



Jaguar XF Review

By Nancy Dunham

Review:

Road Test: 2009 Jaguar XF

Climb behind the wheel of the **2009 Jaguar XF**, push the stop/star button and colors begin to pulse, the dashboard illuminates in red, and the engine softly purrs – talk about a James Bond moment.

So much power, high-tech gadgetry, and throbbing colors – not to mention a smooth, stylish ride - make you realize this isn't just a car, but a highly tuned, road ready, super machine. Whatever superlatives you've heard about the Jaguar aren't enough. This car is an amazing luxury vehicle and a top performer.

If you think the latest in computer gadgetry inside the XF is hot, wait until you watch the covers over the front air vents slowly glide open and the front consoles' colors shift as the music of your choice streams out of the 13-speaker, 440-watt surround-sound Bowers and Wilkins audio system. It's fun to watch these features unfold—something like watching a shiny package open.

When you're ready to take off, just turn the knob that controls the rotary shift drive, glance at the screen which shows the view from a rear-mounted camera, and you're off for a powerful, smooth ride.

2009 Jaguar XF Exterior

There's little doubt that the Jag's smooth, aerodynamic design will entice those that seek luxurious extras in a classic, yet sexy, four-door coupe. Just some of the exterior features that set the Jaguar apart include revised bumpers and lower front air intakes, sill extensions, Bonnet louvers and grilles, four tailpipes, a spoiler and 20-inch alloy wheels.

Even though there is plenty of high-resolution imagery that shows the car's handsome physique, photos honestly don't do this car justice. It's enticing curves and rounded edges give this car one of the more modern looks on the road.

Add to that curvy headlights, a distinctive, chrome mesh grill and the aforementioned slopes and curves leading to the sophisticated rear with signature tail lights and you have the makings of a classic.

Alas, though, no "Jaguar" hood ornament adorns the car. That didn't bother me, but others commented they were disappointed the luxury trademark was eliminated.

2009 Jaguar XF Interior

There's nothing stodgy about this interior. Just as the exterior has burst into the new century with all the modern curves you'd expect, so too has the interior. The lines of the XF are clean and pure and the materials are top-notch – leather, real wood, soft blue interior lighting.

Of course you'll find the interior has all the luxury you'd expect -- ventilated heated and cooled seats that offer plenty of lumbar support and comfort positions -- thick, plush carpeting plus all

types of high-tech gadgetry including radar-based blind-spot monitors and wheel-mounted shift paddles for those that like to change gears manually.

Most of the car's features are controlled by touch screen, which replaces the usual jumble of knobs and levers. I found the touch screen quite intuitive. Candidly it was a relief not to have to try to ascertain what button went with what feature, as is often the case in high-end cars.

What buttons there are actually ease your comfort. The cabin lights turn on when tapped. The glove box opens when you hit a small, round icon (beware – many people struggle with this until they get the touch down, a Jaguar rep warned me). And of course there are all kinds of audio extras to satisfy the pickiest gear head.

As pleasant as these luxuries are, the real surprise is in the interior space. Yes, the XF is a sports car but that doesn't mean there isn't plenty of room for both the driver and passengers. Sculpted front seats offer plenty of support, yet don't hog the space of traditional seats.

Passengers also ride in comfort. Climbing into the rear seat of most sports cars is akin to the 1950s gimmick of seeing how many people can cram into a small telephone booth. The answer for the back seat of the sports car challenge is two – barely. Not so with the XF which gives the passengers plenty of space including all-important head room.

The XF also boasts plenty of storage including a trunk measuring a roomy 17.7 cubic feet.

It's easy to imagine the lights, high tech audio and sophisticated curves of the XF as something of a siren call to young professionals that want to upgrade without looking like they're driving granddad's sedan.

2009 Jaguar XF Performance

If you think this Jag is all flash and no substance, think again.

This car arrived on a snowy day and stayed in my driveway until it was warm several days later.

The powerful 4.2-liter V-8 engine with 300 horsepower offers a powerful, yet smooth ride that feels almost as if you're gliding. Shifts are lightening fast. The cabin's quiet, too, with very little if any road noise or wind sound drifting in.

Even the first time I drove the car – on snow and ice – its firm drive was balanced and easy. What I really enjoyed, though, is that the car was responsive to me. There was no tugging or fighting for control, which says a lot considering the power, which has increased 29 percent over last year's model.

The only downside was that I didn't want to get so busy cruising along that I didn't monitor the benchmark 0-60 mph acceleration is 5.5 seconds (0-100 mph in 5.7 seconds) is lightening fast with no hesitation.

Those who want high luxury, style and power shouldn't hesitate to put the XF – with an MSRP that starts at just \$49,975, deserve to put the XF on their short lists. Forget James Bond – this is the year of the cat.