



RANGEY'S AMERICAN CONNECTION

The Honorable Henry Broughton is taking a trip down memory lane in a Range Rover CSK

Range Rover. The iconic, super premium SUV that is instantly recognizable anywhere in the world is in many people's eyes quintessentially British. Launched in 1970 (and since then the choice of well-heeled farmers, aristocrats, and captains of industry), it is without a doubt the king of the 4x4s. However, dig a little deeper and you will find that many of its early influences were actually American. So without Uncle Sam the world may well have been without the mighty "Rangey."

The Range Rover has its roots at the end of the Second World War in the original Land Rover, an off-road vehicle inspired by the amazingly successful Willys Jeep that kept the American Army moving around Europe and the Far East during the conflict. The Land Rover was utilitarian in the extreme, and it became clear by the late 1950s that customers wanted something that had supreme off-road capability but was also good to drive on the road.

However, apart from a couple of concept vehicles, nothing was done until it became clear from America, where vehicles such as the Ford Bronco and Jeep Wagoneer were thriving, that the sports utility vehicle (SUV) was going to prove very popular. So exasperated was the president of Rover's USA operations by the lack of suitable vehicles from Britain to compete with this new crop of SUVs that he fitted a Series II Land Rover with a Buick V8 engine and sent it back to Rover in England. The levels of refinement over anything offered by Land Rover

were enough for management to give the green light and, in 1967, under the guidance of Charles Spencer King, the Range Rover project was born and delivered in 1970 as a two-door off-roader with excellent on-road capabilities. The engineering department rather than the design department were responsible for the famous two-door shape, which was fittingly later exhibited in the Louvre in Paris as an "exemplary work of industrial design."

Without a doubt the rarest and coolest Range Rover of all time has to be the CSK, and it is in one of these that I am going to take a spin today. I must confess a tinge of nostalgia, for a CSK was the first car I owned after leaving high school. That first summer was spent driving all over Europe in it with friends, having an absolute blast and treating the world as our oyster. Only 200 were ever made (mine was 181, according to a very neat little plaque on the dash) and they all came in jet black with a tan interior, chrome fenders and huge driving lights. It looked fabulous then and it still does now, an amazing feat considering the design is nearly 50 years old.

Having loaded the picnic hampers in the back I clamber on board and swing the impossibly long and heavy door closed. Everything is instantly familiar, and I literally feel 18 years old again—some special cars really do have that ability. The Buick-derived V8 motor fires up with a muted roar and settles to a very pleasing burble, and I'm off to the countryside with my wife to find our perfect picnic spot.

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HAMPTONS DRIVE

There is something magisterial about the driving position in this wonderful machine. You sit very high and can see everything thanks to the huge expanse of glass. Thanks also to the coil spring suspension, which means these cars can go further off road than most owners would ever dare take them, the ride on the road is very comfortable, and we blissfully waft along the lanes of Suffolk. However, I am forced to remind myself that they do roll around corners rather more than I recalled—cue a slightly panicked moment when I thought I wasn't quite going to make it around one bend and caught a slightly surprised sideways glance from my darling wife. However, all was well, and in memory of the summer of '97 I have the windows down and radio up with Van Morrison's "Days Like This" just topping off my trip down memory lane.

As we arrive at our favorite picnic spot and deploy what is almost certainly one of the best features of the Range Rover for outdoor dining (the folding-down tailgate) I reflect that there is simply no other 4x4 I can think of that offers such a blend of old-school charm, go-anywhere style and downright cool. In the original Range Rover Charles Spencer King created a legend that lives on. Or as I read the other day "If you can afford to have one as your second car, you simply can't afford not to have one." ♦

Range Rover CSK: Luxury Driving Experience

The history behind Charles Spencer King's
limited edition two-door Range Rover

250,000: the number of Range Rover CSKs rolled off the production lines in September 1990
12: the number of CDs that can be in the auto-change CD player
200: the number Range Rover CSKs that were made in the UK



114: the increased maximum speed, making the Range Rover CSK the fastest ever production Range Rover
3.9: liter-size of the V8 Petrol Injection Engine in 1990
4.3: liter-size of the V8 Petrol Injection Engine now
5: the number of speeds for the manual transmission
4: the number of speeds for the automatic transmission
2010: the year Charles Spencer King, designer of the Range Rover CSK, died
60: the mph it hit in under 10 seconds
£28,995: the price of the Range Rover CSK in 1990
£69,995: the price of a Range Rover CSK now
6: the number of speakers in the stereo system
16: the diameter in inches of the alloy wheels
1991: the year Range Rover CSK No. 153 was first registered to a Mr. Greaves
2013: the year of its extensive rebuild