



ROBOTS

steal the show



Last month, 18 readers took advantage of our Readers' Day visit to the Land Rover Experience Halewood, on Merseyside. But, as contributing writer **Stuart Render** reports, you don't have to be a petrol head to enjoy it!

There's a family living deep inside **JAGUAR LAND ROVER'S HALEWOOD** manufacturing plant near Liverpool. It's a family that never leaves, never eats, never sleeps and never complains. It is, of course, the family of robots that have transformed car manufacturing.

Halewood, Liverpool is home to the **RANGE ROVER EVOQUE** and **DISCOVERY SPORT**. On 11th July *GTO* readers were given the opportunity to take the '**MANUFACTURING TOUR**'. It's a tour that covers every stage of the assembly process including the sheet metal press, robotic body construction and the final preparation stages before delivery of the finished product.

The modern, purpose built **HALEWOOD VISITOR CENTRE** is just across the road from the factory. This is the meet and greet for both the '**MANUFACTURING TOUR**' and for the '**TASTER DRIVE**', both part of the '**LAND ROVER EXPERIENCE**'. Sadly, on this visit, there wasn't a chance to take a vehicle over Halewood's off-road track, but watching other visitors returning from their '**TASTER**'

with beaming smiles, it's clearly a lot of fun.

The '**MANUFACTURING TOUR**' normally lasts for about three hours, but because we were having lunch (a tasty buffet), we spent around four hours on-site. Our group was hosted by **JOHN** and **SEAN**, two personable, knowledgeable and, often, amusing tour guides. We gathered in the spacious briefing room at the visitor centre, where, incidentally, there's plenty of free car parking and spaces for two coaches.



An introductory five-minute film tells the story of **JAGUAR LAND ROVER**, highlighting that since the company was bought by the Indian company Tata in 2008, and with the introduction of the Evoque and other models, it is now recognised as a great British manufacturing success story.

After a safety briefing, we were kitted out in yellow hi-viz jackets, ear plugs and protective eye glasses. Equally importantly we were issued with personal radio receivers and earphones, which ensured we heard everything our guides said even in the noisiest parts of the plant. Larger groups, like ours, are split and a minibus took us the short distance from the visitor centre to the factory.

The tour involves around a mile and a half of walking and there are a few steps along the way as you gain height to look down on different sections. In these places wheelchair users follow another short route.



ABOVE & BEYOND

PRICES

Adults pay £49, children (10-16) pay £39. There isn't a specific group rate, but Jaguar Land Rover says that anyone mentioning *GTO* magazine when they make an enquiry and book will receive a discount of between 5% and 10%.

TIMES

Tours operate Monday to Friday at 9am and 1pm.

FURTHER INFORMATION

www.halewood.landroverexperience.co.uk

We've had some great feedback and the comments below are typical of the letters and emails we received.

Julie Bookbinder from the Over 50s club in Leeds wrote: "There were only two females in the party and I thought I may be a little bored but I wasn't. I really enjoyed it and the guide was very good."

Anthony Hallam from Bewdley Baptist Church also enjoyed the tour and adds: "I already have a few people interested in a future visit."

Meanwhile John Flanagan from the Ribble Association of the National Trust, writes: "I thoroughly enjoyed the day. Presenters and staff were very helpful and it was a very interesting manufacturing site and I pay credit to the entire workforce. It's encouraging that they reinvest profits and have a very positive world-wide reputation."

So, what do you get to see? The aforementioned robots are definitely a highlight, as is the huge hydraulic Press that stamps out body panels. You get up close and personal with the production lines as the cars go through the manufacturing process.

But this isn't just a factory that allows visitors inside. At various stages on the tour there are small displays that allow the guides to explain what's going on. It's nicely done.

At the end a minibus took us back to the visitor centre where we enjoyed refreshments and we given a **PERSONALISED CERTIFICATE** to take away as a souvenir. The tour price includes tea, coffee and biscuits. You can include lunch for an additional cost.

This is a premium priced tour, but for three hours of constant fascination, even wonderment, it offers value for money. Motoring fans will love it, but I defy anyone not to be impressed by the scale of the plant and the sheer ingenuity that has been used to transform a sheet of metal into a gleaming motor car in just 48 hours. **GTO**