

Jaguar XK-Series Review

To appraise a vehicle, please select a model below:

Jaguar coupes and convertibles have a long history, starting with the iconic E-Type or XKE. It has been lusted after since its introduction in 1961, appearing on teenage boys' bedroom walls, grown men's garages and in movies like the *Austin Powers* series, where it served as the international man of mystery's Shaguar.

After 22 years of the unloved XJS coupe, Jaguar revived the XK name and spirit in the late 1990s with the stunning XK8 coupe and convertible. Powered by an all-new 290-horsepower V8, it was quick and capable of keeping up with the best of the sub-\$100,000 luxury coupe rivals of the time.

Note that this review only covers the period of time when Jaguar referred to its first-generation XK as the "XK-Series." For full coverage of the latest, 2007-and-newer generation, please see our [Jaguar XK review](#).

Most Recent Jaguar XK-Series

They say cats have nine lives and quite appropriately, it takes a long time for Jaguar coupes and convertibles to die. The XKE survived from 1961-'74 before being replaced by the very different XJS, which languished in mediocrity for 22 years before being mercifully put out of its misery.

The Jaguar XK-Series didn't live quite as long, but 10 years is still a long time for an automobile. The 1997 Jaguar XK8 debuted in coupe and convertible body styles, with the XKR arriving in 2000. The standard 290-hp 4.0-liter engine was Jaguar's first-ever V8 and only the fourth all-new engine in its history. We were impressed with its low-end torque and found that it accelerated from zero to 60 mph in 6.7 seconds. We also thought it was "a hoot to drive" with effortless acceleration, precise steering and a supple suspension.

Inside, the XK8 featured a classic Jaguar look with lots of Connolly leather and walnut trim. Although it began to look antiquated later in life with unintuitive controls and subpar materials, in the retro-crazed late '90s, it was certifiably chic. The car's cramped interior dimensions and small trunk were never in style, however.

In 2003, the Jaguar XK-Series engine was upgraded to 294 hp and 303 pound-feet of torque (from 284 lb-ft), sending the coupe from zero to 60 in 6.1 seconds. That year also saw a new six-speed automatic and more than 900 other mostly minor changes, none of which touched the still-attractive sheet metal. After that, the XK8 prowled about through 2006 without any significant updates.

The high-performance XKR featured a supercharged version of the 4.0-liter V8, making 370 hp and 387 lb-ft of torque. Zero to 60 mph in the coupe was accomplished in 5.1 seconds. The 2003 revisions also applied to the XKR, including a power boost to 390 hp and 399 lb-ft of torque.

Prior to the XK8, Jaguar offered the XJS coupe and convertible. The latter appeared in 1989, replacing the odd "Cabriolet" model, which featured a Jeep Wrangler-esque retractable roof that maintained the window frames. By 1990, a 262-hp 5.3-liter V12 was the standard engine. It was briefly replaced in 1993 by a 4.0-liter inline-6 making only 219 hp, but a new 278-hp 6.0-liter V12 emerged in 1994 to complement the standard six-cylinder. A four-speed automatic replaced the ancient GM TH400 three-speed auto in 1993. In 1992, a new head- and taillight design debuted.

What's New for 1997

An all-new Jaguar debuts this year, replacing the stodgy XJ-S. This new sports car boasts the first V8 engine ever found in a Jag, as well as an all-new five-speed manual transmission that features normal and sport modes. The XK-Series is available in coupe and convertible forms, but Jaguar insiders expect a full 70 percent of sales to be of the convertible.

Review

Old enough to order a drink. The car that the XK-Series is replacing had been in production for a full 21 years before finally being retired in 1996. That's an awfully long time for any sheet metal to grace the flanks of any automobile, but when the automobile is a mega-bucks sports car it is even less acceptable. Fortunately, Jaguar has set things right by introducing the completely new XK-Series. The only thing it shares with its predecessor is the basic floor plan; everything else is fresh off the design table.

Like the engine, for instance. This ultra high-tech aluminum block DOHC V-8 engine is the first V8 engine ever to appear in a Jaguar. It makes an impressive 290 horsepower and 284 lb-ft of torque, enabling the car to launch to 60 mph in less than 7 seconds. Aiding the engine in this impressive task is an enhanced five-speed automatic transmission whose knob and lever rest in the familiar J-gate. Also new is Jaguar's approach to the interior. Gone are the hard-to-find auxiliary controls and poorly placed gauges; the new XK-Series draws from Jaguar's racing heritage to make sure that everything is in its proper place. Not that Jaguar threw the baby out with the bath water. The gents in Coventry know that their customers enjoy being coddled in soft hides; thus the standard Connolly leather remains. Also featured in the interior is the requisite walnut trim that makes a Jaguar a Jaguar.

The latest cat-car is a hoot to drive. Effortless acceleration, precise steering, a supple suspension, and fade-free brakes make the experience memorable. Available as a coupe or convertible, this luxury sports car is guaranteed to put a smile on anyone's face. Perhaps the most important thing about the XK-Series is its indication of Jaguar's new direction. With the addition of the XK-Series, Jaguar proves that it can look toward the future without forgetting the good things about its past. If this E-Type-inspired XK-Series is any indication, we will continue to see some wonderful things from the manufacturer.

What's New for 1998

The 1998 XK8 gets automatic on/off headlamps, an engine immobilizer feature as part of the security system and a cellular phone keypad integrated into the stereo controls. Other changes include the addition of two new exterior colors.

Review

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According to one of our interns, who sampled the XK8 at a ride-and-drive event, the latest cat car is a hoot to drive. Effortless acceleration, precise steering, a supple suspension and fade-free brakes make the experience memorable. Available as a coupe or convertible, this luxury sports car is guaranteed to put a smile on anyone's face.

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What's New for 1999

The stunning XK returns for '99 with no significant changes.

Review

Now into its third year, Jaguar's XK8 still possesses some of the best curves to be found in modern automobilia. Featuring an ultra high-tech aluminum DOHC V8 engine that makes an impressive 290 horsepower and 284 foot-pounds of torque, these sexy two-doors are about more than just looks. With an enhanced five-speed automatic transmission whose knob and lever rests in the familiar J-gate, these cats can blast to 60 mph in less than seven seconds.

The interior is an equally race-inspired combination of well-placed gauges and easy-to-reach controls surrounded by rich Connolly leather and walnut trim. Despite the company's luxury orientation, the XKs are a blast to drive with effortless acceleration, precise steering, a supple suspension and fade-free brakes. Available as a coupe or convertible, this high-line sports car is guaranteed to put a smile on anyone's face.

Perhaps the most important thing about the XK8 is its indication of Jaguar's new direction. With the recent introduction of the XK8, Jaguar proves that it can look toward the future without forgetting the good things about its past. The XK embodies all that was great about the E-Type Jaguars with none of the flaws that haunted the classic sports coupe and convertible. We look forward to the arrival of the XKR sometime before 2000. Its supercharged engine should catapult Jaguar into the world of exotic car performance.

What's New for 2000

No major changes.

Review

This year, fans of Jaguar's XK-Series have two models to choose from: the XK8 and the newly added XKR.

Now in its fourth year, the XK8 comes in two styles: the curvaceous coupe or the sleek convertible. The convertible features a power-operated top that lowers, raises and locks into place with the push of a button. Both cars come with a 4.0-liter V8 engine that produces 290 horsepower and 290 pound-feet of torque. A smooth-shifting and intuitive five-speed automatic is the only transmission available. Acceleration from zero to 60 takes about 6.5 seconds.

Stylistically, the XK8 is one of the best-looking luxury coupes available. Headlights slope off with a feline's squint and lead to lines that hark back to earlier Jaguars.

Wood and Connolly leather -- standard equipment on all Jags -- give the cabin a warm feel. Like most coupes, legroom for the front passengers is excellent, but rear-passenger accommodations are minimal. The main options for 2000 are a new 320-watt Alpine sound system and a new navigation system.

Braking ability is enhanced in 2000 with larger front brake rotors and a new ABS system. Additional safety improvements for 2000 come in the form of electronic seatbelt pre-tensioners. It should be noted that the XK8 is the only car in Jaguar's lineup without side airbags, however.

The XK8 is a fine car in either coupe or convertible form. Its closest competitors are the Lexus SC 400 and the Mercedes-Benz SL500. In price, the Jaguar is more expensive than the Lexus and cheaper than the Mercedes. Ford has done much to improve the reliability of Jaguar the last few years, but the XK8 still won't match the Lexus in terms of things not breaking. However, we still feel the XK8 -- with its combination of luxury, power and style -- is a car that buyers should seriously consider.

Attractive and powerful, the XKR is the performance version of the XK8, much like the XJR is the performance version of the XJ8. And like the XJR, the XKR's calling card is its engine. Supercharged with twin intercoolers, the 4.0-liter V8 develops 370 horsepower and 387 pound-feet of torque; it's mated to a four-speed automatic transmission. The XKR leaps from zero to 60 in approximately 5.4 seconds, and is quicker than just about any other car on the road.

Visually, special trim and 18-inch wheels differentiate the XKR from the XK8. The car's lines flow smoothly to give it an aggressive, yet classic feel. With the XKR Convertible, drivers will be able to lower the top to get the feel of wind in the hair.

The closest competition to the XKR is the Porsche 911. The 911 is certainly the more sporting of the two, and it can also be ordered with a manual transmission. However, the Jaguar does have that extra English flair. For high-speed cruising with class, check out the new XKR.

What's New for 2001

For 2001, there are standard child seat-anchor points for the rear seats and a reverse parking-control system. The premium audio system with a six-disc CD changer and the GPS navigation system are now standard equipment on XK8s. Topping things off are minor exterior styling changes and a new no-cost scheduled maintenance program that covers four regular service visits under the four-year/50,000-mile limited warranty.

Review

Now into its fifth year, the XK8 comes in four distinctive styles: the curvaceous XK8 Coupe and Convertible and the high-performance XKR Coupe and Convertible. Convertibles features a power-operated top that lowers, raises and locks into place with the push of a button, as long as the car is moving at speeds under 10 miles per hour.

Stylistically, the XK8 is one of the best-looking luxury coupes available. Headlights slope off with a feline's squint and lead to lines that hark back to earlier Jaguars. The hood's subtle contours form two long, graceful indentations that, from inside, conform nicely to the driver and passenger positions.

Like most coupes, legroom for the front passengers is excellent, but rear-passenger accommodations are quite minimal. The XK8's luxury materials are impressive, with Connolly leather used on the seats, center console, door panels and steering wheel. The leather is matched up with extensive use of burl walnut wood. Another nice touch is the interior chrome door handles that also have integrated power door locks. Much of the plastic is disappointing, however. It reeks of Ford's influence, and often looks like it was lifted from a Crown Victoria.

The XK8's main option (standard on the XKR) is a GPS navigation system. The navigation system is fussy to operate, but it is DVD-based, which means it can store considerably more point-of-interest information than a CD ROM-based system.

Both the XK8 Coupe and Convertible come with a 4.0-liter V8 engine. This is the same engine that is used in the XJ8 Sedan. It produces 290 horsepower at 6,100 rpm and 290 foot-pounds of torque at 4,250 rpm. A smooth-shifting and intuitive five-speed automatic is the only transmission available. The V8 is docile during cruising, but it is also capable of producing surges of power when asked. Acceleration from zero to 60 takes about 6.5 seconds.

Need more? The XKR's calling card is its DOHC, 32-valve 4.0-liter V8 engine. With a huge Eaton M112 supercharger, twin air-to-liquid intercoolers, and minor structural changes, the XKR's engine cranks out 370 horsepower at 6,150 rpm and 387 foot-pounds of torque at 3,600 rpm. To handle this extra power, Jaguar gives the XKR an upgraded suspension and 18-inch wheels.

On the road, both XK8s and XKRs provide impressive grip during hard cornering. This does not come at the expense of ride quality, as the Jag is comfortable and quiet on high-speed cruises. The speed-sensitive steering is slightly overboosted, but it will nevertheless guide you through turns with precision. Automatic Stability Control (ASC) is standard.

The XK8 and XKRs are fine cars in either coupe or convertible form. This is about as close to a classic GT car as you can get. With the Lexus SC 400 discontinued for 2001, the Jaguar's closest competition comes from Mercedes with its CLK430, CLK55 and SL500. The German cars are likely to be better values, but they can't match the Jaguar's level of class and grace.

What's New for 2002

No major changes.

Review

The XK8 comes in four distinctive styles: the curvaceous XK8 Coupe and Convertible and the high-performance XKR Coupe and Convertible. Our favorite is the XKR, for obvious reasons.

New for 2002; the limited edition XKR 100 replaces the Silverstone models of 2001, and offers a host of super-luxury features (including seats covered in Connolly Autolux leather, the finest grade of hide offered by the manufacturer) and special aluminum trim. Only 300 of these cars will be imported to North America, of a total of 500 produced worldwide.

Stylistically, the XKR is one of the best-looking luxury coupes (or convertibles) available. Headlights slope off with a feline's squint and lead to lines that hark back to earlier Jaguars. The hood's subtle contours form two long, graceful indentations that, from inside, conform nicely to the driver and passenger positions. Convertibles feature a power-operated top that lowers, raises and locks into place with the push of a button, as long as the car is moving at speeds under 10 miles per hour.

Like most sporting Gran Turismos, legroom for the front passengers is excellent, but rear-passenger accommodations are quite minimal. The XKR's luxury materials are impressive, with Connolly leather used on the seats, center console, door panels and steering wheel. The leather is matched up with extensive use of burl walnut wood. Another nice touch is the chrome interior door handles that feature integrated power door locks. Much of the plastic is disappointing, however. It reeks of Ford's influence, and often looks like it was lifted from a Crown Victoria.

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On the road, XKRs provide impressive grip during hard cornering. This does not come at the expense of ride quality, as the Jag is comfortable and quiet on high-speed cruises. The speed-sensitive steering is slightly overboosted, but it will nevertheless guide you through turns with precision. Automatic Stability Control (ASC) is standard.

XKRs are fine cars in either coupe or convertible form. This is about as close to a classic GT car as you can get. Jaguar's closest competition at this level comes from Mercedes with its CLK430, CLK55 and SL500. The German cars are likely to be better values, but they can't match the Jaguar's level of class and grace.

2003 Jaguar XK-Series Coupe

Comments

(4.2L V8 6-speed Automatic)

Sleek, Sexy, Fast and Faster

Published: 09/18/2002 - by Liz Kim, Contributor

A car that turns heads. A car that makes jaws drop and salivary glands work overtime. The Jaguar XK is just such a car. In either coupe or convertible form, few others compare when you're talking about objects that are pleasing to the eye. Add to that a throbbing engine and the latest technology, and you've got a very desirable car that several lottery winners have purchased with their windfall.

Although its looks and straight-line abilities have very few equals, a 2002 XK placed fourth (and last) in our luxury convertible comparison test. We chalked this up to a suspension that couldn't decide whether it wanted to lean toward assuming the identity of a sports car (wearing 20-inch wheels as our test car did) or a grand touring (as it offered up too much body roll in exchange for a smooth ride). Moreover, the interior might have been furnished like a grand palace, but Jaguar had issues to address in terms of ergonomics.

Now going into its seventh year of production (lest you think that's long in the tooth, consider that the previous XJ coupe had a shelf life of 21 years), the XK receives a significant number of enhancements to keep up with its posh competition, a cadre of them which have sprung up since the XK's introduction in 1996, including the Lexus SC 430, Maserati Spyder and the Mercedes SL500 and CL500.

Jaguar boasts that there are more than 900 altered parts in the XK for 2003. Thankfully, none of them are in the sheet metal, which remains as gorgeous as ever and is aging as gracefully as Heather Locklear. Changes to the exterior are limited to different wheels, slightly different badging, available (standard on the R) xenon headlamps and some new colors, including a lovely Jaguar Racing Green.

The biggest modifications lie under the hood and around the wheels. Jaguar's new V8 engine sports an expansion in displacement from 4.0 to 4.2 liters, resulting in a small swelling of horsepower, from 290 to 294. Torque has been augmented to 303 pound-feet from 286. For pure straightline acceleration ability, the Jaguar has no equal. Jaguar has listed a 0-to-60 mph time of 6.1 seconds for the coupe, an improvement of 0.5 seconds over the 2002 version.

Meanwhile, the acceleration times of 5.2 seconds for the supercharged R version — which benefits from a 20-horsepower increase to a total of 390 horses and 17 more pound-feet of twist — remain static. With a huge Eaton supercharger, twin air-to-liquid intercoolers and minor structural changes over the normally aspirated V8, this power plant results in one of the fastest coupes you can get for

under \$100,000. Based on our performance testing of the convertible version in the aforementioned comparison test, these are real-world numbers that can easily be achieved.

Managing the growling unit is a new six-speed ZF automatic transmission with a final drive ratio of 2.06:1. Shifts are delivered quickly and efficiently, much better than on the five-speed unit we tested. However, a complaint can be made of the shifter's detents should you row the gears yourself; engagement is loose and isn't conducive to the kind of precise actions that would befit aggressive driving. Best, then, to leave it in drive, step on the throttle and enjoy the intoxicating aria the V8 provides.

Reigning in the horses are ventilated disc brakes at all four corners, newly supplemented by BrakeAssist, which kicks in ABS if the system deems it necessary even though the driver may not have provided enough force. Halting the XKR coupe are standard Brembo discs and calipers, previously only available with the optional wheels or special editions. Unfortunately, Jaguar hasn't fixed the obstinate hand brake mounted to the left of the driver's seat that has confounded many a Jaguar novice; how about installing the logical push-button e-brake from the S-Type?

Also new for the year is a stability control system, a chief item we deem necessary in a car of this class and character. We didn't get the chance to test it in our brief introductory drive, but we're sure it'll come in handy when there's a sticky situation involving yaw rates, lateral acceleration and steering angles.

Double wishbones for the front and rear are the basis upon which the XK8 rides; this arrangement provides a luxurious, well-damped ride, perfect for highway cruising. Monitoring the XKR's contact with the road is CATS (Computer Active Technology Suspension — convenient acronym, no?) that adjusts the dampers to provide a firm or comfortable ride, according to driving characteristics. Immense grip of the road below is provided by plump Z-rated Continental 245/45ZR18s for the front and 255/45ZR18s for the rear. All XKs come with 18-inch wheels, and 19s (20s for XKR) may be ordered for up to \$6,000.

Another option, for XKR only, is an Adaptive Cruise Control which decreases driver input should you be rolling along on a sparsely populated highway. Once you set a particular speed and distance that you'd like to keep between you and the car in front of you, this unit uses microwave radar to maintain that distance, accelerate up to the set speed and brake in order to keep that space (or time units). Don't feel too safe and nod off, however, as the system can only utilize 25 percent of braking power; if someone swerves in front of you, a tone alerts you, but then it's up to you to brake in order to avoid a collision.

Sprucing up the interior are some new color choices for the buttery leather and glossy planks of wood. Should you care for an in-house map, a navigation system is available, and new for the year, it'll even provide you with an animated "analog" clock. (You know, just in case you thought that a digital timepiece would be too gauche.) For the XKR, you can opt for Recaro sport seats and a Momo steering wheel and gearshift knob.

As befitting a \$70,000 vehicle, the Jaguar houses most of your major luxury conveniences, such as heated seats, reverse park control and a power tilt and telescoping steering wheel with a tilt-away feature. But because this is a \$70,000 vehicle, we can make snarky comments about the six-disc CD changer that's outdatedly mounted in the trunk, the nascent rear seats, the auto-down (but not auto-up) windows and the automatic top that's easy to operate but isn't self-covering like those of its competitors (two of which provide a hardtop). Wind buffeting is more noticeable, especially when considering that riding in the SL500 with the top down and windows raised is like driving a coupe with just the sunroof open. The footwell is cramped and the pedals are needlessly close together, as if huddling for warmth. The center stack controls are overly fussy, with too many similarly sized buttons that require your attention away from the road. Also, the interior needs a little more attention to detail when it comes to final fit and finish. The flash lines on the sun visors were as obvious as on our previous '02 test car (one that caused a gash when this writer inadvertently ran her knuckle across it).

When it comes to pure gee-whiz technology, the seven-year-old Jaguar XK falls slightly behind its competitors. However, we have no doubt that many buyers who become enamored with the stunning

shape of the cat will care very little about the intricacies of details that become all but obliterated when they go out cruising, the wind ruffling their hair and engine note soaring around them. Pricing hasn't gone up since last year, and for the money, you've got your Miss Hawaiian Tropic pageant winner waiting for you to unleash its fearsome power. Life is good — especially if you've just won the lottery.

What's New for 2008

The audio antenna is now hidden inside the rear spoiler on the 2008 Jaguar XK and XKR, replacing the old-school power aerial. There are several cosmetic detail changes to the interior as well. Sadly (and surprisingly), British Racing Green is no longer available as an exterior color choice.

Introduction

A new Jaguar doesn't come along every day, and even when one does, it's usually hard to tell since it looks just like a past Cat. While there are certainly cues here and there to remind of its prestigious genealogy, the 2008 Jaguar XK is clearly a new kitten -- and a sexy one at that. However, there's more to this luxury coupe and convertible than sleek and muscular styling. This is a Jaguar that drives as well as it looks, and although it's not quite a canyon-carving sports car, the XK and the high-performance XKR are sporty enough to please those looking for something more than just a pretty automotive fashion accessory.

The XK was fully redesigned last year. One major change over the previous XK8 is the car's all-aluminum body structure and body panels. Sure enough, the XK is a bit lighter than before and significantly less portly than its main competition. Jaguar also claims that the aluminum structure's extra body stiffness has improved handling, ride quality and crashworthiness. While we passed on testing that last assertion, we can say that ride and handling are certainly better than before and certainly competent enough. Just don't expect the XK to keep up with a Porsche 911 in the mountains.

Nor can the standard XK coupe and convertible match the straight-line pace of competitors like the BMW 6 Series or Mercedes-Benz CLK-Class -- 300 horsepower just isn't enough these days. The XKR's 420-hp supercharged V8 easily closes the performance gap, but when properly optioned, the coupe and convertible are suddenly six-figure cars and in direct competition with the likes of the BMW M6 and Aston Martin V8 Vantage.

In a recent comparison test with the BMW 6 Series, we ranked the XK coupe second due to its higher price and relative lack of performance and practicality. However, if you're one to place high value on style, heritage and prestige, the 2008 Jaguar XK and XKR won't disappoint. Enjoyable to drive and look at, the XK should be a very pleasurable vehicle to own.

Body Styles, Trim Levels, and Options

The 2008 Jaguar XK is a luxury sport coupe and convertible available in standard XK and performance-oriented XKR form. Standard equipment on the XK includes 18-inch wheels, adaptive suspension damping, xenon headlamps, rear parking sensors, leather upholstery, power heated front seats with driver memory, Bluetooth connectivity, a touchscreen navigation system and a six-speaker audio system with in-dash six-CD/MP3 changer. Besides its supercharged V8, the XKR adds 19-inch wheels, a firmer suspension with recalibrated adaptive settings, retuned steering, larger front brakes, adaptive headlamps, an aluminum mesh grille, quad exhaust outlets and more aggressively bolstered front seats.

Major options on all XKs include various wheel designs, adaptive lighting (standard on XKR), adaptive cruise control, upgraded front seats with higher-quality leather, satellite radio and a premium Alpine surround-sound system. The Enhanced Luxury Package includes 16-way power seats, leather-trimmed instrument and door inserts, a heated leather steering wheel and power-folding mirrors. The XKR's Portfolio Package adds unique 20-inch wheels, an Alpine sound system, performance brakes and specialized aluminum or walnut interior trim.

Powertrains and Performance

The standard Jaguar XK is powered by a 4.2-liter V8 that generates 300 hp and 310 pound-feet of torque. Power is sent to the rear wheels through a six-speed automatic transmission with manual shift control. In testing, we hustled the coupe up from zero to 60 mph in 5.6 seconds, while the convertible did the sprint in 6.3 seconds. The XKR features a supercharged version of the same engine puffed up to produce 420 hp and 412 lb-ft of torque. Our test of an XKR Convertible revealed a 0-60 time of 4.9 seconds, with the coupe being a few ticks quicker.

Safety

The Jaguar XK comes with front-seat side airbags (that provide both head and chest protection), whiplash-reducing front seats, traction control, antilock brakes and stability control. The standard XK's stability control system has two stages, one of which gives the driver more responsibility for the car's handling before the system activates. The setup is similar on the XKR, though its system gives the driver even more leeway and allows him to disable it completely if desired. All XK convertibles have two aluminum hoops that auto-deploy in the case of a rollover accident.

Interior Design and Special Features

The 2008 Jaguar XK's interior is a pretty dramatic departure from the traditional Jaguar look, with a modern dashboard design and the availability of aluminum trim in place of wood. This serves to bring Jaguar into the 21st century, though some might argue that a Jag without wood is like Tom Selleck without the mustache. Unfortunately, the Jaguar penchant for downmarket plastics continues, which contributes to an overall ambience that doesn't quite match its price tag. Also, the multipurpose touchscreen that controls audio, navigation and climate systems could use a little work. It's simple and intuitive in concept, but we've found it frustrating in practice, with a screen interface that's neither sensitive nor accurate enough.

On the other hand, the XK is much more accommodating than the old XK8, though the two-position rear seat is still suitable only for small children or emergency use (and even then, it had better be a pretty big catastrophe). The convertible's soft top does an excellent job of noise insulation when up, and it disappears underneath a hard tonneau cover in only 18 seconds with the push of a button. The XK coupe's trunk can hold about 11 cubic feet of cargo. With the top down, the XK convertible can still hold 8 cubic feet.

Driving Impressions

Accelerating hard through the gears, the standard 2008 Jaguar XK's V8 makes up for its relatively modest punch with an enjoyable intake and exhaust soundtrack. As you'd expect, the supercharged XKR feels much quicker, as the merest tickle of the throttle results in a determined surge of acceleration. In both cars, the six-speed transmission is impressive, delivering quick, firm shifts that keep the engines in the thick of their power bands.

Sent through corners, both the standard XK and the XKR display the advantages of aluminum construction, as both versions of the car feel more agile and precise than their predecessors. They're certainly not sports cars, though, and competitors like the BMW 6 Series and Porsche 911 are more fun. But those looking for a more comfortable suspension will be quite pleased with this Jaguar, as even the XKR delivers more of a luxury ride than a sporty one.

What's New for 2013

For 2013, the Jaguar XK gets standard 20-inch wheels in place of the old 19s. There is also a new Portfolio Pack, which upgrades cabin materials and provides access to unique color combinations.

Introduction

Driving the 2013 Jaguar XK is an event. You're enveloped in a snug cabin with long, narrow windows that evokes the feel of an exotic grand touring machine. The engine ignition button pulses red as if there's a heart beating within. Press it and the silky-smooth V8 engine comes to life and the rotary gear selector rises into your hand. There's not quite the level of theater as you'll find in a [Jaguar](#) sedan, but with its soft leather upholstery, copious electronic toys, sharp handling and selection of magnificent engines, there is never a shortage of entertainment on hand in the XK.

Truth be told, the Jaguar XK has always been somewhat of a forgotten pet in a kennel of sport coupes and convertibles that includes the [BMW 6 Series](#), [Mercedes-Benz SL-Class](#) and [Porsche 911](#). Perhaps it's the reliability issues of the past that have led the car to be overlooked, though none of the above is exactly a Honda Civic in that regard, despite dramatically improved ratings for all of them just recently. Perhaps the Jag isn't the drop-dead gorgeous looker its predecessor was, though none of the above is exactly an automotive Heidi Klum. Perhaps the XK simply got off on the wrong foot, as the appearance of its cabin and the performance of its engines weren't nearly as impressive when this car first appeared in 2007.

No matter the reason, the Jaguar XK deserves a shot now. Its finely tuned suspension delivers impressive handling, yet still manages a compliant, poised ride. The steering is similarly praiseworthy. The car's lightweight aluminum architecture not only makes the XK feel like a featherweight compared to the rather hefty 6 Series and SL-Class, but also makes life easier for the engines as well.

Not that they really needed the help. The base, naturally aspirated 5.0-liter V8 provides a potent 385 horsepower, while the XKR bumps things up to 510 hp. The XKR-S puts out an absolutely wild 550 hp that'll overwhelm the rear tires (and an inattentive, overly enthusiastic driver) with exuberance. All are splendidly smooth, and produce a glorious bass purr as you surge forward. (And we don't say purr just to use a pun when writing about a car named after a cat. It's just the best word to describe the sound.)

Another attractive point for the XK is its price. While the XK starts out at about the same amount of money as the 911 and a V8-powered 6 Series, both of those cars require multiple extra-cost options to match the Jag's list of standard equipment. Meanwhile, the SL-Class costs significantly more to start, although its performance, price and equipment actually line up with the XKR. Finally, when you consider that the XKR-S can better the various Aston Martins in terms of performance, the "value equation" becomes even more compelling.

Yet the 2013 Jaguar XK obviously isn't just about value. It's about the event it provides every time you slip into that driver seat and the ignition button begins pulsating. We think it's an event that's at least worth a test-drive.

Body Styles, Trim Levels, and Options

The 2013 Jaguar XK is available in three models that represent increasing degrees of performance: XK, XKR and XKR-S. Each is available as a coupe and convertible.

The base XK comes loaded with 20-inch wheels, an adjustable suspension, keyless ignition/entry, automatic bi-xenon headlamps, LED running lamps, rear foglamps, power-folding and auto-dimming mirrors, front and rear parking sensors, a rearview camera and automatic wipers.

Standard interior features include leather upholstery, heated and ventilated 10-way power front seats (with adjustable bolsters and lumbar), a heated power-adjustable tilt-and-telescoping steering wheel, driver and front passenger memory functions, and dual-zone automatic climate control. Electronic features include a touchscreen interface, a navigation system, Bluetooth phone connectivity and a 14-speaker Bowers & Wilkins sound system with a six-CD changer, satellite radio, an auxiliary audio jack and an iPod/USB audio interface. The convertible adds a power-operated roof and tonneau cover. The available Advanced Technology package includes adaptive headlights and adaptive cruise control with forward collision warning. HD radio is also optional.

The XKR adds a supercharged engine, different 20-inch wheels, upgraded brakes, upgraded exhaust, adaptive headlights and HD radio. The Dynamic Pack adds different 20-inch wheels, a higher top speed, a lowered ride height, an upgraded and more aggressively tuned suspension and a sport body kit. The Black Pack adds black trim to areas that would normally be bright or chrome. Stand-alone options include an upgraded exhaust and the adaptive cruise control with forward collision warning.

Optional on both the XK and XKR is the Portfolio Pack, which increases the amount of leather and grants you access to two unique interior color combinations and six exclusive paint choices.

The XKR-S adds an even more powerful supercharged engine, wider 20-inch wheels in a matte gray finish, an upgraded exhaust, a more aggressively tuned suspension, a carbon-fiber front splitter and rear aero diffuser, a partially carbon-fiber rear wing, an extensive aerodynamic body kit, heated sport seats (ventilation function removed) and unique interior trim. The Bright Pack adds some chrome exterior trim and bright polished wheels in place of the standard darker components on the XKR-S.

Powertrains and Performance

The 2013 Jaguar XK is powered by a 5.0-liter V8 that produces 385 hp and 380 pound-feet of torque. As with every XK, rear-wheel drive and a six-speed automatic are standard. EPA-estimated fuel economy is 16 mpg city/24 mpg highway and 19 mpg combined. The convertible achieves 16/22/18.

More power is available from the XKR, which gets a supercharged version of the same engine to bring output up to 510 hp and 461 lb-ft of torque. In Edmunds performance testing, an XKR convertible went from zero to 60 mph in a very rapid 4.5 seconds (the lighter coupe would be even quicker). EPA-estimated fuel economy is 15/22/17 regardless of body style.

The 2013 Jaguar XKR-S gets a more powerful version of the supercharged 5.0-liter good for 550 hp and 502 lb-ft of torque. In Edmunds testing, the coupe went from zero to 60 mph in 4.3 seconds. This may seem to show a rather insignificant difference between the XKR-S and XKR, but the capabilities of the former's prodigious power are limited at the drag strip by traction. Believe us, it feels much quicker. Fuel economy is identical to that of the XKR.

Safety

Standard safety equipment on the 2013 XK lineup includes traction and stability control, antilock brakes and front side airbags. Side curtain airbags are not offered. The convertible adds pop-up rollover bars. In Edmunds brake testing, the XKR with 19-inch wheels and tires came to a stop from 60 mph in an excellent 111 feet. The XKR-S was about the same.

Interior Design and Special Features

The 2013 Jaguar XK's cockpit is well-tailored and inviting, with special touches here and there like the rotary gear selector that rises out of the center console upon start-up. There are some ergonomic glitches, however. The multipurpose touchscreen that operates audio, climate, navigation and phone systems has been improved in terms of response and functionality, but still isn't as user-friendly as some competing systems. Another downside involves the backseats, which are cramped even for small children. The cabin can also be a little claustrophobic given its rakish greenhouse and slim windows, being more akin to an Aston Martin than a BMW 6 Series.

The XK's power soft top takes a scant 18 seconds to lower and is well insulated for a quiet ride when deployed. The XK coupe's trunk can hold about 11 cubic feet of cargo -- much larger than the trunks in the 911 or Mercedes SL-Class and just slightly smaller than the 6 Series or Mercedes E-Class cargo holds. With the top down, the XK convertible can still hold a respectable 8 cubic feet.

Driving Impressions

It's no surprise the 2013 Jaguar XK is an impressive straight-line cruiser. The XK might not be as responsive as a Porsche 911, but it's more nimble than the latest BMW 6 Series.

The current lineup of V8 engines has created an entire new definition of Jaguar performance. Even the base XK is impressively potent, with near-instant response and a wide, muscular power band. The supercharged XKR, meanwhile, is a monster, and it can post acceleration numbers equaling some of the world's best sports cars.

If the XKR is a monster, then we're not sure what that makes the XKR-S -- some sort of Union Jack-waving Mothra, perhaps. Even the slightest throttle exuberance will set the tires spinning futilely as the traction control struggles to rein it all in. This is not a car to be taken lightly, yet its increased abilities yield a truly impressive machine. The XKR-S's overall demeanor is indeed firmer than the regular XKR's, but it's surprisingly comfortable compared to an Audi R8 or Porsche 911, and you would undertake a road trip without hesitating.