

New Jaguar XF

At first sight, the new Jaguar XF seems to have ticked all the boxes in everyone's books. Is this true? Or is it just the natural enthusiasm that greets every new example of one of the motoring world's iconic marques. If you are a Jaguar enthusiast, you'll not argue. However let's look at the evidence.

What Car's annual award for 'Car of the Year' 2008 gave it top prize. It also grabbed the 'Best Executive Car' category prize ahead of both BMW's 5-Series and the elegant Mercedes CLS. Can such a prestigious publication be wrong? In fact the Group Editor went so far as to say that, in his opinion, it is the best car Jaguar has ever built!

But it doesn't stop there. It has also been declared 'Car of the Year' by 'The Sun' newspaper, 'Limo of the Year' by 'Top Gear' magazine, 'Interior of the Year' by 'Car' magazine and took the prestigious 'Design Award' from 'Autocar'. They can't all be wrong and such hard-headed motoring experts will hardly be carried away by sheer novelty!

Three versions are available, all supplied as standard and the specification is truly generous to say the least. Each has six-speed automatic transmission featuring the innovative Jaguar Sequential Shift, which permits drivers the option of one-touch manual gearshift operated from a steering wheel mounted paddle.

For the purists it must be made clear, the XF cannot be said to be entirely new. It has inherited several features from its 'blue-blooded' antecedents - as of course you would expect of the most recent in a long line of aristocrats. Basically the normally aspirated V8 engines first saw action in the XK coupé along with its gearbox and suspension though they have been recalibrated for the XF. Some of the floor pan comes from the old S-Type along with a few less spectacular bits and pieces. Why have they done this? Well why not? A good recipe seldom needs changing and they obviously considered development money better put where more impact was required, such as in its outward appearance which is unarguable strikingly different.

This four-door, sporting saloon has a decidedly coupé-like profile and the view from head-on has almost cat-like determination.

The strong grille emphasises the broad, solid stance. The low nose, rising waist, sweeping roofline and powerful shoulders combine to give a visual impression of power. And the detailing is just so subtle, from the woven mesh of the grille to the dramatically sculpted light clusters, side power vents and the large alloy wheels

Its interior is also interesting, it is just so svelte. Everything is to hand and so, well polished, I can't think of a better way to describe it. There are some pretty nifty touches too amongst all the wood and polished aluminium. When you press the pulsating red starter button, the four air vents rotate open and a rotary dial rises from the console.

The dial is a new transmission control called the JaguarDrive Selector that has replaced the gearlever found in Jags' for at least the last two decades. The controls are illuminated by a soft, turquoise light at night. The seats are double-stitched leather of the smoothest quality. Then there is the proximity-sensing control for the overhead lights and glove box release, all governed by 'JaguarSense' technology. Most spectacular of all is the top-of-the-range, Bowers & Wilkins, 440 watt speaker system, and though it is optional, who would want to be without its stupendous reproduction? And there are three options to choose from depending on spec. In addition there is the touch-screen that includes as standard, satellite navigation, Bluetooth, iPod, USB and MP3 connectivity.

Ride is I have to admit, a touch on the firm side but then I don't necessarily think that's a bad thing. I like the feeling of security I get from a car that doesn't try to shake you out of



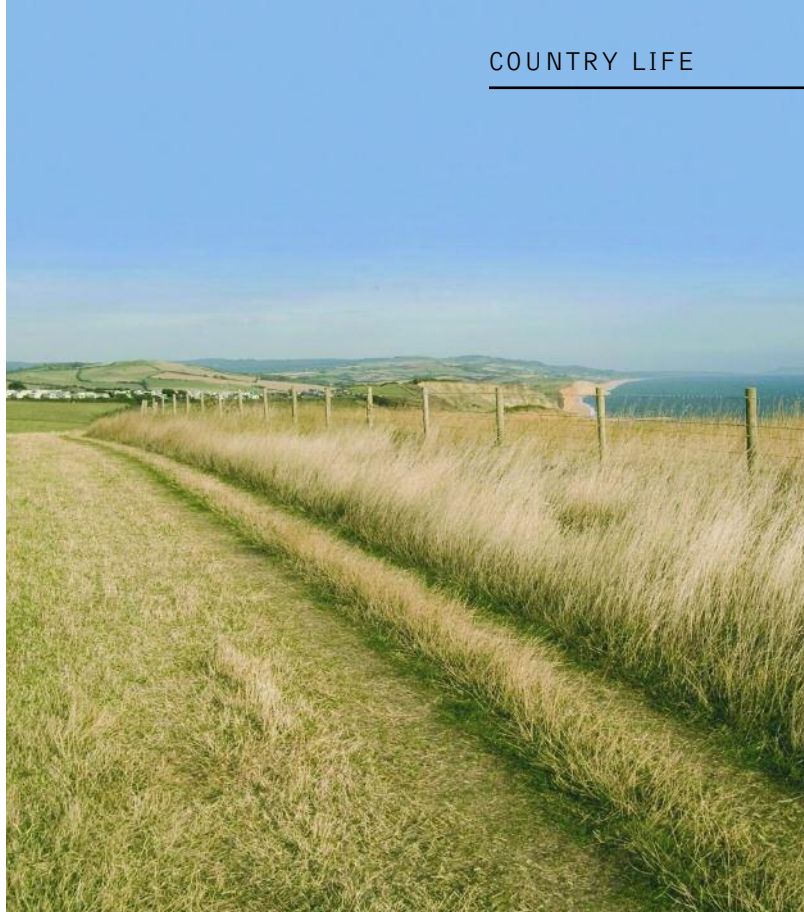


your seat as you wing round corners. In my opinion, the XF offers the best torsional stiffness in its class and delivers both the refinement and dynamic performance you should expect from a vehicle of this calibre. The excellent driving position is complemented by a steering system that is both accurate and perfectly weighted.

It is really quite spacious for what is to my mind, a coupé in disguise, even at the back. There is ample space for five adults, and I don't mean 'little ones'. Each seat offers ample comfort, support, headroom and security. And the boot, an area often cut fine in sporty vehicles, offers up to 540 litres with Jaguar's Tyre Repair System as fitted. I have reservations about it but then that's purely personal. There's nothing wrong with the concept and I think it beats the standard space-saver spare now found in so many vehicles.

Safety features include six airbags, rear parking sensors (front sensors and rear-view camera are optional), and a raft of electronic driver aids. The bonnet will also pop up to soften a blow if a collision with a pedestrian is detected.

The XF is available with a choice of engines; a 2.7-litre twin-turbocharged V6 diesel; a 3.0-litre V6; 4.2-litre V8; and a 4.2-litre supercharged V8. Three models are on offer at a starting price of £33,900 that rises to £54,900 for the supercharged version. My money's on the 2.7-litre V6 diesel. I think it will far outsell the competition. www.hollandbrothers.co.uk



Coastal access - still a long way to go, says CLA

Words: Tim Barnes-Clay

CLA East Midlands say it has serious concerns about Government plans for public access along the whole of the Lincolnshire coast.

CLA Access Expert, Andrew Shirley, said: "Our concerns centre on the failure to recognise the rights of individuals who will be affected by these proposals in the Marine Bill. This is exemplified by the lack of an independent right of appeal over the route of the corridor and the failure to compensate businesses where loss is shown.

"It is disappointing that the Government has failed to take account of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs findings that a lack of independent appeal was a 'fundamental weakness of the Bill' and that compensation should be paid where final loss, as a direct result of this legislation, can be proven," Andrew concluded.

The CLA will be lobbying on these issues throughout 2009 once the Marine Bill is published. MPs and peers now have the opportunity to ensure that the legislation is balanced and properly respects the rights of individuals and businesses on which the rural economy is dependant.

For more information visit: www.cla.org.uk