

2006 Jaguar X Type: Luxury for the Commoner

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Prices for top selling luxury cars can easily top \$50,000 when taxes, destination charges, and dealer prep fees are factored in. Generally, this isn't a problem as the customer who purchases a vehicle of this renown can afford the big price tag. However, automakers have learned that there is a market for "entry level" luxury cars for up and coming buyers who want the name without paying the steep price. The dilemma for automakers is not to water down the product line, rather to offer a car that upholds the marquee without diluting its value. One such car that has successfully filled that criterion is the Jaguar X Type, the focus of this review.

Admittedly, I am biased toward purchasing American cars even through the ups and downs of the U.S. car industry. Still, I am fascinated by changes that occur in vehicles throughout the world as I know that at some point those changes will be incorporated into cars traversing North American highways. One such feature that I have seen grow more commonplace is the use of all wheel drive to power automobiles. Subaru, for years, has offered all wheel drive across their model line, but few cars – foreign or domestic – have incorporated what has chiefly been the realm of sport utility vehicles.

In 2002 Jaguar introduced its first all wheel drive car, the X Type, a compact sedan. Fresh on the heels of the successful launch of the midsize S Type, the X Type's base price began around \$30,000 well within the range of other entry level luxury cars in its class including the Saab 9-3 and Audi A4. As a "bonus" all wheel drive was made standard supposedly giving the X Type an edge over most competitors. Unfortunately, it did not work out that way.

The original X Type performed poorly against the competition. Published reports stated that the car was too small, less dependable, and not as powerful as other cars in its class. Sales were sluggish for the first three years before Jaguar overhauled the car in time for the 2005 model year. For 2006, these changes were brought forward and include as many as one thousand component changes over the original model.

If you purchase an X Type, there is only one engine that comes with the car: a 24 valve 3.0L V6. Paired with a five speed automatic, the engine kicks out a respectable 227hp, not bad for a car weighing in at just over 3500 lbs.

The interior is atypical Jaguar: beautiful. Bronze Sapele wood, finished chrome, and leather appointments truly make the X Type a car lovely to behold on the inside as well as the outside. Standard interior features include an Alpine® 10-speaker, 320-watt sound system; 8 way power adjustable driver's seat; tilt/cruise; power everything; are some of the stand outs of the X Type. Optional equipment allows for owners to select Bluetooth® hands-free voice connectivity and SIRIUS® Satellite Radio. For ultimate luxury the Vanden Plas edition, formerly available on only larger Jaguars, is now available on the X Type. Larger wheels and an assortment of trim packages are the hallmarks of a Vanden Plas equipped car.

For the exterior, traction control is mated with the all wheel drive system to give an optimum level of handling and braking performance. Rain sensing wipers, power/heated door mirrors, and automatic headlamps are all features found on the X Type. Of course, one of the most sought after features is its looks: distinctive Jaguar lines, the trademark split grille, and quad round headlamps.

Base price for the X Type starts at about \$33,000 for the sedan and is three to four thousand dollars more for the Vanden Plas sedan and sport wagon models, respectively. Roughly half of all Jaguar sales come from the X Type and the entire company's success in North America is dependent on how well the X Type is received. Judging by the changes put in place by Jaguar, the X Type should continue to carry the lion's share of the market while keeping the Jaguar name front and center. Copyright 2005 -- **Matt Keegan** is a contributing writer for **Auto Parts Canada**, a wholesaler of fine **Jaguar parts and accessories** for your vehicle.