

Daimler V8 Saloon - buying tips

You could almost write this guide with one word - RUST! But before we discuss that, let's consider how the Daimler saloon came about.

Jaguar launched the Mark I in 1955. It was a very advanced car of monocoque construction, with very modern styling and 6 cylinder OHC engines of 2.4 and 3.4 litre capacities. It was in production until 1959 by which time, nearly 40,000 had been sold.

Enter the Mark II, This had a greater dlo (automotive designer speak for daylight opening - window glass to you and me!) plus a wider track and the option of a 3.8 engine. Although the two models looked very similar, most body panels were different. An abundance of exterior chrome work was matched by a plentiful supply of wood veneered surfaces inside.

Following Jaguar's purchase of Daimler, in 1962 the Daimler 2.5 litre V8 was introduced. It featured the traditional Daimler fluted grille, split bench front seats with individual armrests, automatic transmission and a power steering option. In 1967, a manual transmission alternative was offered with optional overdrive just before the 1967 facelift. Narrow bumpers and a reduction in interior wood were offset by the standardisation of reclining seats, power steering and an alternator. On balance I believe the 1967 facelift was a positive for the Daimler saloon and that face lifted cars look more modern.

So what should you look for when buying a Daimler saloon? Firstly, keep in mind that only around 18,000 Daimlers were made and of these, less than 5,000 were the face lifted version. Although Daimler bumpers are interchangeable with Jaguar ones, it is becoming difficult to source the narrow ones and this applies to overriders too.

Very few examples will have got through life without attention, especially to the bodywork. It is worth pulling back the carpets along the sill to see whether there is any wiring running under the carpet. It should run through the sill so if it is under the carpet, you know the sills have been replaced and the wiring forgotten or, more likely, the sills have been patch repaired and the wiring inside damaged. The sills are particularly vulnerable to corrosion and it is important to ensure the inner and outer sills are in good order. So probe around, preferably with car on a lift and make sure you know if any corrosion exists. Also look carefully at the front arches, the front lower apron, sidelight pods, front crossmember crows foot, jacking points and around the rear lower panels particularly around the back of the fuel tank. Examine the inner rear arches - there is a seam that rusts badly from behind the rear seat to the bottom of the boot floor.

The lower portion of all 4 doors are vulnerable as indeed is the boot (trunk) lid and the bodywork at the bottom of the radiator grille. Under the bonnet (hood) the inner wing panels can flex and rupture around the hinges. Look inside the boot and the fuel filler for rust - it's worth taking out the spare wheel to see if the boot floor will need repairing/replacing.

As you can imagine, repairs to corrosion can be very expensive and it is very difficult to carry out an inspection on the vendors drive. Unless you know the car and its history well, try to get it onto a ramp to inspect before making any offers.

Most Daimlers are automatic - from April 1964 they incorporate D1/D2 controls. The Borg Warner type 35 is a 3 speed and is mated to a 4.27:1 final drive (4.55 on manual transmission.) The result is a box that shifts relatively smoothly (type 35s were the motor industry standard auto trans in the sixties) but it is a little breathless on today's motorways. This is easily solved by installing a 3,54 axle which gives you a comfortable 25mph per 1,000 rpm and makes 70mph cruising a pleasure. The 2.5 litre engine has plenty of torque low down and can handle the lower (numerical) axle ratio effortlessly.

Suspension is durable but wears out in time. I see many saloons that are riding an inch (or two) low that basically need new springs and dampers. Manual steering has been described as a test of manhood. PAS was standard on the facelift model but is becoming increasingly difficult to service. You can add systems from newer Jaguars but this is not straightforward so the best

alternative is probably the full electric system rather than the electric/hydraulic hybrid conversion which I have found to be noisy. I have yet to fit a full electric system so watch this space.

The door handles, rear light plinths and reversing light surround are all made from Mazac and tend to pit after years in service. Depending on the degree of pitting, re-chroming may be possible otherwise new replacements are required which are freely available but expensive.

The interior is leather and there is a lot of it so it's expensive to retrim. There's a lot of wood which degrades over time especially in sunlight so this will need re-veneering and/or polishing. There are not too many craftsmen capable of doing this work so, you've guessed it, it's expensive. Re-chroming is another expense which has increased exponentially in recent years, The wide bumpers on early models are especially expensive while the slim bumpers still cost a lot. The wise buyer will try to get a handle on these costs before making an offer.

Fortunately the engine and transmission are straightforward. The engine has good longevity and performs well. Repairs can be expensive as an eight cylinder engine inevitably costs more than a six to overhaul. The Type 35 gearbox will generally get you home but will need specialist attention if it is not performing to standard. The rule here is "try before you buy" and look out for slow changes and snatching.

The good news is that there are a lot of cherished Daimlers around that are in excellent order and require little more than routine servicing and a huge support network providing parts and expertise. If you like a challenge, please make sure you have a very firm handle on restoration costs and factor this into your budget.

In summary, the Daimler Saloon is a beautiful car. It is tranquil and reassuring and handles better than the 6 cylinder models due to its weight distribution. Daimler prices still lag Jaguar but are starting to climb as people recognise their true worth.

Chassis numbers start at 1A1001 for RHD and 1A2001 for LHD. the 1967 facelift models start at 1K1001 and 1K3001 respectively¹

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