

DRIVE



Business Scene's motoring correspondent **TIM BARNES-CLAY** visited the home of the British-built Jaguar in Warwickshire and discovered that the latest XJ 'big cat'

Power and grace



Pros 'n' Cons

- Very Attractive ✓
- Powerful ✓
- Refined ✓
- Expensive X

Fast Facts

- Max speed: 155 mph
- 0-60 mph: 6.0 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

provides a journey of sophisticated elegance which doesn't come cheap, but makes motoring in this dynamic and beautiful machine a truly special occasion.

Jaguar XJ 3.0 Diesel Portfolio

More than 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 is 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.

Beautiful detail

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 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 more than £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.



Tim Barnes-Clay



Above: Interior details. Below: Rear and side view of the Jaguar XJ.

