

New XK/R buyer's guide



It's been three years since the 'new' XK first graced the pages of *JWM* – which means there are plenty of examples out there that are no longer new...does an all-aluminium XK make a sound used buy?

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All-aluminium and lightweight construction, V8 power, curvaceous coupe and convertible bodies, a sequential shift transmission... and much more besides. When details of Jaguar's 'new' XK – codenamed X150 – were revealed for the first time in August 2005, the specification sheet promised much.

More than three years on, the XK has largely delivered on those promises too. The first step in Jaguar's much-vaunted product-led recovery plan and the first new Jaguar to be produced by a design team solely under the guidance of Ian Callum, the XK was generally very well-received by the world's motoring press and public alike, and on the road it was a joy to drive from the

word go. Both aesthetically and dynamically, the XK is a Jaguar that hits all the right buttons.

Inevitably, though, the current harsh economic conditions – coupled with vehicle excise duty changes – mean that the premium sports/GT market is presently a tough one for all manufacturers to operate in and so, after a very good start sales wise, in recent months XK sales have slowed. That, in turn, has had a knock-on effect on the used-market, which means that values of the 'new' XK have depreciated fairly quickly. Brand new, a well specified early-2006 XK coupe would have cost well in excess of £60,000, and there was a period in which demand was so high that some registered but delivery mileage examples were even changing

hands for more than list price. Today, however, that same car may sell for little more than half that amount.

Though bad news for those that bought new and didn't plan to keep their car long, the flipside is that if you've hankered after an XK for a while, then a good used example represents quite staggering value for money. But, before you rush out and buy one, just what do you need to look for?

Exterior

Given its all aluminium structure, one thing you shouldn't find in any XK – coupe or convertible – is rust, and you shouldn't find any welding either. The entire monocoque and body structure is riveted and bonded together with the exception



of two welds on the coupe – one at the rear either side of the roof. This means two things when looking at a used example.

For starters, the XK's complex aluminium construction means that any accident repair is a very specialist job and though the high values of these cars – even taking into account recent depreciation – means that any damaged/repairable examples should have been dealt with only by an accredited repairer, if you do find yourself looking at a car that shows signs of poorly repaired accident damage, walk away. There are plenty of completely straight cars to choose from. Secondly, while we certainly haven't seen any bodged cars, if you spot a weld anywhere – you'll know something's wrong...

Aside from those fundamental points, look for general cosmetic condition that will point to whether a car has had a caring owner or not. The XK is a big car and, parking sensors or not (rears have always been standard, front sensors were optional until April of this year, but are now also standard), can easily suffer from scuffs to the front/rear bumpers. Those big alloys too are susceptible to kerbing, especially the 20in and very popular Senta items. Should a set of these be badly kerbed, bear in mind that they were listed as a £2,500 option until very recently. Talking of wheels, when announced the XK coupe and convertible came as standard with 18in 'Venus' alloy wheels running on Continental Sport Contact 2 tyres. Few cars were ordered

with these, the majority of buyers opting for 19in Carelia or the already mentioned 20in Senta items (as worn by the example photographed here), which wore Dunlop Sport / Sport Maxx Directional tyres respectively.

On any prospective purchase, make sure that the tyres fitted are of the correct type otherwise you may find the car suffers from undue road noise. A 19in 'runflat' wheel/tyre combination was also listed when the XK was introduced (called the Sabre, it ran on Dunlop runflat tyres), but we've never seen a car fitted with them, and they can't have been popular as they very soon disappeared from the options list.

One exterior option well worth having in our view are the £430 active front lights. If you're

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The view under the bonnet is not that exciting, but the 4.2-litre V8 is a reliable performer – note the cable from the strut top indicating that CATS is fitted

looking at a car on your own and are not sure whether they are fitted or not, there’s a simple way to find out. Just park ten feet from a wall, turn the lights on and spin the steering wheel from lock-to-lock. If you can see the beams move, active lights are fitted – a real boon on unlit country roads.

All cars feature a keyless start system, but also desirable – and also a £430 option – is keyless entry. The fobs look no different, but keyless entry cars will have a small rubber button on the handle. Walk up to the car, pull the handle and it will automatically unlock and, on leaving, press the rubber button and it will automatically lock if the fob is detected outside the car. On cars with keyless start only, unlocking/locking will require a push of the appropriate button on the fob.

Pre 2008 model year cars will all sport an exterior mast-type radio antennae. This feature was derided by press and customers alike, so from the 2008MY on, both coupe and convertible XKs have their radio antennae hidden within the rear spoiler. A kit and official procedure

to retro-fit the spoiler mounted antennae does exist, but the process won’t be cheap. The replacement spoiler is listed at £353.50 for the coupe and £340 for the convertible, and a wiring kit is also needed at a cost of between £90-£120 depending on the spec of the car (all prices exc. VAT). Fitting time is then 4.9 hours for the coupe, and 3 hours for the convertible – and that’s without budgeting for the subsequent body repair to take care of the hole left in the wing. In short, the procedure’s likely to cost around £1,000 even before the body repairs. As reception is better with the external antennae, if you’re buying an early car, we’d live with it!

Two final ‘exterior’ notes. We’ve driven a few cars, especially convertibles, where the windows won’t raise properly every time due to the upper rubber seal being slightly out of position. This has always been easily rectified simply by squeezing the rubber – but check all windows operate correctly and, on convertibles, also check the roof’s operation (it should take just 18 seconds to raise/lower) and its outer edges for any



The XK pictured features the popular 20in Senta alloys – originally optional on both XKs and XKR, they became standard fitment to XKR with the 2008MY, and to the XK with the introduction of the XK60 model. For 2008MY cars on, the external antennae (below right) was replaced by an integrated spoiler/aerial unit



imperfections caused by the windows catching on the fabric.

Engine/powertrain

Though essentially carried over from the previous generation XK, the 4.2-litre naturally-aspirated and supercharged AJ-V8 engines were significantly developed for use in the new XK. New fuel injection technology meant cleaner emissions, while in supercharged form the AJ-V8 sported variable valve timing for the first time (always a feature on the earlier 4.0- and subsequent 4.2-litre n/a engine) plus a twin air-intake system. Reliability wise, both have proven to be pretty much bomb-proof.

While early versions of the 4.0-litre V8s used in the X308, and pre 2003MY S-TYPE and steel-bodied XK have a list of well-documented flaws – weak timing chain tensioners and water pumps amongst them – the 4.2-litre version saw all those issues addressed. The installation in the aluminium bodied XK has proved equally successful, and so provided an engine has been

serviced in accordance to the factory schedule (intervals are 12 months/10,000 miles), there should be no problems whatsoever. In the absence of an oil pressure gauge or even water temperature gauge to keep an eye on (not all progress is for the better), simply make sure that an engine runs smoothly and pulls well on any road test.

The six-speed ZF '6HP26' gearbox used in post 2003MY steel bodied XKs was also carried over to the aluminium-bodied car, but its installation is significantly different. In the new XK the 'box adapts gearchanging strategy according to how the car is being driven at any given time, and in addition to a fully automatic 'Drive' mode, it features an automatic 'Sport' mode that's vastly different to that used before. Not only does the 'box hold gears for longer in Sport mode, it automatically blips the throttle on downshifts – making any driver look very good indeed. On top of that, steering wheel-mounted paddles also enable manual sequential shifts, and changes are lightening fast.

The gearboxes (the same unit in updated form is used on the XKR) are designed to be maintenance free and a unit in good condition should shift seamlessly in Drive mode, quickly in Sport mode, and respond almost instantaneously to inputs from the wheel-mounted paddles. We've not driven a car that's ever exhibited any gearbox problems, but we have heard anecdotal reports of occasional harsh downshifts at slow speeds – cured by resetting the gearbox, an easy matter for a dealer to do if a vehicle's still under warranty.

Suspension, steering, brakes

Developed from the set-up used very successfully on the last S-TYPES, the XK's suspension is independent all round via double wishbones and coil-springs/telescopic dampers. Initially, Jaguar's excellent CATS system (Computer Active Technology Suspension) was listed as an option for the XK, but within months it became standard fitment. We've never seen a car on passive dampers and, as the CATS set-up is so good



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(while in the 'old' XK the dampers only operated in pairs, in the aluminium car each is controlled independently), if you do find one, we'd avoid it. If unsure, simply lift the bonnet and look at a damper top-mount. CATS equipped cars will have a wire coming from the centre of the mount. All XKR's had CATS from the outset.

As well as providing the car with a fantastic blend of refinement and outright handling ability, the suspension is tough too. Steel-bodied XKs knocked out upper wishbone bushes and CATS dampers – where fitted – with annoying regularity, but the same isn't true of the aluminium car. The only rider to that is that some owners have reported a knock from the front suspension, so listen carefully on a test run – this has been traced to an issue with lower control arm drop-link bushes, the entire lower arm being replaced as necessary under warranty. Steering is via Jaguar's well-proven 'Servotronic 2' system,

which provides good levels of both feedback and feel. The steering is certainly weightier than in previous Jaguars, but it should be by no means heavy – if it is, then it's likely to be due to a faulty transducer rather than a problem within the rack itself and, again, is an issue that would be rectified under warranty.

As you'd expect, braking is via ventilated discs all-round, 326mm/326mm front/rear on naturally-aspirated cars, and 355mm/326mm front/rear on supercharged cars, with an electronically operated handbrake. Pedal feel and stopping ability should be excellent in both cases – anything less is not acceptable. From the 2008MY on the Alcon R-Performance brakes (400mm/350mm front/rear) first seen on the special edition Portfolio model (see XK timeline) have been available as optional extras on 'standard' XK/XKR's but, while certainly good, the standard braking systems are so well-sorted that

you shouldn't feel it necessary to seek an Alcon-equipped car, even if you do drive hard. As a £1,700 option, there aren't likely to be that many around in any case.

Interior/electrics

Since its launch, the standard specification of the XK – as we're sure you now realise – has been tinkered with a few times, and the interior certainly falls into that category.

Initially, both Burr Walnut and Poplar Wood dash options were available, along with a knurled aluminium finish. When the XKR arrived, it sported an aluminium 'weave' dash as standard. Why is this relevant? Well, the Poplar Wood finish proved particularly, er, unpopular, so was eventually dropped and replaced with 'Satin American Walnut'.

In short, if you do find a car with Poplar Wood and you like it (we did...), it may well be worth



XK coupes offer a useful 300-litres of boot space, convertibles have 283-litres with the roof up, but just 200-litres when it's lowered. If a car doesn't have keyless entry – as here – there will be no small rubber button on the door handle. The interior shots on the opposite page show a 2007MY XK with 'Sports' interior – the shot below shows the upgraded switchgear on a 2009MY car



trying to knock some more money off the initial asking price.

Seat wise, XKs originally came as standard with ten-way electronically adjustable 'Sports seats', and XKRs with similarly adjustable 'R Sports seats', but both can be specified with a 'Luxury Sport Interior pack'. As well as additional interior trim enhancements, this pack includes softgrain leather 16-way adjustable seats that include inflatable side bolsters. That might sound like a lot of hot air, but they really are very good and, when buying used, the asking price won't reflect the additional £2,495-£2,995 the new owner would have paid for them originally.

The 2008MY cars onwards sport upgraded switchgear in answer to some criticisms that the original type switches felt 'cheap'. The upgrades include revised door switch packs with aluminium or wood inserts, column stalks with chrome wings and a 'tungsten' finish to the buttons on the

New XK timeline

August 2005: Jaguar releases the first details and pictures of the new XK coupe.

September 2005: The coupe was shown for the first time in public at the Frankfurt motorshow and, though not exhibited, pictures of the convertible were also released.

December 2005: 'Job 1' – the first customer XK coupe – came off the Castle Bromwich production line. A 2007 Model Year car, chassis number B00379, it is now in the Jaguar Daimler Heritage Trust collection.

January 2006: After the convertible had its public debut at the North American International Auto show in Detroit, the global XK launch began in South Africa. Both coupe and convertible models received excellent press reviews.

June 2006: At the end of the month, Jaguar revealed the first details of the supercharged XKR coupe and convertible.

July 2006: The XKR's global debut came at the London International Motor Show, *JWM* had its first chance to get behind the wheel later that same month. The first customer XKR bore the chassis number B10527.

April 2007: Jaguar unveils a bodykit for naturally-aspirated XKs – on sale from March. Priced at £1,763 (exc. fitting), it will eventually be offered as standard on the XK60 model (see September 2008).



March 2007: At the Geneva Motor Show the special edition 'XKR' Portfolio was unveiled (above). Additional features included a Bowers & Wilkins sound system, polished 20in Cremona alloy wheels, two new interior dash finishes, a contrast stitched interior and huge Alcon brakes. Just 500 were made, with 60 only for the UK priced at £75,597

June 2007: Details of the 2008MY XK and XKR models were released (beginning at chassis number B20075). All cars now sport

centre console. The changes aren't dramatic, but are a definite – if not essential – improvement. Also from the 2008MY onwards, several luxurious options that debuted on the XKR special edition 'Portfolio' model (see New XK timeline), became optional across the XK range. The Portfolio options include such as a Bowers & Wilkins sound system, a contrast stitched interior and, on the convertible, a range of different hood colours.

In our experience, all interiors have, thus far, proved to be hard wearing but on cars sporting higher mileages, check for wear around seat bolsters, and do ensure that everything works. There are a lot of electronics on an XK and, though it may pain the vendor for you to do so, insist on trying as much as you can. Beware too of any aftermarket electronic accessories that have been fitted – a car as complex as the XK does not react kindly to components that are not specifically designed to work with it.

a radio antennae integrated into the rear spoiler, and revised/upgraded switchgear. The standard specification for XKR models was also enhanced by the inclusion of 20in wheels, premium sound system, heated front screen and other minor changes – XKR prices were raised to £70,697 / £76,097 (coupe/convertible) to reflect this, XK prices remained unchanged. The 'Portfolio' range of options was made available for all models



March 2008: At the Geneva Motor Show the special edition XKR-S was unveiled (above). Though no more powerful than a standard XKR, its top speed is 174mph, and other enhancements including a faster steering rack, lower ride height, 20in Vortex alloy wheels, a bespoke bodykit, Alcon brakes and upgraded interior. Priced at £79,995, 200 were built for the European market, just 50 being for the UK. A 2009MY XKR Portfolio coupe and convertible were also shown, but neither were destined for the UK market



September 2008: The XK60 version of the naturally-aspirated XK was unveiled at the London International Motor show (above). Now the 'standard' XK model, each XK60 sports a bodykit (first shown in April 2007), 20in Senta wheels, chrome-finish side gills and minor interior enhancements, but with no price increase.

XK vs XKR, coupe vs convertible

In terms of dynamics, the step forward from a steel-bodied XK to an aluminium-bodied car is significant, especially in convertible form. Lighter and stiffer, a new XK is significantly more nimble than its predecessor, and the ability gap between the coupe and convertible so small that it's all but unnoticeable, even when driving hard. Buying a drop-top no longer means a compromised driving experience (but it does mean compromised boot-space, especially with the top down when a convertible has 100-litres less capacity than a coupe). On the road, you can expect a naturally-aspirated new XK to feel as quick as a previous generation XKR point-to-point, while the aluminium XKR raises the bar yet again.

Any new XK, be it coupe or convertible, naturally-aspirated or supercharged, should provide a driving experience that rewards in spades, yet shouldn't be at all intimidating.

Tech spec (manufacturer's figures)

	XK coupe	XKR coupe
Engine:	Quad cam V8	Quad cam V8, Supercharged
Capacity (cc):	4,196	4,196
Bore/stroke (mm):	86/90.3	86/90.3
Max power (bhp@rpm*):	298@6,000	416@6,250
Max torque (lb ft@rpm*):	411@4,100	560@4,000
Compression ratio:	11.0:1	9.1:1
Transmission:	six-speed auto, sequential shift facility	six-speed auto sequential shift facility
0-60mph (secs):	5.9 (6.0)**	4.9 (5.0)**
Top speed (mph):	155 (1td)	155 (1td)
Combined mpg:	25	22.9
CO2 (g/km):	269	294
Weight (kg):	1,595 (1,635)**	1,665 (1,715)**
Current OTR price (£):	60,995 (66,995)**	70,995 (76,995)**

* Power and torque figures are EEC PS and EEC lb ft respectively.

** Where different, convertible figures are in brackets.

XKR-S model has a top speed of 174mph (1td).

Independent servicing costs

Though it's technically a far more advanced car than its predecessor, the good news is that the aluminium-bodied XK range is no more complex to service. We spoke to Derby-based specialists, Elite and Performance Jags, which currently looks after a number of new XKs and, due to easy accessibility and the commonality of components to other Jaguar models, servicing presents no problem at all and, as a result, EAPJ's service prices are identical to those for the steel-bodied 4.2-litre cars.

Interval	XK	XKR
10,000 / one year	£185	£199
20,000 / two years	£185	£225
30,000 / three years	£210	£199 (??)
40,000 / six years	£270	£295

Prices from Elite and Performance Jags, including VAT and fitting



The XK vs XKR price gap on the used market is around £6k (see Specification, price, choice) and, if you want absolute performance potential, then the extra outlay for the 'R' will be well justified. If however, you don't plan on breaking land speed records – or risking losing your licence any more than is necessary – then the naturally aspirated XK is nigh-on as quick in real world conditions, and it will return a precious few more miles to the gallon too.

Specification, price, choice

Given that it's a luxury sports car – and a Jaguar at that – all XKs were well-specified from new, and many owners chose to tick what few boxes there were on the options list to really load their cars up. However, on the used market those options will have a far lesser effect on a car's value – so if you find a good example that doesn't, for example, active headlights, the Luxury Sports interior and 20in alloy wheels but those are features you want, then keep looking. It won't be too hard to find the car that meets your expectations.

Price-wise, and here's the good bit, while the trade guides still state that the entry level point into XK ownership is around £38,000 for a naturally-aspirated coupe, the reality is it's considerably less than that. A nationwide search on a well-known internet site brought up nearly 300 new XKs for sale, and the cheapest on offer was a 2006, 06-registered, sub 15,000-mile

coupe in 'Winter Gold' with full main dealer history, 19in wheels and factory warranty at just over £33,000. That's less than some late steel-bodied 2005 4.2S XK models that were being advertised, albeit those being convertibles.

That coupe wasn't an isolated case either. Just a few hundred pounds more would have netted us a well-specified Midnight Black coupe which, though it had 40k on the clock, sported goodies including 20in wheels, adaptive cruise control and keyless entry. In short, there was plenty of 2006 coupe choice in the sub £35k bracket, while '06 convertibles started at around £39k with an example sporting just 15,000-miles.

If it's only supercharged power that will satisfy, then 2006 XKR coupes begin at around £41k-£42k, and those examples we found were very highly specified indeed. The £6k coupe-convertible price gap also holds true in XKR form, with the first convertible R we found priced at £47,000 – and that was a 2007 car. If that exterior antennae simply will not do, then 2008MY cars begin at around £49k, with some delivery mileage but registered coupes being offered at just £52k!

One word of warning, there did appear to be some wild differentiation in prices with some very similar spec cars at very different price points – some vendors are clearly still hoping to get more for cars than is realistic in the current economic climate, so shop around.

Conclusion

Brand new, an aluminium-bodied XK or XKR represented very good value for money compared to the opposition and today, due to the current economic climate, a used example represents quite exceptional value. And there really are very few pitfalls to be aware of.

The specialists we've spoken with have heard of no significant problems with the cars at all. Reliability really does seem to be very good and, given that all cars came with a three-year warranty and the first customer deliveries were in March 2006, all cars on the used market should still have some factory warranty left. Of course, the earliest examples will be out of warranty soon, so if you find yourself looking at one of those, make sure any potential issues you find are dealt with quickly. But, beyond that, buying a car out of warranty shouldn't be a worry, and servicing by independent specialists (see 'Independent servicing costs'), will be every bit as affordable as it was for the previous generation model, but with none of the big preventative jobs – like timing chain tensioner replacement – to worry about.

Thus far then, the 'new' XK story – even if it is now not so new – seems to be all-good. If you can afford to buy one, then simply drive it, and enjoy it.

Thanks to Elite and Performance Jags (01332 265826 / www.eapj.com) for help sourcing the XK coupe in the pictures, and for technical advice and service pricing.