
Jaguar I-Pace

Francis Galashan



Launched in March 2018, the I-Pace is Jaguar's first luxury sports SUV EV. Collecting over 60 international awards, including World Car of the Year 2019, World Car Design of the Year and World Green Car of the Year.

Francis Galashan gives us a first hand review of Jaguar's contribution to the EV world.

I have owned my I-Pace since June 2019 and it was my first EV. I was looking for a full-size EV to replace a diesel car and had test driven a Tesla Model S some 18 months before. While I was impressed with the Tesla's acceleration and tech, I was less sure with the cabin for a car of its price and I found the styling rather bland for my tastes. Also putting me off buying was that I was living in central London at the time and had no off-street parking. The joy of finding a parking space right outside my house then trailing cables across the pavement to charge was not one that I wished to savour on a regular basis.

Then the I-Pace was announced and that got my attention. Director of design, Ian Callum, whose DB7 design had helped save Aston Martin, has penned all the modern Jaguar cars for the last twenty years or so. The sleek, bold design for the I-Pace looked radical without being cartoonish. Initial specs suggested it could match the Model S in many areas and, depending on trim levels, be somewhat less expensive.

I finally collected my I-Pace HSE in June 2019 from a London dealership and drove up to Edinburgh to where I had moved back to live. Like all EV-newbies (other than Tesla owners who enjoy their Supercharger network that is!), the journey proved to be a steep learning-curve concerning the complexities of the public charging network. But it was all relatively drama free and I have been living with the I-Pace now for almost a year. So, what is it like?

Pros

Beauty is, of course, in the eye of the beholder. However, a year in and I still get a thrill when I look at the car. It has proportions that one doesn't meet every day, particularly with crossover SUVs.

Complementing the taut, cab-forward exterior is a delightful cabin filled with high quality materials in what many people comment as being the best Jaguar interior to date. The panoramic roof makes the car feel light and airy and the almost 3 metre wheelbase gives excellent rear passenger leg room. Whilst

there is plenty of tech through its two infotainment screens and configurable driver display, it is not on the same level as Tesla's screen which controls virtually all the functions of the vehicle. However, I personally prefer the mix between touch screens and old-fashioned control knobs found in the Jaguar which allows adjustment without one's eyes leaving the road.

For those of us old enough to remember self-installing our first cassette player in a car, a 15-speaker, 825W Meridian surround sound system is a thing of wonder! Apple Car Play and Android Auto work seamlessly. So all-in-all, a very special place to be sat.

Despite the delights of the styling and interior, it is the driving experience that has me ranking this electric cat as probably the best car I have owned. There are a bewildering array of wheel and suspension options on the Jaguar configurator web page hinting at this being aimed squarely as a driver's car. Jaguar have certainly not missed the target here. Whether or not owners opt for the standard coil spring suspension or go all-out with the bells and whistles air sprung options, the verdict from owners and professional road testers is the same. For a 2.2 tonne, higher-riding crossover-style vehicle, the ride and handling are astonishing. Add to that the linear instant-on torque that most EV drivers know only-too-well and you have a car that leaves you giggling after a spirited outing.

Cons

The I-Pace's energy efficiency is not quite at the levels of Tesla or indeed the Korean manufacturers Kia or Hyundai but is roughly on a par with its German rivals, the Audi e-Tron and Mercedes EQC. Long term use tends to indicate around 2.5 miles/kWhr which equates to a real-world range of around 220 miles from the 84 kWhr useable capacity of its battery. A recent software update that I have yet to carry out at the dealership claims to add around another 20 miles to that figure.

The very few negative issues cited in early reviews – somewhat laggy infotainment screens and a brake pedal that was hard to modulate when transitioning between regenerative and manual braking - have been largely solved

by software updates. These are delivered periodically via a mixture of Over the Air updates and dealer visits for the more critical powertrain control updates.

A 12m kerb-to-kerb turning circle doesn't make the I-Pace a manoeuvrable city car for sure – its long wheelbase and wide, large diameter wheels put paid to that – and the I-Pace is also very wide at 2,139mm including mirrors. Good luck getting through any 6 foot 6 inch width restrictions that you may encounter. But it's proven absolutely fine for driving around Edinburgh and Glasgow in normal use.



On balance, the I-Pace is the best car I have ever owned. Having stepped from a 550hp V12 ICE into this electric cat, I can honestly say that I experience more wide grin moments from its addictive linear torque delivery than any ICE car can hope to deliver, barring the odd ludicrous hyper-car. The Jaguar somehow manages to blend near-sports car handling with serene levels of hushed ride

quality. The cabin is a joyful place to be and I particularly miss that pleasure during these lockdown days. As well as being fast, luxurious and good-looking it has proven to be well-built and eminently practical with decent boot space and rear passenger leg-room.

For my use patterns, I find the 220 ish mile range more than adequate. For those unlike me who do a lot of longer journeys, then access to the uber-reliable Tesla Supercharger network would make a strong argument for considering a Model Y. The public charging infrastructure in Scotland and the wider U.K. is not yet as reliable or ubiquitous as it needs to be but things are improving daily. That being said, I never fail to be surprised at just how much charging is done at home and it still tickles me to fill up a near-supercar with electrons overnight for less than £10! I certainly do not miss standing at smelly petrol stations watching the pump spin past £100 ever week or so!!

In the first 11 months of ownership the car has proved completely reliable and well-built, while software updates have continued to make it even better. The general discussions on the I-Pace forums and Facebook groups support this positive experience. Those few who have experienced issues, particularly early on after introduction, found that dealerships unfamiliar with EVs in general often took extended time to fix issues but this situation has improved over the last 18 months.

The I-Pace has vastly exceeded my expectations and well done to Jaguar for such a commendable first EV. I thoroughly recommend you try a test drive of the I-Pace when you can. I guarantee that it will leave you smiling from ear to ear.