



The jewel in the E-PACE's crown is undoubtedly its ride quality



NEW JAGUAR E-PACE SUV REVIEW

The Jaguar E-PACE is the British brand's second sport utility vehicle (SUV). It comes hot on the heels of the F-PACE, the quickest-selling model ever to have come off Jaguar's production line. Here, our chief road tester, TIM BARNES-CLAY, gives his thoughts on the new car, having been invited to drive it in Corsica recently.

The E-PACE is diminutive when compared with the F-PACE, and it doesn't look much like it. It has more in common with the Range Rover Evoque, because it uses the same chassis. There are other Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) models rolled into the mix, too. The new SUV's headlights are reminiscent of the two-seater Jaguar F-Type, possibly hinting at the athletic potential of the E-PACE.

There are two petrols and three diesels on offer. Yes, I know, who said diesel was dying? Obviously not JLR. I drove the most potent diesel, the D240 twin-turbo. As the numbers in its name suggest, the SUV churns out 240PS, and it's fitted with an automatic transmission and four-wheel drive only.

There are a couple of model line-ups: regular and R-Dynamic; the latter of which gets twin tailpipes,



front fog-lights and body-coloured door cladding. Then there are four trim levels within each range. I drove the 'S' trim in R-Dynamic form, which boasts fat alloys, navigation, electrically-adjustable front seats and leather upholstery.

The jewel in the E-PACE's crown is undoubtedly its ride quality. The car feels refined on every road surface, behaving better than an SUV has any entitlement to, even at a snail's pace. Potholes are soaked up so well that there are times when you wonder if the Jaguar has metamorphosed into a hovercraft.

The E-PACE's ZF nine-speed automatic 'box changes smoothly, and on the R-Dynamic, gearshift paddles make things more fun. Rather than staying in 'auto' mode, you can dance through the cogs yourself using the shifters behind the steering wheel.

The cabin is a lovely place to spend time. It's even grin-inducing at times, with neat touches, like the 'cub' image in the windscreen frame helping to raise a smile. The general effect is elegant enough, with skilfully placed sections of leather and double stitching to remind you you're in a quality motor. Only some hunks of dark plastic here and there rain on the parade.

Room-wise, you're laughing in an E-PACE. The car will sit four-up, no problem, and tall occupants in the back seat won't have cause to moan about legroom or headroom. There's plenty of that.

Stowage-wise, Jaguar has thrown in more cubbyholes than you can shake a stick at. The E-PACE also has a huge bin area between the front seats, and there are seemingly bottomless door pockets for additional storage.

The practical side of things continues to the Jaguar's boot. At 577 litres, it offers more cargo capacity than most other small SUVs. And things become positively van-like with the rear seats folded down. In place of human cargo, there's 1,234 litres to knock yourself out with.

Hand on heart, I feel JLR has every right to look like 'the cat that got the cream' with this fresh product. The E-PACE will be popular, no doubt about it. It has a near-flawless mix of comfort, practicality, power and refinement. It's also entertaining to drive, and it can put a smile on your face. Not every premium compact SUV can do that.



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