



## **How To Buy An XJS**

By LeRoy Sorrell

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This guide was created to help you save \$\$\$\$\$\$ thousands of dollars before you make your purchase rather than after buying the wrong car then you will be thousands in the hole with not much chance of recovery. With the purchase of the guide, you will receive a 15% discount for all of 2017.



## How To Buy An XJS

This guide and its contents is the result of close to 20 years of the author owning and servicing a 95 Convertible an 87 Coupe, an 87 XJSC and dismantling 15 XJS cars in the years of 87 to 95 with 13 of them being 94 and 95. This guide gives you a step-by-step detailed written description of the XJS and to assist you while performing a pre-purchase inspection for an XJS. During the inspection, you may find parts that need repair or replacement. This buyers guide describes these items and the estimated cost to repair or replace. This guide primarily addresses the XJS produced from 93 to 96 equipped with the inline six AJ6 engine which is the least costly to maintain and the late 93 to 96 known as the facelift model have a more modern look and tend to be even more desirable with the more robust appearance with its spoiler combined bumper covers. The 95 and 96 are the final two years and were equipped with a different AJ6 engine than the 93 and 94 and is a truly bulletproof motor.

I have been selling XJS parts since 2005 and too many times I have had customers buying several parts and inquiring about more and stating that they had just bought the car and was now discovering some issues that may be major and no idea what else they may need. A short-lived honeymoon can be the result. With the proper info in advance, your honeymoon with the XJS can last for years, which will reinforce your attraction to the XJS when you first began to dance with the idea of acquiring one. What I discovered was that the purchase many customers made was due to the attraction but without basic knowledge of the XJS. So I decided to make a contribution to the enjoyment of their choice of classic cars by creating a guide with some parts pricing that will help people purchase a proper XJS.

I urge you to eliminate the thought of buying cheap, restoring then resell for a great profit. This can happen if you live long enough but the truth is, it very rarely does. The restoring of what we know, as classic cars are fairly recent in the scheme of things. For the most part, until the late 80's most cars that we know of as collector cars today were just old cars, not collector cars. The idea of this becoming an accepted approach or as an investment was never the case such as art and other collectibles and no reference to the present term describing classic cars as rolling art. This was the result as some were disappearing and found rusting away where they sat, therefore becoming few and far in between and, as the appreciation for the talent and vision of the designers began to grow.



Most people who collected many cars that are now being discovered did so only because they liked the cars and perhaps thought they may one day become valuable. This too was a rare motivation. The increase in value was never much thought if any at all. If so we all would still have the cars we let get away or sold that are now worth a bundle.

One new car dealer in the mid-west of the States ended up with hundreds in a collection of very low mileage cars because these were trade-ins and he would only sell new cars and continued buying old buildings to house the cars without a plan of ever selling them.

This buyers guide is directed to the person who wishes to buy an XJS or any classic car because they want to experience the joy of owning and driving one. Not intended for speculators. Here I will list the most important criteria while considering your purchase.

### **The Search Begins**

First of all, do not buy the "Cheap Car" that deal that leads you to believe that you can have a great XJS for under \$5000 as this can be achieved, however, it is extremely rare. And as the value slowly increases, it will soon become a nearly impossible task. I say nearly as anything is possible but I assure you that only one person of many will have that story to share.

Example: you find an ad that states "just a little TLC and you will have a great car for only \$3000, \$4000 or \$5000". You know these ads or the one that someone mentions "a great opportunity to own an XJS for very little". And beware of the ad that lists all of the items that are standard in all XJS cars, "This car has AC, Power steering, power brakes, power windows" I call this type of ad boilerplate language that you see often. This seller should also state that the car comes with tires and has an engine! That seller is most likely a dealer who bought the car at auction for \$2000 and knows nothing about the car. The mistake that so many of us make is that beautiful machine the XJS, gets us so excited that we over look the flaws which to correct may cost much more than its worth and normally do. Thus ending up with an albatross and grief. Not to mention the great one that appears on the market a few days later for a few thousand more. Always buy the best car you can. Do not look for a project car, as this will cause you to accept too many issues in need of repair or service. Any classic car is an adventure; so do not look for trouble or you will find plenty.



Avoid body or paintwork if possible. If there is minor touch up, this is no big deal but if there are body and paint damage that requires repair and a total re-spray, walk away as this alone will cost at a minimum \$4,000. If you are thinking of driving one for a while that obviously needs paint or bodywork with the thought you will get to it one day, perish the idea because the Jaguar police will arrest you. There are still enough great examples of the XJS showing up for sale. You can pick up a very clean proper example for \$8,000 to \$13,000 in your color of choice however to achieve this, you must be patient.

### **Your Fact Finding Mission**

Always ask if there are any service records. This will tell you if the car was well cared for or not throughout the cars life and if there were any repairs that were repeated in a short period of time. This will indicate that there is perhaps a serious problem that was never properly sorted. Stay clear of the non-running car even if the interior and paint look great. There may be a blown engine or gearbox or worst case, both. If you repaired these yourself they could cost upwards of \$7000 and a lot of time and double in a shop. This guide is to prevent you from buying a gun and taking the car out of its misery or worst taking yourself out back and proceeding with the later. Although the XJS is slowly increasing in value, it is not yet in the XKE market and may never be, so although you can buy them relatively inexpensive, I urge you to be patient and not purchase the first one that you see unless it truly is a gem in the price range I mentioned earlier. For now, there are plenty around with the inline six but fewer facelift V12 93 to 95.

Spend the money to get the car up on a lift for full under body inspection that can be done in less than 30 minutes. Look for any leaks and if there are, be sure to identify and get a quote to repair the leaks. Pay special attention to fresh black paint or under body coating as this is a sign there is a cover up or rust repair. As well be very careful of bubbles anywhere in the paint, which is normally bondo work due to rust. You can use any tool or your knuckles to knock around such area on the bottom of the car for a change in the sound i.e. Solid, hollow or mushy indicating layers of rust. As well inspect the same area from inside the car. This is where pulling back the carpet in the footwell to inspect the floors will reveal this. You will need to unscrew the two screws on the carpeted panel in front of the seats to lift the mat under pad for inspection.



This will also reveal what is going on in the car and in the trunk area do the same when signs of repair are evident. However, if you see enough of this fresh black paint on the undercarriage and the seller cannot explain why it is present along with several other issues described in this guide, I would suggest you thank them for their time and walk away.

### **AC And Interior Switches**

Turn on the power by starting the engine to check all switches i.e. All lights interior and exterior including turn signals, radio, antenna, check seat controls located on the doors, lighter in the console, AC & Heat controls located on each side of the radio, temp and AC button on the left and fan on the right. Turn on and check all cycles and listen for a change in sound when switching to defrost and air should then be blowing from the top just under the windshield out of the plastic molding across the dash. Switch back and forth to make sure the blower motor speed cycles are functioning and switching from the top of the dash on defrost and from the dash vents on the face of the dash and below when switching from outside air to recycled interior air. This becomes more evident when driving and the vents are open, you can smell the air from outside then as you switch to interior recycled air, it will change. Also, check the AC vents to be sure you can adjust them by hand and they remain in the position you place them in. If they do not stay in the position you move them in, then they are broken. The center vent will cost around \$90 and the side vents around \$45 each. Check the mirror switch that is located on the dash just behind the ignition and is a round knob that you can turn to the left or right to adjust the door mirrors. If the switch is bad, it cost around \$65 to replace. If the mirrors are damaged, they will cost around \$95 each to replace. The rear view mirror located in the center of the windshield cost around \$55 to replace. Check the headlights and taillights for damage. If any are cracked, they are all very costly and hard to find and no longer in production, however, we are investigating the reproduction of the lights. The used headlights will cost around \$250 each. The corner/outer taillights will cost around \$400 each, the inner tail lights located on the trunk/boot lid will cost around \$275 each and the smaller lens on either side of the license plate is a lens only, not a light and is called a dummy light and only on cars in the States as the European license plates are longer. They will cost around \$75 each. If the car has been sitting and the glass is dirty, clean the windshield with water before turning on the wipers. I do not recommend using the windshield washer when very dirty, as the blades will scratch the glass from the dirt before they get wet.



If you do not have water to clean the glass, then you can pull the blades toward the front until they lock in the forward position then you can turn them on to see them moving in the up position when finish just return the blades back in the down position on the glass. The wiper switch is the handle on the right side of the steering wheel on the steering column, opposite of the headlight and turn signal, which is on the left handle. The windshield washer button is on the outer end of the wiper switch handle. Exclusive to the 92 to 94 are trip computers located in the dash just above the radio so you want to push the buttons on the sides to check the associated buttons. The earlier XJS had trip computers as well but are totally different in appearance, cost, and availability. 91 and older are many as it was used for several years and cost around \$45 but 92 to 94 very rare and cost around \$350 and the fastening screws can only be accessed from behind the dash by removing the radio or the switches on each side of the computer and they are pushed into place by clips on the sides. When dismantling a car, I leave the trip computer in until I remove the dash, as this is much easier.

### **Seats & Door Panels**

Check the leather on the seats for wear. This normally is apparent on the side bolsters on the outer edge of the seats and they should be a tight fit to the center of the seat. When lying to the side, this indicates the foam is worn and to repair could cost \$150 ea. When the seats are intact and showing some cracking/lines in the color only, this can be re-dyed for around \$50 each if you do it yourself but is not a quick solution as it takes several time-consuming steps. However, if the leather on most of the seats are cracked or split then it could cost \$500 to \$1,000 each to replace or recover. On occasion, we have seats in great shape that we sell for \$300 to \$450 ea. If the seats do not operate, this can be a result of a bad switch, which will cost around \$85 each. If the problem is in the seat computer/module, this will cost a minimum of \$150 each and are located on the floor under a carpet covered panel just in front of each seat fastened with two screws. Check the seatbelts to be sure they function properly. If they are not working, we can repair them with new straps for \$100 each. To check the condition of the door panels, run your palm along the interior of the door for smoothness without humps. The door panels on convertibles tend to get warped from exposure to moisture as a result of getting caught in the rain. If the panels are not flush with the doors and you can see the fastening clips then chances are the door panels need repair which will cost a minimum of \$250 ea.



Also, the door panel covers are made of vinyl however the door armrest is leather. Under the vinyl on the lower portion is a cardboard type material and that is why they warp when wet. We sell the replacement of this section in a waterproof material for \$150 each or we can sell you a complete panel in exchange of yours at \$350 ea. The wood on the doors and dash is real wood and the console piece known as the ski-slope is aluminum with a wood veneer. To replace the ski-slope will cost around \$180. To replace the dash pieces will cost around \$30 each and the door wood will cost around \$55, used or for a complete reconditioned set will cost a minimum \$350. If removing the wood on the door and rear side panels, you must remove the panels to access the screws fastened to the back of the wood. The dash wood has clips on each side and will pry out with a proper plastic interior panel-prying tool. We sell these tools.

### **Door Handles**

Check the interior and exterior door handles to see if they operate correctly. Also, place the key in the door locks to see if the doors and trunk lock and unlock when turning the key. Some of the cars have key fobs so check them as well and if the battery in the key fob is bad, you can buy it at a battery store for about \$5.00. If the interior door handle is broken it will cost around \$60 each to replace and the exterior will cost around \$100. If there is a defective trunk lock actuator it cost around \$150 to replace and door lock actuators around \$95.

### **Convertible Top**

If the car is a convertible, inspect the canvas for worn areas and holes around and below the rear glass as this will need to be replaced and will cost around \$1800. On occasion, we have a respectable gently used one for around \$800. In the trunk/boot is the spare with a color-coded cover matching the floor and inner panel. If the spare cover is missing it will cost \$60. On the right side there should be a matching cover over the convertible top pump assembly and there should be two turnbuckles on the front of it to fasten it to the battery tray. If the cover is missing it will cost around \$100 and are rare. If the turnbuckles are missing they are rare but we sell them for \$25 each. Please note that the top pump assembly on 93 and older is located in the storage box behind the passenger seat. The reservoir for the top pump should be 3 ¼ full and the fluid in it should be green, not red. For years so much miss-information has been spread about using transmission fluid. I know some Jaguar dealer parts and service dept staff who tell customers this.



Well here are the facts: the green oil is the proper oil to use and it is mineral oil and is the same used in Rolls and Bentley. I know from owning and servicing these cars. The only differences are the labels on the bottles. Transmission fluid causes the seals in the pistons to swell and disintegrate then leak inside the car and when really bad, saturate the rear carpet and ruin it. Ask me how I know this? Wow! What a mess! The top pistons/cylinders are located behind the rear panels where the quarter windows come up and go down. So if the fluid is red and low, then you will want to pull those panels to inspect. They are held on with plastic clips on the front of the panel and a couple on the front of the panel right behind the doors. Even if the fluid is red and to the full mark I would still inspect as someone may have seen it low and filled it not knowing that this was the result of a puddle on the floor under the rear seat where the pistons fluid will end up. We sell the proper fluid but please understand that if the transmission fluid has been in the car long enough, the damage may already be done so no one knows. Replacement of the pistons will cost around \$140 each. We normally have some used around for \$60 each.

This needs to be discussed when negotiating the price if indeed there is damage to the pistons. Now if the top is not working and the seller says the pump is bad, this will cost around \$400 to replace. To lower the roof you must place the car in park then engage the parking brake located on the floor between the seat and the door. The top will not operate unless you do this. Then you will see black handles above you on the roof frame of each side on the car as you sit in the seat. Press in the small button and pull the handles down. This releases the lockdown on the top. Then you will be able to push the roof switch located on the console to lower the top. It is the center of the row of three switches on the console in front of the armrest and the other two are the windows that should be marked but over the years may be worn off. As the top begins to lower, the two rear quarter windows should go down, if not chances are the motor on the regulator is bad and this part will cost around \$250 each. When the roof is all the way down, release the button and remember to disengage the parking brake. Once the top is in the down position you can push the lock handles back in the lock position as they were before you unlocked them. There should be an interior matching boot cover for the top that has hooks and snaps on it. The hooks fit into the canvas loops around the base of the top and the snaps fasten to the rear quarter panels and around the back of the rear seat in a late 93 to 96 or rear area if an early 93 or older prior to a rear seat. A 2+2 has a rear seat. If the top boot cover is missing, some colors are rare and will cost around \$300.



## **Body Inspection**



Check all body panels for alignment, as they all should be. The hood should line up with the fenders all the way across the front over the headlights. You can stand back to look at the front to see if it looks level. The rear of the Car can be easily checked by looking at the chrome on the face of the trunk lid with the chrome on the top of the corner/outer taillights. If the trunk lid is in the closed position and is above the rear quarter panels and evenly above the corner/outer lights then this is an easy adjustment by just opening the trunk and lowering the latch by loosening the two bolts then pushing the latch down a little then re-tightening and this may have to be repeated a couple of times to get it right, so you know this is no big deal while inspecting and is normal over time.

## **Test Drive**

When you start the car, lights on the dash will come on and should soon go off in about 15 to 45 seconds however periodically look at the engine temp to see if it runs hot. The temp should be around the middle of the gauge once the engine is up to operating temperature. While test-driving as tempting as it is, do not listen to music. This is when you need to pay attention to any sounds coming from the car. If there is any whining sound this could be a brake issue, front or rear hub bearings or the worst the differential. If there is grinding when you apply the brakes then for sure the rotors are bad and this normally occurs in the front. If there is a knocking sound it could be ball joints or tie rods. These are only suggestions as cars can have any of these sounds and could very well be something else. Make sure the transmission shifts smoothly and no jumping or jerking. Check the exhaust for smoke, when you first start the engine and when warm (around 5min) rev it up then look again by immediately going to the back and repeat when you return from the test drive. As well check the temp gauge again and if it is close to the red, then there is a cooling issue that could be a simple fix or it could be catastrophic. Either way, this needs to be identified before purchase.

## **Wheels And Tires**

Check the wheels and tires for wear. If the wheels are OEM, which you can google that year XJS to see what the OEM wheels look like, check for what is known as curb rash. This is a result of the wheels rubbing against the curb when parking, therefore normally apparent on the right side.



Also check for pitting on the wheels, which show as rough ugly spots in the finish. This is caused by salt in coastal areas or ice melt used by highway departments on the road in northern areas where it snows. It will cost upwards of around \$150 each wheel to repair or perhaps more to replace.

### **Under the hood/bonnet**

Opening and closing the hood differs from 1975 to 1993 and 1994 to 1996. When opening the 75 to 93, you would pull the lever on the left under the lower panel forward of the door, then you must place your hand forward of the windshield under the hood midway between the left side and the center and push the safety latch forward to release the hood then you can open it. Very important when closing, do not slam this hood. You must lower it from the same area near the latch in the center controlling with your hand until you hear the latch catching, return to the lever in the car and push it back into the lock position and you will see the hood lowering into the lock position. The 94 to 96 does not have a safety latch so after pulling the lever you just lift the hood open. Now for closing this hood, the manual says to pull it down then push each side down into the latch until they lock however a tech who serviced Aston Martins at a Bentley dealership in CT where they serviced my two Rolls showed me an easier and more stately way to close it if the hood is straight. From the front of the car standing in the center of the hood, pull to release the locking position on the hood struts then place hands on each side of the top of the hood then gently push down evenly until closed and locked. I have been using this technique since 2004.

### **Inspecting The Engine**

Look over all wires and hoses to see first if everything appears to be in place and for any unusual thin wires crossing over any components as this would be a sign that someone bypassed something. Have a good look at all the relays to be sure that they are all in place on the inner fenders on each side. The left side relays are exposed but on the right side, they are under a black cover. Check the oil level by pulling the dipstick on the left side of the engine and pay close attention to the color. If you can read the level through the oil and it slides easily off the dipstick then the oil is clean however if it is very dark, thick and gritty to the touch between your index finger and thumb then this indicates poor maintenance. And if the oil is gooey/sticky or gritty to the touch then most likely there are some very costly issues present.



As well if the oil shows any bubbles as in separation in the oil, this is most likely a head gasket problem and in such case, you may have some huge surprises so I suggest you walk away. Remember for now there are enough around in superb condition. Check the transmission/gearbox fluid located toward the rear on the left side of the engine just behind the oil. Check for level while the engine is running and warm, however, the most important is the color and smell. The color should be red but if closer to brown this is due to poor maintenance, and if it smells burnt then the unit is on its way out and needs rebuilding and should this be the case, then this may already show in the shifting while driving. Check the brake fluid located on the left side in a plastic reservoir above the brake actuator/booster that is a large metal unit connected to the firewall area. A well-maintained system will have clear fluid in it. Poorly serviced will look tan or brown. If it is brown, this is a danger zone and is an indication that moisture has damaged the brake fluid and sometimes this color tends to be particles of rust. It is important to bleed the system as part of your post ownership of the car as the moisture collected in the brake system will eventually cause rust in the system and will be costly to repair or worst cause brake failure when you really need it to operate correctly and safely. There has always been an old rule when acquiring a pre-owned car and that was to drain all fluids and replace with fresh new fluids. This is a great idea and practice when cars do not have current service records. Check the antifreeze level located in the black metal reservoir on the right side of the engine bay. This is where you will also fill with antifreeze. In front of this you will see a plastic reservoir with a cap on it, which is for the windshield washer fluid.

When there is an oily or greasy engine bay, something is worn and leaking. The old saying that all British cars leak is no truer than any other car. If neglected any car will leak so do not accept someone trying to sell you the car along with that story. First look at the cam covers for signs of leaking from the gaskets as they will leak when old and need to be replaced as in any car. While inspecting the under carriage, you will also want to look over the engine bottom and transmission pans for leaks and if they are wet, then look for a leak. The first line of defense in this case it to tighten the bolts but before you do, make sure that you are doing so according to the correct torque specifications or you can very easily make it worst by warping the pans. The power steering reservoir is black plastic and located on the right side of the engine bay below the fuses. If it is very oily and everything else in this area looks oily and dirty, chances are the top on the reservoir is on wrong. I have had many people ask to buy a reservoir thinking that this will



solve the problem but it is a simple fix. For some reason, Jaguar designed the top to screw on counter clockwise. So if it is not totally ruined, carefully try to fasten correctly and this will solve the problem.

I trust you now have enough info to find a proper XJS to enjoy and we at Classic Car Garage are always available to help you with any issues during your XJS relationship. We do all we can to answer any repair questions you may have by submitting them to [info@xjsparts.net](mailto:info@xjsparts.net) and we normally can respond the same day. Start your engines and begin the journey!