

JAGUAR XJ

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. Motoring expert Tim Barnes-Clay investigates

Motor manufacturers such as Warwickshire-based Jaguar saw production increase, thanks to the success of the luxury new XJ and XF models. Happily, 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.

The XJ takes a new approach to sustainable motoring. Constructed using Jaguar's aerospace-inspired aluminium body technology,



the XJ is lighter than its rivals by at least 150kg which significantly improves performance, handling and economy, while delivering increased strength, refinement and safety. The lightweight aluminium structure – with 50 percent recycled material – underpinned by a lifecycle approach to vehicle design and manufacture, enables the new XJ to minimise its carbon footprint. This alone creates a potential saving of three tonnes of CO2 per vehicle, compared to a bodyshell made from new aluminium.

It also offers extremely attractive cost of ownership with impressive fuel economy and emissions performance across the range; high predicted residual values and 15,000-mile

service intervals. These benefits are just some of the results of Jaguar's obsessive attention to detail during product development. Processes such as the use of the latest 'virtual' technologies to implement 40,000 quality-specific assessments are one of the reasons that the Jaguar brand has received numerous recognitions for vehicle quality.

Of course, 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 clean, 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 one of personal space – a sensation 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

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to create a truly welcoming environment. In addition, an innovative panoramic glass roof, which is an integral part of the XJ's design, dramatically increases the light in the cabin.

The Jaguar is loaded with toys too. Stunning, 12.3-inch high-definition virtual instruments





complement an innovative, dual-view technology 8-inch touch-screen that can project DVD movies or television programmes to the passenger while the driver views vehicle functions or follows satellite navigation. Premium surround sound options include the top-of-the-range 1200W Bowers & Wilkins system, which is comparable in audio quality to the best in-home entertainment. Advanced infotainment features also include hard drive-based audio and navigation systems, and comprehensive connectivity for portable audio and video devices via the powerful media hub.

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 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 power train, 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; features such as air suspension, adaptive dynamics (continuously variable damping), active differential control and quick-ratio power steering help deliver the blend of responsive, dynamic handling and superior, supple ride expected from a Jaguar. 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 comes at a cost. You will have to splash out over £55,000 for the very basic diesel model, and you will need to have even deeper pockets if you want to drive the higher up the range XJ Portfolio.

- 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