

Just my cup



Of Tea

Ian Lamming purrs at the latest SUV from Jaguar

I 'VE a friend. He runs my favourite café in the Lakes. He loves his cars and is a discerning driver.

He's also an honest, no-nonsense critic, often harsh and outspoken, a pooh pooher of many vehicles I quite like. But this week I've every confidence in the test vehicle, which I announce as he crafts me my favourite mocha, strong, smooth and extra hot.

"Oh yeah, now you are talking; love 'em," Rich gushes about Jaguar's splendid F-Pace. "In fact I've just been spec'ing one up on line and so far it's going to cost me 55K."

This is Jaguar's first foray into the world of the ubiquitous off-roader and it's a hum-dinger.

Colour-sensitive, but in all but the maroon, F-Pace is resplendent. This test car is silver, with black 20in alloys and the R-Sport body kit.

Parked by the side of the road I must have stopped, turned and looked back at least six times before heading for my mocha. What a looker, what a head-turner, what a car.

F-Pace is big, opulent and imposing. It screams prestige, even though, at around £40K basic, it is actually surprisingly affordable for such a class of car. Like all Jaguars, it is sleek and cat-like. But somehow it manages to meld this lithe athleticism with strong and muscular purpose. It also has the largest front grille imaginable which looks capable of shredding the space time continuum. Full marks for the looks.

Climb inside its capacious interior and things go from great to greater. Jaguar is incapable of making a bad interior and F-Pace was never going to let the side down – it's lovely.

Gorgeous leather seats and trim, stunning ergonomics and the latest hi-tech touch screen gadgetry marry traditional with ultra contemporary to fantastic effect in a cabin that boasts an abundance of space for driver and passengers alike.

This F-Pace packs the firm's 180bhp 2.0 turbo diesel, which is strong and refined enough with a broad spread of power for overtaking and great ability to cruise. Given the size of the F-Pace and its performance, the 41mpg registered on the trip computer is impressive too.

What else do Jaguars do rather well? Handle. Here is an SUV that thinks it's a sports saloon. The steering is razor sharp, as are the dynamics overall. It turns quickly and rides superbly well. It loves the twists and turns of Northern life and comes with the added reassurance of all wheel drive; great for slippery roads and when you decided to venture off them.

From the reactions at the café, which are mirrored by countless oohs and aahs from mums and dads in the school car park, Jaguar has successfully come up with a vehicle in the F-Pace that is very much everyone's cup of tea...or, in my case, mocha.

Fact File

- Model: Jaguar F-Pace R-Sport
- Engine: 2.0 litre, turbo diesel
- Drivetrain: eight-speed auto
Power: 180bhp
Top speed: 129mph
- 0-60mph: 8.2 secs
- Miles per gallon 53.3 (combined):
- CO2 (g/km): 139