

SEPTEMBER 10, 1975. A BLACK DAY FOR MODENA, STUTTGART AND TURIN.



What's good news for the British motor industry has to be bad news for our foreign competitors.

And the best news of this or any other year has to be the Jaguar XJS.

No other car made currently offers a comparable combination of performance and luxury at anywhere near the price.

Which explains why export orders for the XJS are already expected to be in excess of £20 million. In the first year.

Needless to say, performance of the XJS is startling. Zero to sixty takes under seven seconds. Top speed, where permissible, is in the region of 150 mph.

Yet this level of performance is achieved in levels of silence and safety that will astonish and delight you. As will the mpg figures.

Technically, the XJS has many features which are unique to Jaguar. And the list of luxury and safety features fitted as standard equipment is long and impressive.

Which is as it should be, considering that the XJS has been designed to be the definitive Jaguar.

Which makes it, in many ways, the definitive high-performance luxury car.

September 10, 1975. A great day for British motoring. And for Britain.

The Jaguar XJS

The car everyone dreams of.
But very, very few can ever own.

XJ-S Celebrating 50 Years (1975-2025)

Overview

The Jaguar XJ-S (later called XJS), is a luxury grand tourer built from 1975 to 1996, in coupé, fixed-profile and full convertible body-styles. There were three distinct variations, with a final production total of 115,413 units over 20 years and seven months.

Design

There was a considerable delay in finalising the XJ-S design. Although everyone on the design team was happy with the front and middle of the car, the problem was the back.

Sir William Lyons was notorious for micro-managing the design details of his beloved Jaguars and no matter how many different approaches and designs were suggested by the drawing office, the 'Old Man' didn't like any of them.

Sir William wanted to know 'what was selling' and 'whose cars had captured the public imagination'. The Ferrari Dino was considered top of the pops at the time and Sir William requested that he wanted a good look at one. One was "borrowed" from a Ferrari dealer for several hours whilst Sir William looked over the car with a sketch pad.

If you have ever wondered where those distinctive 'flying buttress' features at the back of the XJS came from, have a look at a Dino.

XJ-S (1975-1981)

Designed to move the air as efficiently as possible, gone were the elegant curves and delicate 60's detailing of earlier Jaguar models. Chrome bumpers were replaced by plain black plastic, and



Milton King & Anona Fitzgerald, Red 1978 XJ-S V12 5.3 litre auto.

internally there wasn't a sliver of wood to be seen.

Inside there was welcoming leather, and the facia was very modern in its elegant use of black plastic with aluminium infills and vertical instruments for the minor dials.

Power came from the Jaguar V12 engine with a choice of a manual or an automatic transmission. A manual XJ-S was able to accelerate to 100 km/h in just over 7 seconds with a top speed of 240 km/h.

The first automatic XJ-S cars had a BorgWarner Model 12 transmission. In 1977, General Motors Turbo-Hydramatic 400 transmissions were fitted.

With the XJ-S, Jaguar didn't try to recreate or replace the E-Type, but move the game in a completely new direction.

The original XJ-S in all its 15 mpg V12 glory is a very different beast from the later XJS cars. It began life with thoroughly modern styling and became progressively more traditional as the years passed.

XJ-S HE (1981-1991)

The effortless V12 suited the character of the original XJ-S perfectly, capable of hitting 150mph with little fuss. Unfortunately, the XJ-S was launched in the wake of a fuel crisis, and as time went on, the fuel economy of the V12 became more of an issue.

From July 1981, the XJ-S was renamed the XJ-S HE and received the new High-Efficiency V12 engine designed by Swiss Engineer Michael May. Fuel efficiency improved by 58% from approx 15 to 22 mpg.

At the same time, the XJ-S HE received changes to its exterior and interior. These changes included body-coloured boot trim in place of the standard previous black; new five-spoke (starfish) alloy wheels; chrome inserts on the upper part of the bumpers; burlled timber elm inserts on dashboard and door cappings.

Other changes included higher gearing (2.88 diff' ratio against 3.07) and a move from 6.0in to 6.5in x 15in wheels.

The suspension was revised and the steering was sharpened up.

Reviews at the time noted that the interior was now a more traditional Jaguar place to be, with the traditional round dials and wood veneer.



Mark Bartold, 1988 Silver Birch 5.3 litre V12 XJ-S HE convertible

XJ-S Celebrating 50 Years (1975-2025)



Ivan and Janine Cooke, 1984 Blue 5.3 litre V12 XJ-S HE.jpg

XJ- SC Cabriolet (1983-1988)

In 1983, a Cabriolet model known as the XJ-SC was released. The coupe's small rear seats were removed in order to make space for the removable soft top, making it a 2-seat car.

The XJ-SC model wasn't a full convertible, but rather a targa topped Cabriolet model with a roll bar and a fold down hood for the rear.

Initially the Cabriolet conversions were undertaken by Tickford. The almost complete XJ-S Coupe (without its roof fitted) was taken from Jaguar's Castle Bromwich site, to Tickford's premises. Here the buttresses were cut off and further modification work undertaken including under body strengthening, installing the roll bar over the driver and passenger area and modifying/replacing the rear wing panels. Once this work was complete, the near Cabriolet was then returned for final finishing work.

The multi-site method of construction was not efficient and after about 100 XJ-SC Cabriolets were built, the end-to-end Cabriolet production was brought in-house at Jaguar.

The two Targa Panels over the driver and passenger area can be removed either one at a time, or both together.

The XJ-SC also had an optional hardtop section for the rear of the car. This came

complete with heated glass rear window, unlike the canvas hood, which was plastic.

Six-cylinder AJ6

Also in 1983, the new 3.6 litre Jaguar AJ6 straight-six engine was introduced. The six-cylinder cars can be identified by a raised bonnet centre section.

Between 1983 and 1987, the six-cylinder engined cars were only available with a five-speed manual gearbox (Getrag 265), with a four-speed automatic (ZF 4HP22) offered from 1987 onwards along with improved fuel injection.



Bryan and Anne Blair O'Shaughnessy 1989 V12 XJ-S Coupe.

5.3 V12 Convertible (1988-1991)

Some serious re-engineering was required to convert the Coupe into a Convertible. A special rear bulkhead was needed and steel tubing was built into both sills areas, running the full length of the wheelbase, supported by new cross bracing.

To allow for the canvas hood to fully retract, two separate fuel tanks would have been required. This in turn would have caused other problems, and so the existing fuel tank position was retained, resulting in the hood sitting high on the rear deck when folded. There also wasn't room for a hinged panel to cover the folded hood, and the fabric tonneau cover had to be manually fitted.

Despite this, the final result was well received and was an instant success.

In total, 30,946 convertibles of all varieties were built, making it a major force in the XJ-S resurgence during the final 8 years of production.

XJS Facelift (1991-1996)

Although Jaguar had tried to keep the XJ-S fresh with new alloy wheels and trim updates the model was beginning to look dated.

The XJS was relaunched in its final form in May 1991 under Ford Motor Company's new ownership, dropping the model name's hyphen, marketing it as the XJS. This facelift cost Jaguar £50m,

XJ-S Celebrating 50 Years (1975-2025)

To look at a Facelift XJS, the changes don't appear that dramatic, but in fact around 180 of the cars' 490 panels were changed. The most obvious exterior changes are the pillar-less doors, the restyled rear lights that featured more modern rectangular lights and a broad chrome strip across the boot edge.

The rear windows were extended and the front quarter lights removed. At the front, the grille reverted back to black and a new chrome strip was inserted along the front of the bonnet. The shape of the fuel filler cap was also changed.

Inside, the famous barrel dials were replaced with traditional, circular versions and there were redesigned front and rear seats.

The 3.6 litre also made way for the new 4.0-litre version of the AJ6 straight-six that had already made its debut with the XJ40 in 1989. The cars were also fitted with the ABS brake system.

Initially the Facelift appeared only in Coupe form, the convertible not arriving until April 1992.

The V12 engine's capacity was enlarged to 6.0 litres in September 1993 with a power output of 227 kW (304 hp).

Once Jaguar started updating the XJS there was no stopping it and in 1993 the car received further changes. These included new colour-keyed bumpers, while the convertible became a four-seater. At the same time, the car received more aerodynamic front/rear bumpers.

Outboard rear brakes replaced the more complicated inboard brakes of previous models. With the introduction of the 6.0-litre V12, the transmission was also updated to a GM 4L80E with a fourth-gear overdrive, whilst the automatic 4.0-litre models continued with the electronic ZF4HP24E transmission.

In April 1994, the AJ6 engine gave way to the AJ16. Still with 4.0 litres, it featured substantial revisions and now equipped with coil-on-plug ignition.

In 1995, the final specification changes were made and the car was referred to as the Celebration model to celebrate the 60th year of Jaguar Cars. Celebration cars feature diamond turned wheels, and more luxurious interior. These final cars were finely developed, and now regarded as the best of the lot.



Roly Donders, 1983 Cobolt Blue 5.3 litre V12 XJ-S HE

Aftermarket/Inhouse Modifications

A number of XJ-S's were modified by coach-builders including Lynx and Lister. Jaguar also manufactured a modified XJ-S (XJR-S) in conjunction with Tom Walkinshaw Racing.

Motor Racing

XJ-S had a successful racing career in the 70's/ 80's and continues to be campaigned at club level. *See separate story.*

XJS Reaches Classic Status

The XJ-S was not only a nimble road racer, it was a brilliant grand tourer.

Like the Mini, the XJS managed to reach classic status while it was still in production, with a new generation of journalists drooling over its combination of refinement and handling.

The XJS was a member of a very exclusive club, a BL car whose reputation survived the bad times. Initially underdeveloped, unfashionable, out of favour with the press, it shrugged off two recessions and being badly-built on outdated facilities to flourish and become *one of the most successful cars to ever wear the Jaguar badge.*

XJ-S Timeline

- 1975: (Jan) XJ-S V12 Coupe goes on sale
- 1981: (Feb) First HE engined car
- 1982: (June) First 3.6 Cabriolet (no V12)

1983: (Oct) First 3.6 litre Coupe

1986: 5.3 litre V12 Cabriolet introduced

1988: V12 Convertible replaces Cabriolet

1988: (June) XJR-S Celebration model

1991: (March) Facelift introduced

1992: (April) 4.0 litre Convertible

1993: (May) XJR-S discontinued

1993: (Sept) 6.0 litre V12 introduced

1994: (May) AJ16 engine introduced

1995: (May) 4.0 litre Celebration

1996: (April) Last 4.0 litre Convertible

1996: (April) Last 6.0 litre V12 Coupe

Production

115,413 cars were produced between 1975 and 1996.

The XJ-S remained in production for more than 20 years – the longest run of any Jaguar – and went on to become a financial success for the company, with the last car coming off the line in April 1996. The XJS was superseded by the XK8. ■

Editor: Information for this story sourced from various sources.

XJ-S and Motor Racing

Motorsport

After covering a story about the evolution of the XJ-S it wasn't really possible to exclude the successful racing career achieved by the XJ-S in the 70's and 80's.

Today the XJS continues to be extensively campaigned in club level motorsport, both in the United Kingdom and overseas.

USA - Group 44

For 1977, the "Group 44" racing team had a very successful season in Trans Am with a race car based on the actual production XJ-S chassis and running gear.

The team won the series' 1977 drivers' championship cup for Bob Tullius but missed winning the manufacturer's title by two points (only 1 Jaguar competed in the Trans-Am series compared to many more Porsche entrants).

In 1978, a purpose-built tube-frame "silhouette" style XJ-S race car was constructed which greatly reduced the weight compared to the full production chassis car campaigned in 1977.

Group 44 succeeded in again capturing the driver's championship for Bob Tullius and also captured the manufacturer's title as well, by entering the 1977 car at some venues to gain additional manufacturer's points for Jaguar.

USA - Cannonball Race

In April 1979 a XJ-S driven by Dave Heinz and Dave Yarborough was entered into the very illegal "Cannonball Run".

They won the 4,608 kilometres (2,863 mi) event from New York to Los Angeles in a record time of 32 hours and 51 minutes, a record that stood for 4 years. They averaged almost 90 mph, when the maximum speed limit in most USA States was 55 mph. The win was a huge publicity success for Jaguar.

Tom Walkinshaw Racing (TWR)

Jaguar saw the benefit in racing in the European Touring Car Championship (ETCC) but had no money. They agreed to supply cars and components and pay TWR £200,000 for every victory.

In 1982, TWR entered one XJ-S into the ETCC. Tom won 4 of the 11 races that season to finish a credible 3rd overall and validating TWR's decision to take the XJ-S racing.

With Jaguar becoming an official sponsor in 1983, the team became a two-car entry, taking 5 victories and finishing second in both the driver's and manufacturer's championship.

With more money coming from Brown's Lane, new lighter cars were built with more powerful engines, 5-speed gearboxes and 17-inch wheels allowed massive 14 inch diameter brakes.

In 1984 TWR Jaguars won 7 races (including the prestigious Spa 24 Hour race), to win the driver's and manufacturer's championship.

These on-track successes had a huge effect on the image of the XJ-S and increased sales throughout TWR ETCC campaign.

Bathurst

In 1985 the three TWR XJS Jaguars were brought out of retirement for the James-Hardie 1000. The cars were clearly the class of the field, qualifying in 1st, 2nd and 6th.

Walkinshaw and Percy dominated most of the race, only losing the lead to the Goss/Hahne car during pit stops. Goss and Hahne (car #10) had to battle a broken seat, held loosely in place by straps and cable ties for well over 100 laps. They sat in second most of the way until a split oil line late in the race cost the Walkinshaw/Percy car 3 laps and any chance of victory.

Goss/Hahne won the "Great Race" while Walkinshaw finished to make a Jaguar 1-3 victory with Walkinshaw following Goss across the finish line in a formation finish. The cars were entered in the 1986 Bathurst 1000, but ultimately did not race due to a lack of funding from Jaguar Rover Australia. ■



Despite being heavier and having less engine displacement than most of its competitors, Bob Tullius and the Jaguar saw the checkered flag 7 times in a row tying Mark Donohue for the most consecutive Trans-Am wins. The program was aimed to boost the corporate image of British Leyland, not the Jaguar marque as such, but Jaguars 1978 Manufacturers win over Chevrolet was sweet.

V. Fast.



THE XJR-6, 6.0 LITRE V.12 MAXIMUM SPEED, 230 MPH. AVAILABLE ONLY TO JOHN WATSON, EDDIE CHEEVER, RAUL BOESEL, MARTIN BRUNDEL, AND JAN LAMMERS.

V. Cool.



THE XJ-SC CABRIOLET.
3.6 LITRE 24 VALVE 5 SPEED MANUAL, OR 5.3 LITRE V.12 AUTOMATIC.

V.12.



THE DEFINITIVE GRAND TOURER.
THE XJ-S 5.3 LITRE V.12 AUTOMATIC, OR 3.6 LITRE MANUAL.

The XJ-S range of sports and grand touring cars. Four choices. No alternative.

