

I have in my possession the paragon of luxury, of massive ability, and of bridled attitude – the SVAutobiography Dynamic, of Range Rover’s new flagship models, exclusively handcrafted at JLR’s performance and personalisation arm, the ‘Special Vehicle Operations’ technical centre near Coventry.

There are three distinct Range Rover trim levels – Vogue, Vogue SE and Autobiography. The Sport is available in HSE, Autobiography or ultra-sporty SVR variants. The Autobiography adds numerous standard features which are optional further down the range. So, in short, what JLR have done is mix it up some, starting off with the basic SVO, adding a big dose of SVA luxury, and a chunk of the go-faster ‘Dynamic’, which bestows it with the same engine as the SVR – a 542bhp 5.0-litre supercharged V8.

JLR is at pains to point out that this car is not an SVR, even though it shares the same engine (with an added dollop of etiquette). They explain that the wheelbase issue has been simplified – the Dynamic has a standard wheelbase while all non-Dynamic SVAutobiography has long wheelbase, designed especially for owners who are driven around.

I’m off to pick up a few cases of the sparkling wine from Gusbourne Wine Estate, which sits on the low slopes of the ancient Romney Marsh in Appledore, Kent. Negotiating narrow country lanes, I conclude the SVAutobiography Dynamic to be a triumph with massive road presence, owning the tarmac beneath its 22” alloys. In Drive mode, its serenity personified; turn off traction control, play with the paddles and it turns into something mental.

But, this isn’t just another drag racer. JLR engineers have dropped and firmed up the sport suspension, retuned the engine, reworked the dampers and hydraulic anti-roll system; they’ve done some serious recalibration too, added tech which monitors and adjusts the front and rear axles independently, and the steering rack, is also borrowed from the wild SVR.

## RANGE ROVER SVAutobiography DYNAMIC

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turn off the traction  
controls, and it turns into  
something deranged.**

Its arrival is nicely muted via the quad-exhaust system which, under duress, delivers a full-blooded V8 rumble. On the road the throttle is less aggressive than the SVR, but the overall propulsion is still enough to make this car the fastest Range Rover in history, with 0-60mph in of 5.1 seconds.

I arrive at Gusbourne and, to stretch my legs, take a walk around the vineyard. I come across Laura Rhys, Master Sommelier, inspecting the vines. “We hand-pick our grapes,” says Rhys, “and ensure only the best bunches are brought into the winery. Those

that don’t make the quality inspection are mulched back into the soil.”

She explains the bunches are gently pressed then fermented in stainless steel tanks and oak barrels. Once bottled, the second fermentation takes place with yeast and sugar added. It then rests for three years, allowing the wine and the yeast to get acquainted and eventually delivering champagne-like aromas and flavours. This is followed by a week of ‘riddling’ (tilting) on a gyro-palette. The yeast is then disgorged by freezing the neck of the bottle and finally the champagne corks and muselets (wire cages) are added. The sparkling wine is then left for a further six months, giving it time to ‘cork age’ and knit back together again, before it’s labelled.

In the tasting room I met Gusbourne’s current caretaker, Andrew Weeber – a retired orthopaedic surgeon, who lives part of the year in Zurich.

With a single goal in mind of creating the world’s finest wines, Weeber took over Gusbourne in 2004, and set about changing his ‘turnip patch’ into a vineyard, creating an English sparkling wine that stands alongside other big hitters. The only way he felt this would happen was to source the grapes solely from Gusbourne vineyards. This, Weeber felt, would ensure the quality of the grapes. With this vision in mind, he chose to plant predominantly Burgundian clones in the vineyards. Although the yields were lower than other classic

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» clones, the resultant fruit delivered significantly more flavour, making them ideal for quality sparkling wine production.

Weeber pours me a generous glass of Gusbourne Rosé and invites me to join him on the patio where he tells me the history of the estate, which dates to William the Conqueror. "It wasn't until 1410 that mention was made of Gusbourne Estate in John de Goosbourne's will," says Weeber. "Since then the estate passed to numerous dignitaries, including Philip Chute, a man of distinction and wealth, who was held in high esteem by Henry VIII. The 'Goosbourne' family crest, which depicts three geese, still adorns the small parish church in Appledore." I turn the bottle to inspect the label and see Gusbourne pays homage to their heritage, using these same three geese on their labels.

"We don't take short cuts," says Weeber. "We're guardians of their vineyards, guiding the grapes through the winemaking process, respecting the natural elements involved in winemaking and favouring minimal intervention."

Weeber walks me to the car. "Nice wheels," he smiles, running his hands along its flank, picking up on the exterior styling like the side vents, the mean-looking bonnet, the graphite front grille and the bumper accents. I invite him to sit at the controls.

He eases in, caressing the steering wheel. Sitting in its sublimely comfortable, ergonomically flawless seats, with fantastic visibility, delivers a sense of occasion. It doesn't feel like a massively tall sports car, but rather a very nippy SUV.

I explain that inside, there's masses of opportunity for personalisation, from two-tone paint to pretty much every kind of opulence you can dream of - like a pair of fold-out aluminium tray tables from the centre console, complete with a refrigerated locker that can take two tall glasses and a small bottle.

"So, what's the damage," Weeber enquires. "£132,800," I reply. He considers this for a moment then replies, "It may not make fiscal sense on paper, but that misses the whole point."

He slips a bottle of bubbly into the fridge locker and eases across to the passenger seat, nodding me into the driver's seat. "I bet she has exceptional off-road capabilities." I slide open the panoramic roof, fire her up and head up the dirt track leading to the top of the estate. "Let's see," I announce. **AC**

[www.landrover.com](http://www.landrover.com)

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