

Taming the twisties

BY SUE MEAD

Who wants “the bends”? Rally drivers and sports car enthusiasts do! Therefore, the Mediterranean island of Corsica was the perfect location to try out the all-new 2018 Jaguar E-Pace, on the mountainous topography nicknamed the “Island of 10,000 Bends.” In addition to appealing to vacationers and hikers, Corsica is a driver’s paradise, as a significant swath of its roadways are carved out of majestic terrain that stretches from sea level to nearly 9,000 feet, creating paths of tight snaking pavement and ominous switchbacks.

We drove along portions of the route used by

the Tour de Course—the World Rally Championship’s Rallye de France; it was not only fun, but it provided an opportunity to assess the powertrain and traction capabilities, as well as the comfort, of Jaguar’s new compact crossover crafted to blend sports car traits with sport utility cargo and passenger-carrying capability, in a small, upscale British-designed package.

Two years ago, Jaguar’s bigger F-Pace sport ute came to market, and has since more than doubled the marque’s annual sales. So, it’s no surprise that the E-Pace now follows, adding breadth to the heritage brand’s lineup and fueling hopes that it could become Jag’s top-selling model, as skyrocketing growth continues in the CUV segment of automotive transactions.

On sale now, the all-wheel-drive E-Pace is available in two engine configurations and a collection of trims starting with the base E-Pace, S and SE; high-performance R-Dynamic S, SE and HSE (see pricing in sidebar); and a special E-Pace First Edition model with the base engine. All have AWD traction, with an Active Driveline available.

Up front are a bold grille and LED headlights with signature J-blade daytime running lights that give the CUV an assertive attitude that’s unmistakably Jaguar. The short front, rear juts and pinched style of the side windows are reminiscent of the Jaguar F-Type’s scheme. The pitch of the roofline meshes with a bold side window treatment, giving the compact utility vehicle a sporty, purposeful appearance. The body sides have Jag’s familiar fuselage-like profile; muscular haunches taper toward the rear and contribute to the powerful stance of this five-passenger vehicle, while sharp creases along the front and rear fenders further emphasize its strength.

Inside is a warm, premium interior, surrounded by soft trim door casings and accompanied by sleek chrome door handles. Top-grade leather cosets. A fully-electronic instrument cluster sits behind the iconic Jaguar steering wheel that is highlighted by paddle shifters. A 10-inch InControl Touch Pro infotainment system is standard, while an optional 12.3-inch HD virtual Interactive Driver Display and full-color head-up display provide

safety without distraction.

The compact road-runner offers a generous 61.7 cu.ft of storage space behind the first row, plus deep front and rear door pockets. The rear cargo area has a gear-holding capacity of 31.7 cu.ft, significantly larger than its cousin the Range Rover Evoque (20.3 cu.ft). A hands-free “powered gesture” tailgate makes it possible to approach the vehicle and place objects in the loadspace without using the remote key fob. Illumination adorns the door handles and storage areas.

Under the hood is a turbocharged 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine, producing 246 hp and 269 lb-ft of torque, with 0-to-60 mph acceleration in 6.6 seconds. The turbocharged four-cylinder that powers the R-Dynamic model makes 296 hp and 296 lb-ft of torque and speeds to 60 in 5.9 seconds, with a top speed of 151 mph. Both engines are mated to a new nine-speed automatic transmission.

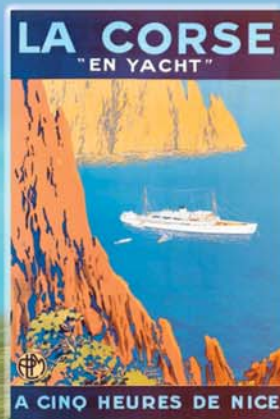
We drove the AWD E-Pace R-Dynamic S on pavement and along off-road tracks. Our top take-aways were its gorgeous looks, sporty handling and at-the-ready power that benefits from crisp shifts delivered by the paddle shifters.

Dynamic mode brings quicker shifts and also adjusts steering, throttle response, Adaptive Dy-

namics, AWD/Active Driveline, transmission shift strategy, dynamic stability control and torque vectoring. In Eco mode, upshifts come earlier to improve fuel economy.

Rain, Ice and Snow Mode provides enhanced stability in low-grip conditions, as well as revises the settings for Dynamic Stability Control, throttle response and transmission. Standard is All Surface Progress Control, a low-speed cruise control system that recognizes differences among road surfaces and improves handling in low-traction conditions. An all-new standard torque vectoring system reduces understeer and improves safety and stability in corners.

Also onboard is Jaguar’s exclusive Activity Key, designed for buyers with active lifestyles. This optional wristband key has no moving parts, requires no battery and is waterproof up to 59 feet deep. Jaguar’s connected car features bring a 4G LTE wifi hotspot, connected navigation, and InControl Apps. Available is a Meridian premium surround sound audio system, with 15 speakers packing 825 watts. Satellite navigation (standard on S, SE, and HSE models) benefits from dead-reckoning functionality that positions the vehicle even when GPS signals can no longer be received. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

BODY / SEATING	.....5-door SUV / 5-passenger
ENGINE	.....2.0L turbo 4-cyl
HP/TORQUE	.....246 hp / 269 lb-ft
	<i>R-DYNAMIC</i> : 296 hp / 295 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....ZF 9-speed automatic
DRIVETRAIN	.....AWD (standard or active)
0-TO-60 MPH	.....6.6 sec / <i>R-DYNAMIC</i> : 5.9 sec
TOP SPEED	.....143 mph / <i>R-DYNAMIC</i> : 151 mph
STEERING	.....elec power-assist rack & pinion
SUSPENSION	.....F: MacPherson strut w lower control arm, coils, passive damper & passive anti-roll bar; R: Integral multi-link w coils, passive dampers & passive anti-roll bar
BRAKES	.....F w/17" wheels: 12.8; R 11.8; Front w/18-21" wheels: 13.7
	<i>R-DYNAMIC</i> : Front 13.7, Rear 11.8
WHEELS / TIRES	.....18-, 19-, 20-, 21-inch
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....173.0 in / 105.6 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....37.4 cu.ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....6.4 in
CARGO VOLUME	.....24.2 / 52.7 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....4035 lb / <i>R-DYNAMIC</i> : 4175 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	.....18.1 gal
MPG	.....21/28/24 (city/hwy/comb)
	<i>R-DYNAMIC</i> : 21/27/23 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICES	.....Standard	.....\$38,600
	.....S	.....41,500
	.....SE	.....44,300
	.....First Edition	.....53,550
	.....<i>R-DYNAMIC</i> S	.....\$47,250
	.....<i>R-DYNAMIC</i> SE	.....50,050
	.....<i>R-DYNAMIC</i> HSE	.....53,100