

CLASSIC DRIVER

Jaguar F-Type V8 S: The cat that roars

Lead

Usually, it's bulls that are driven through the streets of Pamplona, but we tried it with a big cat instead: the new 495HP Jaguar F-Type V8 S...

The noise of a hundred thousand howling hellcats at siesta time? Old ladies in flowered aprons storm onto the road, even older men in dusty suits shake their heads and the entire local population of children runs waving and laughing after us, as the orange roadster with a louder-than-life roar flies through the small Spanish mountain town. It's one of the first warm days of the year and the sun beats down on lush green meadows and hills through which the ribbon of asphalt winds in large curves. Ernest Hemingway immortalised Pamplona, including the gnarled trees along the mountain roads to the east, in his 1926 novel 'Fiesta' (though he later feared its subsequent fame had spoilt the previously unknown town).





But it wasn't Pamplona that produced the biggest surprise of the day, or even the F-Type in general; it was the bloodcurdling sound that still rang in my ears a day later. If you drive the F-Type in Sport mode, thanks to the 'active exhaust system' you will find that every input to the throttle and every gearshift via the paddles is accompanied by such a fierce crackling and popping that one at first fears the petrol tank is in flames. Spare a thought for the Spanish goats with post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of our test drive.





In other ways, too, the F-type is overwhelming. In just 4.3 seconds you are at 62mph and top speed isn't reached until 186mph. Even at 90mph, however, there is such a storm of noise in the cockpit that conversation is near-impossible. The ecstatic topography of the mountains and valley roads, winding up from Burgui to 1,168m above sea level, only to spiral into gentle curves down to Lumbier, is predestined to test the agility of the F-Type.





The Alcantara-trimmed sports steering wheel is wonderfully precise at directing the roadster, while clever weight distribution makes it seem easier than it is (given its 1,665kg kerb weight) and the adaptive damping system provides extreme stability and security. Rarely has the driver been able to have such fun juggling throttle, brake and shift paddles.







On arrival in Pamplona, we switch back to the quieter comforts of automatic mode to negotiate the narrow streets of the old town, where the bulls are driven in the summer fiesta. I suppose we should travel in a Lamborghini through the town made famous by bulls – but who would have thought it: the big cat is a worthy competitor for the mid-engined aggressors of Sant’Agata. While we finish off the trip with Hemingway’s favoured Pastis and marinated octopus, heat shimmers over the bonnet of the Jaguar. Whether the English hero can win the battle against Porsche, Aston and so on, will start to become evident this week, when the first examples of the new Jaguar arrive at UK dealerships. It’s going to be a good summer.

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