

Test location: Mumbai-Pune  
Photography: Rohit G Mane

# Jaguar I-Pace

Electric cars can deliver The Thrill of Driving!

**Y**OUR BRAIN WILL NEED TO BE re-wired for the future of the car. For generations the grey matter has relied on sight and sound to process speed. More the noise, faster you are. Aural drama adds to excitement. It's why supercharged Jags sound like they are gargling thunder. It's why we slapped free-flow exhausts on our Zens and Swifts. If nothing, all that noise delivered faster feels.

Put your foot down in an I-Pace and your brain doesn't know WTF is going on. The eyes

are going OMG. Your body is gasping from the relentless surge of g's. Your passenger has run out of breath barking OMFG; the mobile phone they've been using to film the speedo for Instagram has smacked them hard in the face. But your ears are telling your brain that aliens are being strangled.

I don't know how else to describe the synthesised 'dynamic audio' piped into the I-Pace's cabin. They call it a 'race car howl' but the race cars they're referring to are Formula E which, ahem, don't use V12s. It's a drone





mapped to the throttle, a very, very strange noise. But it does sound like the future. And it all adds to just how astonishing the I-Pace is.

How astonishingly good the I-Pace is! Stick the most gnarly traditionalist in the I-Pace and they will grudgingly admit the future ain't so bad. And since we are talking about speed, let's wrap this part up first. The I-Pace is f\*cking fast. 0-100kmph in 4.8 seconds only tells one part of the story. The first of two even more impressive aspects is the immediacy of everything. Max torque of 696Nm is E63 AMG / BMW M5 territory and it's all on tap at just 1rpm. That means there's no wait. No hesitation. No micro-moment's delay as turbos spool up or revs rise or the gearbox goes down the gears. It's instant. In full Dynamic mode, it is too much to be honest. Too sharp. Too vicious. Too violent. You never had to be so sensitive to the throttle, a twitch never resulted in such a surge of acceleration. Remember to re-wire your right

foot, along with the brain.

The second is the relentlessness of everything. 394bhp isn't earth-shattering but all that instant torque means it goes from 0 right up to 190kmph like greased lightning. No momentary pause as the next gear is hammered in. No ebb and flow with the tide of revs. It's 0.8g all the way through — and that's the g-force you feel when a plane takes off.

The I-Pace uses two electric motors on each axle which gives it all-wheel-drive, so grip off-the-line isn't a problem. Forget being a problem, it's *bazinga* quick. But what's really cool about electric cars is because everything is electric and electronic the ESP works completely in the background. In a traditional ICE it is reactive, you can feel the power being cut to account for grip running out, but here it is predictive so only that much torque is sent as the tyres can handle. It's all incredibly seamless. Nothing is fighting anything. Torque isn't trying to overwhelm

grip, ESP isn't working overtime to reign in the madness. It's just one relentless, never-ending shove till you hit 190kmph. And then max out at 200kmph.

The only time you feel ESP working is when you've switched off ESP and are cornering like a hooligan. It will let the tail hang a little bit — yes you can get it to oversteer ever so slightly — before it chimes in and says enough buddy.

And you want to know what the craziest part it? This isn't billed as an electric sports car. This is an SUV — doesn't feel like one from behind the 'wheel but Jaguar wants you to know that this is an SUV and I even did a bit of off-roading with it back in 2018 when I drove it on its global launch. No, we won't be doing any off-roading today, I'm not brave enough to hit trails with any electric car without professional supervision. I did go round corners though, very fast, and the I-Pace really handles. This is a heavy car, 2.2 tonnes, but all that weight is concentrated in

**Above:** Cabin architecture looks cool and not shared with any Jags. **Facing page, left:** Physical buttons for Dynamic mode. **(right)** Pivi Pro is a bit laggy; all the prominent EV-related info is easily accessible

the batteries under the floor and between the wheels so the centre of gravity is low, the weight is within the wheelbase and that gets it to go round corners really, really fast.

Except your brain desperately needs that re-wiring. There's no noise — after spending half a day with it I figured out how to turn off the dynamic audio; the cool thing about an electric car is it rockets to the horizon without any noise, why strangle aliens while at it? And in any case those sounds don't really tell you how fast you are going. So there's no noise and that means you don't know how fast you're getting to the corner. Plus nothing has mid-range

acceleration like an electric car, 0-100kmph acceleration is one thing but the way it rockets from 40-120kmph is even more breathtaking. On the highway you come up to cars far faster than your brain can process and then you stand on the brakes because you're going too fast. Similarly in the hills you slingshot out of one corner and arrive at the next faster than your brain can process. Which means, no matter how desperately you stand on the brakes, you're

going through the corner faster than you would in normal course. It feels like you're in a video game, virtual reality except it's all happening on a real road. The steering is electric and there's not much in the way of feel. You're grappling with understeer, there's body roll. It's all hectic.

Stop. Have a cup of tea. Take a minute to look at the car, arguably Ian Callum's finest work before retirement. I've always maintained an EV should look like a car from the future and the I-Pace nails it. It is so cool, so futuristic (I know I have used that word too many times already) that its rivals still cannot hold a candle to it. The bonnet, if you can call it that, is super-short, super-low and just has a small 'frunk' to hold the charging cable. There is a visible scoop in the bonnet which channels air over the top and through the underside of the rear wing to the bluff rear end. The door handles stay flush with the doors and pop out when you approach it. It's low, the lowest roofline on any SUV, and

**You slingshot out of one corner and arrive at the next faster than your brain can process**

sleek. Most unlike an SUV except the ground clearance qualifies it as an SUV.

And now that your brain has had sufficient time to process everything you realise the I-Pace will easily keep pace with sports cars in the hills. There's masses of grip. It genuinely is a lot of fun to drive. The Jaguar fires out of the apex like its tail is on fire.

And it does it all so easily.

That's the beauty of all these electric cars. Driving them is just so easy. So effortless. In the city this is so easy and relaxing to drive. And because there's no engine to cancel out all the noise there is more sound insulation which means greater isolation from the world outside. The I-Pace also gets air suspension so you can raise it to clear horrid speed breakers though the standard ride height isn't in any danger of scrapping its underside. The ride quality though is stiff and firm. Those handling chops come with a trade off and it is more a sports car than a luxury car in the city. This isn't a car to be chauffeured around in either, space at the back isn't especially accommodating and you sit with



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your knees up because of that high floor.

The driving environment though is quite excellent. The I-Pace, unlike its rivals, has a completely different cabin architecture from its siblings and that makes it unique and very cool. Very futuristic (there we go again). The space inside is enhanced by the massive glass roof, and it is a roof, it doesn't open up. But there isn't a cover for it and even though it is tinted it can't cut out the glare and intensity of the Indian sun, plus in the afternoons it gets so hot you cannot even touch the glass roof.

My biggest bug bear though are the drive selector buttons where Reverse is located below Drive. This is rather counter intuitive, after all you move the automatic gear lever up for reverse and pull back for drive. And the Pivi Pro infotainment isn't the most intuitive or responsive, and that's the one area the I-Pace shows its age. After all it was launched back in 2018. Not Mercedes, not Porsche, not Audi, not Volvo — it was Jaguar who were first off the blocks among the premium manufacturers with an electric car (of course Tesla was much



**Top:** Suspension tune is deliberately sporty and you can even hang the tail a bit before ESP cuts in. **Left:** Glass roof not the most practical under the Indian sun. **Extreme left:** 400km range possible even when having fun

before everybody else). And they got it right the first time round, led by some of the brainiest engineers who came over from Munich. They didn't borrow the F-Pace's chassis but did an all-new, all-aluminium architecture with the highest percentage of aluminium on any Jaguar even to date. They gave it double wishbones at the front and Jaguar's integral link at the rear, evidently tuned for sportiness. The 90kWh liquid-cooled battery pack with 432 lithium-ion cells is mounted in that EV-typical 'skateboard' fashion which gives it a centre of gravity 13mm lower than the F-Type sports cars. And they made sure I-Pace owners won't get range anxiety. We got a real-world range of 400km, and this is after we plugged it into the charger after spending a day driving rather enthusiastically. You can do Mumbai-

Pune-Mumbai on a single charge. Similarly Delhi-Jaipur-Delhi with a quick top-up at the JLR dealership or Tata Power's expanding EZ Charge network which JLR will obviously ride on the back of. Jaguar were ahead of the game with EVs, but it's a shame JLR squandered the opportunity to make the first move in the luxury EV space in India, letting Mercedes steal a march with the EQC.

Which is all the more relevant now because this is Jaguar's future. By 2030 Jaguar will only sell EVs, and in fact by 2025 itself every Jag will be electrified. No more snarling, growling Jaguars! I will join you in shedding a tear but I will also point out that very few of you are buying Jaguars. It's the LR in JLR that has been keeping the company afloat. Jaguar doesn't have a USP over a Mercedes, BMW or even Audi — going

full electric is probably the only way to reinvent the brand. And if the I-Pace is anything to go by, that reinvention will stay true to Jaguar's sporting roots.

The only challenge is to quickly re-wire your brain. And while at it, suitably beef up your internal organs too. ✉

**Sirish Chandran (@SirishChandran)**

## JAGUAR I-PACE EV 400 HSE

**Battery** 90kWh Li-ion battery **Motor** Two, PMSM motors **Power:** 394bhp **Torque:** 696Nm **0-100kmph:** 4.8 seconds (claimed) **Top speed:** 200kmph (limited) **Price:** ₹1.12 crore (ex-showroom)

**+** The most sporty luxury EV, fun to drive, great to look at

**-** Firm ride, laggy infotainment, tight on space

**evo rating** ★★★★★