

Jaguar XJS 1975-1990

The Jaguar XJ-S (later the XJS) is a luxury grand tourer produced by the British automaker Jaguar Cars. The XJ-S replaced the legendary Jaguar E-Type (or XK-E) in September 1975, and was based on the XJ saloon. It had been developed as the XK-F, though it was very different in character from its predecessor. Although it never had quite the same sporting image, the XJ-S was a competent grand tourer and, in fact, more aerodynamic than the E-type. The last XJS was produced on April 4, 1996, with the XK8 taking its place.

1976

The first XJ-S appeared in 1975 as a 1976 model. Power came from the V12 version with a choice of a manual or automatic transmission (but the manual was soon dropped). The XJ-S was one of only three V-12 automobiles at the time, the other two coming from Italian makers Lamborghini and Ferrari. The XJ-S could hold its own with both Italian cars, being able to accelerate to 60 mph (100 km/h) in 6.5 seconds and reach 157 mph (240 km/h).

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 2 points (only one Jaguar was competing in the Trans-AM series compared to many more Porsche entrants). In 1978, a purpose-built tube-frame "silhouette" style XJS race car was constructed which greatly reduced the weight compared to the full production chassis car campaigned in 1977.

This silhouette car had only the production cars roof panel as the sole piece of factory XJS sheetmetal on the car. Group 44 succeeded in again capturing the driver's championship for Bob Tullias and also captured the manufacturers' title as well by entering Brian Fuerstenau driving the 1977 car at some venues to gain additional manufacturers point for Jaguar. The silhouette car survived and has surfaced recently in the SVRA historic sports race series. The 1977 factory chassis race car is believed to still be in the hands of Group44's Bob Tullius.

Jaguar's timing was not good: the car was launched in the wake of the first fuel crisis and the market for a 5.3-litre V12 grand tourer was very small. The styling was also the subject of much criticism, including the "flying buttresses" behind the windows.

Jaguar did seize promotional opportunities with the television series *The New Avengers* and *Return of the Saint*. *The New Avengers* featured Mike Gambit (Gareth Hunt) who drove an XJ-S. Reliability issues meant that three XJ-S cars were used. *Return of the Saint* saw Simon Templar (played by Ian Ogilvy) driving an early XJ-S with the number plate "ST 1". Miniature versions were made by Corgi and proved popular. A decade and a half before, Jaguar had turned down the producers of the earlier *Saint* series when approached about the E-type.

Responding to criticisms that the XJ-S was not a worthy E-type successor, Pininfarina revealed a sporty show car in 1979 based on XJ-S mechanicals. The car never went into production.

The 1980s

The 1981 XJ-S received the new High-Efficiency engine for much better economy. The XJ-S was also now the fastest automatic-transmission car in the world at 168 mph with 255kw and 0 to 60 in 5.7 seconds. In 1982, the new V12 XJ-S won first and second at the Tourist Trophy race at Silverstone.

In 1983 a new cabriolet version debuted with a new 3.6-litre Jaguar AJ6 engine, the XJ-SC. In the XJ-SC, the rear jump seats were eliminated making it only a 2-seat car. The XJ-SC was not a full convertible but had a non-removable center targa-type structure and fixed cant rails above the doors. The rear quarter windows remained as well. With the introduction of the AJ6 engine in the XJS chassis came the availability of a 5-speed manual transmission for the 6 cylinder cars. This model with a Getrag manual transmission was not imported by Jaguar into the United states until 1994 (and then only in extremely limited numbers).

A limited number of earlier 5-speed AJ6 cars did enter the US as grey market personal imports however. A V12 XJ-SC did not emerge until 1985. The two-seat XJ-SC targa-type model was replaced with a two-seat full convertible in 1988. Prior to that there was a special full convertible version called a Hess & Eisenhardt XJS offered through dealers starting in 1986. The Hess & Eisenhardt coachbuilding firm was located in Ohio and built approximately 2100 of these cars under contract from Jaguar before the official Jaguar built XJS convertible appeared in 1988 to be offered as a 1989 model. The Hess & Eisenhardt convertible differed from the later Jaguar convertible XJS as its unpadded top folded down deeper into the body structure of the car resulting in a cleaner rear profile when the roof was lowered. The later Jaguar

full convertible had a heavier padded top that did not fold into as small of a bundle when in the lowered position.

In 1984 Tom Walkinshaw's TWR team captured the Group A title in the European Touring Car Championship with their version of a racing Jaguar XJS. In 1985, XJS drivers John Goss and Armin Hahne won the James Hardie Bathurst 1000 motor race in Australia.

In 1988 and 1989, a special XJR-S version of the V12 5.3 litre car was produced by TWR to celebrate Jaguar's win at Le Mans. A numbered limited edition of 100 of these cars were made for European sale only. This car had a distinctive TWR-fitted body kit, special alloy wheels and suspension and handling improvements. Between 1988 and 1989 a total of 350 XJR-s cars were produced with the 5.3-litre engine. After September 1989 the change was made to a special 6.0-litre engine with a Zytac engine management system. This was different from the standard 6.0-litre engine used in the late XJS models

Jaguar did consider a luxury Daimler version, without the flying buttresses, but this vehicle was not put into production.

Throughout the life of the XJS, British company Lynx sold a high-quality four-seat full convertible conversion. Lynx also produced 67 hand-built two-door estate/shooting brake/station wagon versions of the XJS marketed under the "Lynx Eventer". The Eventer was a very elegant model, which succeeded in the overall design because it removed the flying buttresses, incorporating them into the estate design. Jaguar were urged to market their own version but never did. Most Eventers are believed to still exist although build quality, especially on the early versions, was at best variable. Lynx have in the past supplied a new roof section (at a price!) due to poor build on early versions. If buying second-hand, use a magnet to check for plastic filler.