



# Black Magic

Whipping through Wales in the Rolls-Royce Wraith Black Badge

After a week of seclusion in the Welsh countryside, my wife and I find ourselves chafing at the thought of returning to London. But the journey is not without its consolations: a delectable lunch at a country inn along the way, the welcoming arms of The Ritz at the end of the road, and the Rolls-Royce Wraith Black Badge hugging every stretch of pavement in between.

The Black Badge comes in a shade so profoundly dark it seems to absorb rather than reflect the scant light of the midwinter sky. This car is no mere exercise in aesthetics, however; it's the most powerful Rolls-Royce ever, with a 624-horsepower V12 tuned for a distinctively sharp response and a transmission engineered to unleash massive yet utterly seamless waves of torque. Its steering, braking, and suspension have likewise been modified for a greater degree of driver engagement, while still cossetting occupants on the magic carpet ride for which Rolls-Royce is renowned.

The byways of Mid Wales are confoundingly narrow, an impression that's only accentuated by the high, impenetrable hedges that line their every mile.

The Wraith Black Badge, the most powerful Rolls-Royce ever

While the Wraith takes up more than its share of the road, it glides along unencumbered, as oncoming motorists shy to the side at the sight of its inky black mass. I slow to ease through the even narrower streets of the small market town of Rhayader, where, on spotting the Wraith, a pale, slender boy in a windbreaker emits a scream so piercing it neatly breaches the cabin's

otherwise highly effective barrier of noise-reducing materials.

Invigorated by a stellar meal in Llanddewi Skirrid, we forge southward to Newport, where we join the M4, a high-speed express to the heart of the city. I choose a gap in the fast-flowing traffic, prod the throttle, and the Wraith charges forward, its tailpipes drumming a dark staccato beat. Piccadilly, here we come.

## The Essentials

### The Car

- **Rolls-Royce Wraith Black Badge**, \$390,000

### The Hotel

- **The Ritz London** swiftly earned a reputation as the city's poshest stay when it opened in 1906. Leaving the new Green Park Suite may prove difficult, but a Ritz 110—a gold-flecked elixir of vodka, Grand Marnier, Champagne, and peach liquor—at the Rivoli Bar will do the trick. [theritzlondon.com](http://theritzlondon.com)

### The Restaurant

- A culinary force for nearly 50 years, chef Shaun Hill has left a trail of Michelin stars in



his wake. At his current domain, **The Walnut Tree Inn**, his exquisite dishes, like Dover sole in a delicate curry of mussels, leeks, and potatoes, reach the zenith of country cooking. [thewalnuttreeinn.com](http://thewalnuttreeinn.com)

### The Camera

- Capture your memories of the road trip with the **Leica SL**.

Precision-milled from a solid block of aluminum, it's less a camera than an objet d'art that challenges you to create images as beautiful as itself. The SL's optics and imaging technology are so sophisticated and its controls so effortlessly intuitive that your photos may turn out even more striking than you could imagine. [us.leica-camera.com](http://us.leica-camera.com)

