

Range Rover Sport revised for 2012

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The best-selling Range Rover Sport has been given a new lease of life for the 2012 model year. A new eight-speed automatic gearbox contributes to lower fuel consumption (despite more power in some models), while a refreshed design inside and out visually differentiates the classy off-roader from its predecessor.

One can imagine that spirits at Gaydon are pretty high at the moment. Sales are up, as are profits, and parent

company Tata Motors is finally seeing some returns on its substantial investment into the Jaguar/Land Rover pairing. Following its debut in 2005, the Range Rover Sport has been one of the main driving forces behind Land Rover's resurgence, blending all-round class with dynamic ability and versatility. Having successfully built upon the Range Rover brand values, the Sport is once again the subject of our attention.





For the 2012 model year, Land Rover has performed an extensive overhaul of the capable off-roader. To begin with, the two 3.0-litre diesel engines now have lower fuel consumption and reduced CO2 emissions, and in our elegant 'Buckingham Blue' SDV6 (the more powerful of the two) test car, more power (252bhp). The less potent TDV6 continues with an unchanged 208bhp, although it does have significantly lower emissions thanks to a high-pressure injection system. The halo model retains the 5.0-litre supercharged V8 petrol engine developing 503bhp, equipped with a six-speed ZF automatic transmission.





For the pair of diesel engines, however, a new eight-speed transmission makes its first appearance in the Sport – it offers a wide ratio spread, and corresponds perfectly with the generous torque of the turbocharged engines, resulting in a tangible harmony. We put the ZF gearbox through its paces in the northeast of Mecklenburg, Germany, deliberately testing its decision-making – though we were unable to faze it, leaving us suitably impressed with its ability to second-guess our inputs. Shifts take just 200 milliseconds, and allow the Range Rover to spurt out of bends in a way normally associated with much smaller machinery.

The eight-speed gearbox can be controlled by either a rotary dial (common in the majority of modern Land Rovers/Jaguars), or via paddles on the steering wheel. Economy is improved, with our SDV6 version going from 30mpg to 32mpg and the TDV6 gaining an extra 1mpg on top of that – remarkable figures when you take into account the size and weight of the express train-esque Sport.



But a Range Rover must also be a front-runner in terms of design, luxury and equipment. New colours for exterior detailing are added (and the Autobiography and Limited Edition models gain some new interior features and colours), along with some subtle but effective styling modifications. Practicality is also boosted by

the addition of an electrically operated tailgate, which can be pre-set to rest at the owner's desired height. Also new to the Sport is a 7-inch touchscreen with 'Dual-View' technology, allowing the driver to follow navigation instructions while the passenger enjoys a DVD movie on the same screen. Improvements have been made to the voice control system, and the standard Harman Kardon infotainment has been boosted from 240W to 380W – or even 825W for the optional 17-speaker Logic 7 premium arrangement.



The revisions to the Sport help the off-roader to muscle its way to the top of its class once again. Prices start at £48,795 for the SE version of the SDV6, which includes electrically adjustable leather seats, Bluetooth phone preparation and rear parking sensors. HSE trim adds leather/Alcantara seats with driver's seat bolsters, supplemented by a rear-view camera and 20-inch wheels. The Autobiography starts at £66,695, while Land Rover asks £67,295 for the Supercharged 5.0-litre model. Prices for the TDV6 model are yet to be announced.

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