

2 Cost considerations

– affordable, or a money pit?



Purchase price

No XJ is really expensive, compared to some other Jaguar classics. Therefore, even the best cars are comparatively affordable, though dearer than less impressive makes. Those who want a really good car should look at the top of the market and spend more initially, to have a more reliable and durable vehicle from the start. Others, who are merely looking for a taste of the XJ experience, and will settle for a car to give them a couple of seasons of fun before selling or restoring, can afford to buy at the bottom of the market for complete, roadworthy, or almost roadworthy, cars. Other options are paying good money for a near complete refurbished vehicle to be finished off, or buying a cheap model in need of total restoration, which will probably work out more expensive later.

Affordable to run?

For XJs to be used regularly it's important to factor in fuel, servicing, consumables and insurance costs when deciding whether the car will be affordable to run. Modern cars suffer depreciation but low running costs. XJs are generally the opposite and should at least hold their value. If you want a car that will go on for year after year with nothing more than oil, water and fuel then you are underestimating the commitment of owning a large classic which wasn't cheap to run when it was new, and will not be cheap to run 20-30 years later.

Price bands

If you're looking for an excellent show car you'll need to spend more than £5000-£6000 – perhaps significantly more. A car which is perfectly respectable for day-to-day use, but not so spotless that you daren't put lots of miles on it, will cost something around £2000-£3000. Bargain cars, especially if they have just passed inspection, can be had for £1000-£2000, but there are also cars below that which could give a year's service with few major outlays. Because the XJ cars are the most common Jaguars, there is the option of buying a different



Concours standard takes effort.



Manual choke-converted daily driver.



Gas conversion cuts fuel bills.

4 Relative values

– which model for you?



Models

There are many Series XJ models, with a wide variety of prices to match. There are three Series, two wheelbases, three body types, and a total of four engines, with automatic and manual versions of many cars, meaning there's a model for most tastes. When it comes to choosing one, the priorities of a person merely wanting an XJ for gentle pottering on sunny days (for whom a 2.8 auto will serve well) are different from the person who wants to mix it over long distances with modern high-speed traffic, where a 4.2 or V12 is the best choice (the V12 S3 was not officially sold in the United States).

S1 cars look more 'classic', with their lower front bumper, taller grille and fussier detailing inside and out. S2 cars look more modern and sleek, despite similar dimensions, but have a reputation for poor build quality from the British Leyland era. They may have the furthest to climb, price-wise, however.

The limited number of XJC hardtop coupés means they will always be more rare and valuable, with the number of V12-engined models barely making it into 4 figures, and the number of V12 Daimler cars standing at only 407. The coupés were built using the short-wheelbase XJ floorpan, but needed heavy modification and manual construction to arrive at the unique cabin, door and wing structures.

The S3 unveiled in 1979 is arguably the prettiest of them all, having benefited from deft Pininfarina styling touches to lighten the cabin and give it crisper cleaner lines, at the expense of a slightly taller look and only heavy long-wheelbase versions. The Bosch fuel injection first introduced on US-market late S2 cars was also used on V12 coupés and all 4.2/5.3 S3 cars. Jaguar ceased production of the 6-cylinder S3 XJ in 1987, although the S3 continued in V12 form until 1992 when the XJ40 shell was modified to accept the V12.

Jaguar did not use the Daimler name in North America in modern times, so the



Ken Cantor's immaculate V12.



'Final 100' V12s are the most valuable.

9 Serious evaluation

– 60 minutes for years of enjoyment



Circle Excellent, Good, Average or Poor boxes for each check and add up points at the end. Be realistic, and especially vigilant where bodywork is concerned, and with regard to engine checks on the V12.

Overall stance

An XJ6 should sit flat and level front-to-back and side-to-side, or very slightly higher at the rear, especially with low fuel load. If sagged to one side – typically the driver's side – or drooping at the back, the springs are tired. On level ground the bottom of the front subframe should be about 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ in above ground with most 215 width tyres and 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ in with 205s.

Ex 4 Gd 3 Av 2 Po 1



Eric Féron's US coupé stands well.

Body panels

A good XJ should have undistorted panels with even shut lines, and the doors should follow the body contours and not stick out at the corners. Look for filler bulges along the bottom of doors or wings and around the headlamps, arches and sills. Feel the wheelarch returns for rough metal, or double thickness or seams from repairs. Mud-filled seams on sill ends or arches, or around the headlights or lower wing fronts can hide rot, so clean and inspect by torchlight. Front and rear valances suffer badly, and the lower radiator crossmember (visible through the grille) is structural.

Ex 4 Gd 3 Av 2 Po 1



Stand back to look at reflections and panel gaps.

Underside and sills

Beware heavy gobs of underseal over poor welding or rusted metal. The fronts of the footwells suffer, as do the sill seams, front and rear jacking points, and the radius arm attachment points. The rear lower quarter-panels around the tanks are often rotten but are detachable. Check for rust in the chassis rails within about a foot of the rear suspension cage mounts, and if the rear screen appears rusty be especially suspicious of rust in the lower rear sill area where the wheelarch joins, as water collects here. If possible, look under the seat cushion for water/rust from a leaky rear screen. The front upper section of the sills is hidden behind the wings, but look from inside the rear edge, past the open door, and check for clues of corrosion, such as packed mud or bubbling at the rear lower edge of the wings.

Ex 4 Gd 3 Av 2 Po 1



Sills should be solid rather than patched.

Bonnet and inner wings

The hinge attachment points rust from inside the box section and this affects shut lines and bonnet closure. There will be tell-tale marks where the bonnet has hit the top of the wings if it has closed crookedly in the past. Typically, the left-side hinge

Ex 4 Gd 3 Av 2 Po 1



Reliable but elderly S3 fuel injection.

when cranking, before warm metal causes the fuel to evaporate and appear dry. Injector connectors should be unbroken and firmly held by spring clips, with the wires not split or cracked where they emerge, or indeed anywhere else in the engine harness, which becomes brittle with age, especially on the V12 cars.

Ex 4 Gd 3 Av 2 Po 1

Engine

Brief rattling on start up from cold is acceptable but, once warm, correctly adjusted Jaguar engines should run with just a light rustle from the valve gear. Loud tapping is at best a fiddly valve adjustment or at worst a loose tappet guide or piston. Look inside the oil filler cap to see if screws or plates have been fitted to clamp the tappet guides in place. Rumbles or clonks suggest bearing trouble.

Whirring from the timing chains is permissible, but metallic clatter is not. Screeching noises can indicate a loose belt or a worn pulley bearing, and the exhaust note should be regular and even at idle, although some hunting is common. All Jaguar engines are very strong, however, and with clean oil and coolant – easily checked – should last many years. The early 2.8-litre engines had a reputation for burning pistons, but by now any problematic ones will have been fixed with better parts.

Obvious heavy dirt or loose-hanging wires, etc., spell lack of maintenance, but if the inside of the oil filler cap is clear of whitish ‘mayonnaise’ and there is no fuel smell on the dipstick or exhaust smell in the header tank, the engine is probably OK. There is no substitute for a full compression check, however, if engine condition is important and you don’t wish to do a precautionary rebuild as part of a planned restoration. A wet/dry compression check is not trivial, especially on the 12s, but for such a complex and potentially expensive engine to refurbish, it’s a wise investment of time and money and the equivalent of a house survey before purchase.

Once underway, audible pinging under load on a road test is a bad sign, though not that rare. It may not be easily remedied by retarding the timing, if due to weak mixture or unsuitably high compression for local fuel. The cylinder head(s) may have been skimmed to the point where a thicker head gasket is required to restore normal compression.



New core plugs. A good sign.

Transmission

Most XJs were automatics, with either the trusty Borg Warner

Ex 4 Gd 3 Av 2 Po 1

15 Problems due to lack of use

– just like their owners, XJs need exercise!



Large thirsty 'hobby' cars like the XJ tend to be kept for high days and holidays, which is a shame because they have always been capable of high mileages and everyday, year-round use (with appropriate anti-corrosion care). A run of at least ten miles, once a week, is recommended for the XJ, but is barely adequate for the bigger engines which are so under-stressed. Try for longer runs and avoid frequently starting the engine and switching off before totally hot, as this is worse than never running the car. The large engines take some warming, and failure to disperse acidic combustion byproducts will damage even a fine motor. Depending on storage conditions, the interior leather can also benefit from feeding while out of use.



Stored cars should be exercised often.

Seized or sluggish components

The XJ has either 3-piston or 4-piston Girling front calipers and twin-piston calipers at the rear, all of which are the modern style with seals fixed in the body and sliding on the piston surfaces rather than vice-versa, as with earlier Jaguar Dunlop brakes. This helps reduce, but does not avoid, corrosion damage or seizure of the working surfaces during prolonged storage.

The best way to maintain brakes is to use them and change the fluid prior to extended lay-up. Stainless pistons or some aftermarket calipers may suffer less, but regular fluid changes still help.

The master and servo cylinders are conventional but can corrode or fill with slime from old fluid or deteriorated rubber. The handbrake mechanism and cable should be lubricated, although many cables are nylon lined. Flex hoses to the front calipers and rear suspension cage can crack with age and should be inspected in any car after prolonged storage. Early cars using leather output shaft seals in the differential can also begin to seep on prolonged standing.

For manual transmission cars the clutch friction plate may seize to the pressure plate or flywheel because of corrosion, so regularly working through the gears and



Cable lubed and handbrake left off.