

GEAR & GADGETS

COOL BRITANNIA The Range Rover PHEV has an estimated all-electric range of 51 miles.



LAND ROVER

RUMBLE SEAT / DAN NEIL



A Hybrid Rover With Range That Justifies Plugging In

IN THE FOLLOWING paragraphs I will provide some context that consumers need in order to make an informed decision regarding the test vehicle, a plug-in hybrid version of the 2023 Range Rover. Take that, ChatGPT.

But prior to, I would ask readers to imagine themselves on the bridge of this boxy dirigible, in the pilot's seat, cruising at an altitude where turbulence is a rumor and the hood's horizon goes on forever. Within a radius of about 50 miles, and up to speeds of 87 mph, the fully charged PHEV can operate on electrons alone, proffering seamless, swelling acceleration, from stoplight to stoplight, at every dreamy whim. The drivability, the effortlessness—Britannia rules.

Do you miss the gas engine? You do not.

The automaker formerly known as Jaguar Land Rover (now just JLR) had a very newsy April. The Gaydon, U.K.-based house of brands announced it would invest GBP 15 billion to accelerate its transition to an EV-first portfolio. Among the initiatives: JLR will kill its gas-electric platform for midsize SUVs in favor of a battery-electric skate. That suggests vehicles like Range Rover's Velar and Evoque will be EV-only within a few years, but JLR has not confirmed.

The big stock will carry on with the company's large-vehicle flexible format, accommodating gas-electric powertrains as well as electric. Today's guest is the luxury-prestige brand's first extended-range PHEV, powered by a

2023 RANGE ROVER SE 440E PHEV



Base price \$110,500

Price, as tested \$128,475

Powertrain Plug-in gas-electric hybrid, with 3.0-liter turbocharged inline six-cylinder; eight-speed automatic transmission with integrated traction motor assist (140.8 hp); 31.8 kW lithium battery; electronically locking center differential with two-speed transfer case; permanent AWD.

Power/torque 434 hp/457 lb-ft

Length/wheelbase/width/height 198.9/118.0/87.0/73.6 inches

Curb weight 5,940 pounds

0-60 mph 5.3 seconds

EPA fuel economy 51/21 mpg (electric+gas/gas only)

Cargo capacity 83.5/40.7 cubic feet (behind 1st/2nd row seat backs)

3.0-liter inline-six gas engine assisted by a 140.8-hp e-motor. For reference, the Range Rover's all-electric range outdistances the Toyota Prius Prime (44 miles).

The Range Rover is also one of the first PHEVs capable of rapid charging (up to 50 kW), restoring 80% of range in under an hour. These two attributes (longer range, faster charging) address the main reasons first-generation PHEV buyers skip or abandon charging altogether. *C'est futile.*

This brings up another problem with luxury-performance PHEVs hiding in plain sight. The more expensive the vehicle, the more affluent the owners, and therefore

the less likely they are to plug it in. Which figures. Who would drop six figures on this aristocratic battle tank and then bother to plug in like a bloody peasant?

But some will, surely, so for the record: In the WLTP test cycle, the vehicle has a nominal efficiency of 65.1 mpg-e in EV mode. In gas-electric hybrid mode—typically balancing demand, drivability and efficiency—the system gets 51 mpg-e, for as long as the battery lasts. After that, operating in what might be called mild-hybrid mode, the efficiency plummets to an estimated 21 mpg—respectable for a three-ton gourmet food truck, but still....

Owners' failing to charge PHEVs

is one of the reasons the technology, once the darling of air regulators in Europe, China and California, has lost its luster in those markets. The regulatory pullback has added urgency to many automakers' plans for electrification, including some, like Hyundai's Genesis brand, which are foregoing PHEV tech altogether and going straight to battery electrics.

I hate myself for loving Range Rovers. I'm such a closet Tory. The magic in this edition is its polished, hyperclean exterior design, with flush-fitting glazing and roof pillars, grille and taillamp assemblies, door handles—the whole five meters worth of SUV, as seamless

as a silk stocking. While this looks nice, the vacuum-sealed surfacing practically emerges from the numbers, as both lower aero drag and reduced wind noise are critical in electrified vehicles.

JLR's chief creative officer is Professor Gerry McGovern, OBE. It would not be too much to say that McGovern's reign as director of design has been its salvation in recent years, as Range Rover has morphed into a luxe-y, blingy trophy of the equestrian class, an after-hours ambulance service for drunk-stiff footballers. His designs have compelled a generation of luxury SUV buyers to bite an apple they strongly suspect has worms.

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The PHEV option is only available in the SE trim level (base price \$110,500). However, our "Belgravia Green" test unit had been dipped in the Styx of optional equipment, emerging with the black contrast roof, black brake calipers and the "Shadow Exterior Pack" of lacquer-like black trim.

Inside, our machine leveled up with the Hot Climate and Technology packages as well as the "Tailgate Event Suite," offering a pair of seats integrated into the split tailgate. The total out the door was \$128,475.

If you think that's a lot, you need more banging friends. Range Rover's flagship, the V8-powered, all-but-bespoke SV, starts at \$209,000 and offers a range of "exclusive materials, curated design themes and greater scope for personalisation. ..." Great, I'd like a scratching post for my ocelots.

Our test car drove like a stealth elephant. Range Rover calls the PHEV an "extended-range plug-in hybrid," conferring the notion that the vehicle is programmed to drive and behave largely the same, to deliver the same glycerine-slick haptics at the steering wheel, throttle and brakes, whether or not the engine is running or the battery is charged. Engine and e-motor torque both get ratioed by the 8-speed gearbox and then to the two-speed transfer case, center diff and axles. There are an array of drive and terrain modes that deliver power and conserve energy in different ways.

In this respect the ultrarefined Range Rover PHEV offers a glimpse of coming attractions: You barely hear or feel the IC-propulsion unit cycling on and off anyway so you won't miss it when it's gone. The company says the revised unit-body is up to 50% stiffer than the previous generation, helping to reduce cabin noise and transient vibration by 24%. At highway speeds, the loudest sound is distant static from the 21-inch all-season tires. Additionally, active noise control is baked into the Meridian 3D Surround Sound System with speaker-emitters in the headrests producing a masking sub-audible signal that's as if your hearing aid just died.

Want one? I heard that.

Rings vs. Things

Five health-tracking rings, ranked by how well they might pass as handsome jewelry

WHEN YOU think "fitness tracker," you probably imagine a bulky watch. But since the 2015 release of the Oura smart ring, similar devices intended to pass as jewelry have been robustly collecting sleep and activity data. Given that such rings cost about the same as smartwatches like the Apple Watch SE or Garmin Vivoactive 4S, but are more discreet, it's no surprise that a glut of new rings has emerged.

Evidence suggests they track data as effectively as those smartwatches and cheaper wristbands like the Fitbit Charge 5, says Michael Snyder, director of the Center for Genomics and Personalized Medicine at Stanford University, who studies wearable technology's role in health tracking. But accuracy is just one part of the story. These rings are so small, you'll often forget you have one on, improving the odds you'll never take it off. "That gives them time to learn your patterns and what's normal for you," said Snyder.

Still, not all smart rings are designed equal—some are handsome, others skew...medical. Here are five of the newest, organized from left to right by how well they pass as bona fide bling. —Ashley Mateo



PREVENTION CIRCUL
The Good This ring takes real-time heart-rate and blood-pressure readings and measures blood oxygen saturation, a biomarker for circulation issues that can flag concerns like Covid-19 or sleep disorders.
Concerns To ensure the ring continuously monitors daily activities, exercise and sleep, you have to manually activate tracking on the companion app.
Can It Pass as Jewelry? No. Due to the sensor, this ring's chunky plastic frame has a noticeable bulge that protrudes toward your palm.
\$299, Bodimetrics.com



CIRCULAR RING
The Good Using data from its motion and heart-rate sensor, the ring evaluates your fatigue and stress levels so that it can guide you toward a more complete post-workout recovery.
Concerns The ring is water-resistant, but its changeable metal shells seem a bit flimsy.
Can It Pass as Jewelry? In certain conditions, perhaps. Discreetly housed sensors (no ugly bump!) and an outer shell made of metal helps, but the exposed plastic parts make it look less sophisticated.
Available in September, \$284, Circular.xyz



ULTRAHUMAN RING AIR
The Good The ring tracks how well and long you sleep plus stress levels and movement throughout the day. Its app promises to help you use this data to optimize your metabolism.
Concerns For more detailed insights, you have to purchase a separate \$297 glucose monitoring patch, which measures blood sugar levels. There is currently a wait list.
Can It Pass as Jewelry? Maybe. The titanium material has certain elegance, but its matte black color feels heavy and might not suit everyone's style.
\$299, Ultrahuman.com



OURA HORIZON
The Good A 2022 study from the journal *Sensors* suggested that the Oura ring can evaluate sleep quality almost as well as lab tests. And you don't need an advanced degree to understand the "sleep score" Oura shares each morning.
Concerns You have to pay a monthly fee to access the Oura's analysis.
Can It Pass as Jewelry? Yes. The titanium ring comes in five different metal colors, including a cheery rose gold.
\$349 plus \$6 a month after the first month, OuraRing.com



EVIE RING
The Good Evie tracks heart rate and activity, but also, unlike rivals, one's menstrual cycle.
Concerns Evie hasn't been cleared by the FDA as a medical device yet, but the company has applied. If approved, that means user data will be secured to HIPAA standards.
Can It Pass as Jewelry? Absolutely. The open design is stylish and strategic; the gap allows for a comfortable fit even when fingers swell from hormonal fluctuations.
Available in September, price to be determined, EvieRing.com