and hip-hugging sports seats, and it is an enjoyable place to be. It now seats four; it has a bigger boot; its electrically

operated folding roof is better and it contains state-of-the-art tech. MINI's Cooper S is the most inspiring model, due to its pinpoint accurate steering and its turbo-charging. The turbo gives the in-gear velocity an even spicier shot in the arm. The manual gearbox is easy-going and swift, but it's difficult not to be enchanted by the automatic transmission. Here, there are several settings to entertain yourself with, as well as paddles to change gear with. It all makes the MINI Cooper S a genuinely gratifying car, particularly on twisty roads that require lots of skipping through the gears.

DS 3 Cabriolet

The DS 3 Cabriolet is a good-looking



MINI Convertible



DS 3 Cabriolet

open-top supermini that can be personalised in a myriad of ways. However, it isn't a full convertible: as an alternative, the roof peels back, while the rear screen and door pillars stay in position. While this slightly reduces the full rag-top sensation, the DS 3 Cabriolet doesn't suffer much wind noise as a consequence. The DS3 Cabriolet's 245-litre boot isn't big, though, and access to the load area is hindered when the roof is fully pulled back. The French-made car may be a rather left-field option, but it has its own distinct allure. DS' variety of petrol and diesel power units, meanwhile, offers a good selection of performance and efficiency.