

Used Car Buying Guide: Jensen Interceptor



Grand Tourer Introduced 1966

Models Coupe, convertible

Price band £4000-£30,000

For: Effortless V8 power. Room for four. FF model has four-wheel drive and ABS. Stunning '60s looks.

Against: Rust. Fuel bills. Restoration costs astronomical.

The Interceptor is a brilliant combination of massive American V8 power and sharp Italian styling, incorporating a glass hatchback. In its day, the Interceptor cost more than the equivalent Aston Martin and was twice the price of a Jaguar E-Type. For their money, buyers got a very luxurious, fast car - and, if they'd ordered the FF, a technical tour de force, as this model had four-wheel drive and ABS brakes. That level of complexity means that a Jensen in need of repair can be a financial liability, which is worth remembering if you're considering buying one. Fuel consumption is alarmingly high, but not surprising considering the size of the engine, which comes in 6.3- and 7.2-litre capacities. Expect an average of 12-13 mpg. The Interceptor isn't for everyone - some consider it a bit flash - but if you want to make a big impression in something rare and beautiful, there is no better classic.

Interceptor 1966-91

1966 Jensen's previous C-V8 model rebodied by Italian coachbuilder Vignale, which builds the first 50 examples. Powered by a 6.3-litre Chrysler V8 engine. Up until 1969, 1024 are built. **1967-71** FF model has a longer wheelbase, four-wheel drive, anti-lock brakes, brushed-metal roof, bonnet bulge and dual side vents: 320 built. **1969-71** Mark 2 has revised suspension, engine and brakes, plus power steering and a new dashboard: 1128 built. **1971-73** SP six-pack model introduced with a 330 bhp six-choke carburettor engine and a vented bonnet: 232 built. **1971-76** Mark 3 introduced with 7.2-litre engine, vented disc brakes, alloy wheels and air-conditioning: 4255 built. **1974-76** Convertible model offered with a conventional boot and electric hood: 267 built. **1975-76** Hardtop mounted on convertible body: 54 built. **1984-91** Series 4 introduced with 5.9-litre V8 engine, fixed roof and conventional boot. Some convertibles offered. Just 18 built.

Interceptors to Buy

The original Mark 1s are the simplest and arguably the most stylish. However, the later Mark 3 models are easier to get parts for and have luxuries such as air-conditioning and power steering as standard. The high-performance SP version is very collectible, as are the convertibles. The later Coupes and Series 4s, on the other hand, have had less time to rust or go badly wrong. Only buy an Interceptor from an enthusiast owner who has invested consistently and has the bills to prove it.



Interceptors to Avoid

Any Interceptor that needs restoration. However cheap the Interceptor, unless you have full garage facilities and the skills required, making one roadworthy will be prohibitively expensive. FF models are interesting but complicated: some parts are either difficult to find or very expensive, and fuel bills are even bigger than for the standard model. Any Interceptor with a rusty body is an expensive liability.

Buying the Best Interceptor

Take your time. It's a rare car, and not everyone is prepared, or can afford, to look after them, so there are a lot of poor examples in circulation. It is essential to get an expert to check the car out, and joining the Jensen Club (01296 614072) or Jensen Owner's Club (01625 525699) is a useful first move. Mechanically the Interceptor is strong, but neglect causes overheating and oil leaks. Access to the engine is poor, so even minor jobs are complicated. The automatic gearbox is smooth, so if it is noisy then there could be trouble. Electrics are trouble-prone, but rust is the major bugbear as it spells death for Interceptors. Replacement panels are available, but never fit this handbuilt car perfectly. Parts are costly and some pieces of trim, like the Italian door handles, are difficult to find. So buy the best Interceptor you can afford, with lots of history, from an owner who obviously cared.

Interceptor Figures

Engine: 6.2

Speed: 133mph

Acceleration to 60mph: 7.3 seconds

Overall miles per gallon: 14

Engine: 6.2 FF

Speed: 130mph

Acceleration to 60mph: 8.1 seconds

Overall miles per gallon: 12

Engine: 7.2

Speed: 133mph

Acceleration to 60mph: 10.4 seconds

Overall miles per gallon: 14

Engine: 7.2 SP

Speed: 145mph

Acceleration to 60mph: 6.9 seconds

Overall miles per gallon: 13

Interceptor Alternatives:

Bristol 411 £8000-£18,000

Jaguar E-Type £7500-£35,000

Aston Martin V8 £7000-£40,000.