

McLaren 12C / 650s buyers & owners guide (also applies to 675LT in part)

Pre test-drive

1. Check the paint for any chips, check very hard and everywhere, the special paints volcano and mso (McLaren Special Operations) can be difficult to match so try hard to get any blemishes rectified.
2. Also get down on your knees and check the lower parts for lacquer peel, again this should be fixed under warranty if you see any.
3. Stealth paint to the wheels is soft and easily comes off with stone chips, as are the superlight (10 spoke) wheels themselves, check carefully for damage and scratches.
4. Does the car have paint protection? With the special colours paint is expensive, McLaren do not currently share paint codes so they are difficult to match and protection is therefore a good idea on the special colours. On solid colours there is less risk.
5. Make sure the doors open and close ok, the swipe doors are great but can take some getting used to. Sometimes the door latches catch (on all types) and can usually be repaired under warranty. The swipe doors were replaced by buttons in 2013. The newest cars (2015 onwards), can be specified with soft close doors, including the 675LT. These are not being offered as retrofit yet but we know of one car that has had them fitted. The doors do need a firm push to close, hence the introduction of soft close.
6. The AC / heater readout can fail but is fixable under warranty. Many attribute the failure to the firm push required to close the doors.
7. The Iris (2) hardware upgrade is a lot better as it can multi-task however the sat-nav is still not as good as the apps available for smart phones. Make sure the hardware has been updated and not just the software. The updated hardware has icons to each of the 4 iris buttons which are all flat; the original Iris has only 2 icons to the lower buttons and the upper buttons have dimples. Iris (1) should not be a deal breaker.
8. Do check all the lights, front & rear, for condensation, it's quite common and affected lights have been replaced under warranty to date.
9. Make sure all the handbooks are present; some previous owners try to keep them. There should be 3 pamphlet style in the car and another A5 hardback one. Check the battery charger and tyre sealant are in the front boot. There were also options for warning triangles and first aid kit. The car cover is also not standard, if there is one it will be an indoor only cover.
10. It is very difficult to obtain any original purchase invoices or list of options for your car, in fact it is almost impossible. If you have a purchase invoice with list of options you will be lucky, therefore do not worry if they are not present.
11. Open the front boot and look carefully at the leading edge on the inside for tiny rust bubbles, if there are some they will usually replace under warranty. This is not a major issue it is almost undetectable and its aluminium so you won't see rust just micro bubbles.
12. Also check the wiper arms for rust, these are steel. Some have been replaced under warranty but not all so it is worth checking.

13. Due to the stiffness of the carbon tub there have been some cracked windscreens. Again these all seem to be replaced under warranty. However check the windscreen to make sure there are no cracks. Usually they will appear in the bottom corners.
14. Make sure the usb cable and the aux power lead (cigarette lighter style next to the cup holders) both work and have power. This is not a common fault but it has been known to happen.
15. There should be a tracker, make certain as you will probably need one for insurance and you will need to buy a subscription from Cobra, now part of Vodafone. It's around £150pa.
16. Make sure all upgrades / campaigns have been carried out including 616bhp upgrade, Iris upgrades etc.
17. Open the doors and check the seal at the bottom of the wheel arches (mud guards) sometimes they can be loose so just give them a gentle tug to check. It's not a problem and the dealer should fix them back in place.
18. Normal car purchase points still apply, check all the documents, V5, MOT, accident damage report, tyre condition etc.
19. Tyre choice. Cars can only have McLaren approved Pirelli tyres or the warranty will be void. There are 3 types, P-Zero, Corsa and the winter tyre. LT's also have the choice of Trofeo R's. The Trofeo's wear out very quickly and are bordering on dangerous in the rain. The Corsa's also wear quickly and are being replaced with a new model which has been homologated / approved by McLaren for their new models (P14) but not the old model. That leaves a single tyre for now, the P-Zero. Check the car has P-Zeros on if you have / want the McL warranty.

Test drive

20. Check for noises or any creaking. If there are some creaks they can usually be fixed under warranty. Common causes of creaks from the car / chassis are rusty hubs (due to cars standing for long periods), top mounts and some cars require 2 additional bolts to be fixed to the sub frame, this will sound more like a machine gun clicking when turning. Some dashboards have been known creak and have been repaired under warranty.
21. Engine / powertrain modes - with the active panel off the car will not rev match well on down shifts and can be jerky when slowing to lights. However with the active panel deactivated the map is different and the car will do up to 35 mpg on a motorway at 70 mph. It will also be lazy on downshifts and is best used for motorway cruising. With the panel active you have 3 modes, normal, sport & track. In normal the car rev matches a little better, the map is changed so the high mpg will not happen, I don't use normal much. Sport is the best option for smooth rev matching on downshifts and because of this (in my opinion) offers the smoothest drive for traffic jams and stop / start traffic. Track is harsher on the downshifts and has less intervention. Personally I don't use track, if you are confident you can catch a 616bhp car on a slide then that's up to you, even on track I use sport where you can get a decent amount of slide before you are caught.
22. The gearbox is sequential and it does not cruise in neutral to a stop so you will feel it going down through the gears (as above select sport for smoothest downshifts). Early cars have a pre-cog selection that will click to pre select a gear so the changes are faster. Some like this,

some don't, ask the salesman if the car has it. My car has it and it's good for me. If the panel is activated you can put the car in manual mode. In normal driving if you are in auto and change gear you will enter AM mode where the car will become manual for around 15 seconds or as long as you use the paddles.

23. Aero modes – Again panel off and normal / sport / track. Each makes the car a little firmer. The car rides very well with the panel off in town and also in normal. In sport it's nice and firm for B-road blasts and IMO track. Track is for experts. If you push the aero button the spoiler will raise which some people like when parked!
24. Make sure the rear spoiler raises and lowers as you pull off. This is the test cycle, you should hear the hydraulics whirring.
25. Make sure you manoeuvre left and right at full lock. The wheels will judder, that is the Ackermann effect and normal. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ackermann_steering_geometry However there should be no creaking or cracking noises, if there are the hubs may need cleaning or some additional bolts adding to the sub-frame, all usually under warranty.

Purchase

26. You should get one year warranty included with a used MCL if the manufacturer's original 3 year warranty has expired. If you are planning to keep your new McLaren longer you can get a discount on the second year. This is worth taking out as you will save around £1,000. The extended warranty is transferable in a private sale or SOR but not if you buy from a non-franchised or specialist dealer. If you buy from a non McL dealer you will need to wait 3 months to buy a warranty from McL and pay extra for an inspection by McLaren, around £700. If you buy privately or SoR the warranty can be transferred for £80. At the time of writing the one year warranty is £3,500 and the second year with discount £2,500.
27. There are other warranties available including the RAC which can be applied by a dealer such as Romans International with only with a £5k claim limit; work is still undertaken at McL. We understand Alastair Bols warranty has a £10k limit but it is also not purchasable unless with one of Alastair's cars. Alastair's warranty is 6 months included with the car and another 6 months can be purchased for £1,400 (at time of writing).
28. The McLaren warranty is quite restrictive; you will not be permitted to use any tyres other than Pirelli, no tuning, no non-McL exhausts, brakes etc.
29. McLaren are the only manufacturer in the world to warrant their car for track use. However you will require a pre and post track day check and they are £300 each. These checks are included in the Pure McLaren track days. It has been suggested, due to the high value & relative performance, that 'normal' track days are avoided anyway. If you do want to take your car on a 'normal' track day remember to consider insurance and try to get the dealer to include a set of inspections FoC at the time of purchase.
30. Worried about the gearbox and warranty? Graziano gearbox concerns are the main reason to take out the full McLaren warranty. There have been reports of a few failed gearboxes but it is a handful and McL will not repair and will only replace. This is fine if you have a warranty. Graziano will not allow McLaren to take the gearboxes apart and this is why they can't be fixed. However there is hope. John Thorne at Thorney Motorsport / McLaren

Tuning www.mclaren-tuning.com can now repair the gearboxes. The fail is usually a small oil leak caused by a perished seal. The engine needs to come out and the gearbox stripped and it seems most times the repair costs are in the region of £2,000 - £4,000 but that will vary depending on individual issues. What seems to be clear is that the rubbers perish in lower mileage cars that have not been used much. However that does not mean all low mileage cars will suffer. My own car was bought at 4 years old with 4,000 miles on the clock and it has been fine. As time goes by and extended warranties on cars over 5 years have not been confirmed by McLaren it is comforting to know specialists can now fix the gearbox and a lesser warranty can be considered for other claims.

31. Mileage is not too important, there are different theories, ultra-low mileage may have perished rubbers esp.in the gearbox, high mileages seem to have no issues but people worry about resale, there are many over 20,000 and even 30,000 at the moment we estimate a value of around £1 mile. Base price from a McL dealer for a 2012 should be £120,000 for 20,000 miles, warranty and good spec (some carbon, carbon interior, upgraded iris) adjust either way depending on condition and who you buy it from. When negotiating I would start with £5k off the advertised price and go from there, don't be surprised if you end up with just a £1,000 off to seal the deal as there are not many cars around, remember they make money on finance so not much scope for cash discounts. I wouldn't be concerned about age, 2011/12/13, buy on condition and spec.
32. Buy from McL or Alastair Bols if you want total peace of mind and great service. Other specialists like Romans International have good cars. If you don't mind a little risk then a private sale with a transferable warranty can be a good alternative to a specialist dealer and quite a bit cheaper. However make sure the warranty is transferable and ask on the forum about the car, most cars are 'known'.

Options

33. Options can affect the sales price quite a lot. Carbon interior is almost a must for re-sale, personally I think the aluminium looks nice but 99% of people want carbon, if you do get an aluminium interior make sure the car is appropriately priced. Same with the mesh style seats.
34. Parking sensors were an option so if you want them check, these are a bonus but fine without. The reversing camera is not very useful as it is portrait format so it is not a must have option.
35. DAB radio was also an option but from what we have heard it is not worth paying a premium for used as it is not the best system.
36. Be wary of contrasting stitching on the dashboard top, it will reflect on the windscreen and can be annoying. You can wear polarizing sunglasses to get rid of this but then you won't see the iris screen. Again not a deal breaker.
37. Carbon in the engine bay is nice, so is front and rear splitter. Carbon to the door sills is also nice but only visible with the door open. The carbon wheel arches (visible when doors are open) can break and is expensive to replace. Keep this in mind with carbon, looks nice but it is v.v.v. expensive if broken.

38. You shouldn't require lift on an early 12C's, it came on the spiders but was not an option until 2013 on coupes. Do check underneath at the front and rear (esp. if carbon) that there are no deep gouges. Due to the large front splitter lift is almost a necessity on a 650s, if there is no lift you will need to drive very carefully and price accordingly. Some owners do have 650's without lift and it is manageable but requires full attention.
39. Sports exhaust, up to you, its louder outside but not inside and adds no power. Note that aftermarket sports exhausts will invalidate a McLaren warranty.
40. Allegedly cars with a VIN No. under 100 were built in the McLaren Technology Centre and not in the McLaren Production Centre. Therefore there is a possibility the early cars were built by McLaren engineers and not on the assembly line. Possibly even by F1 engineers. This is just an interesting fact.
41. There are 4 types of wheels, Standard, 5 twin spokes / lightweight forged (commonly known as penis wheels and 5 spoke) / lightweight forged 2 (5 spoke) / super lightweight forged (10 spoke). The super lights are very expensive, £4,000 each from McL, so if it has these you are lucky, however they are softer so if you are offered the 3 years tyre and wheel insurance for £450 take it, if not ask for it. You can see the wheels here:-
<http://cars.mclaren.com/12c-design>
42. Carbon Ceramic Brakes, same applies as to other makes of car, they are expensive to buy and not too much difference on the road except reduced dust. Of course different owners have different views but if they do need replacing they can be expensive. There have been some reports of CCB's wearing if the car is subject to lots of track days.
43. There are only approx. 800 super-series McLarens in the UK including F1, P1, 675LT, 650S & 12C. Of these around 25% are estimated to be off the road in collections so there are not many to choose from so don't get too hung up on finding the perfect spec as it may not exist. Many 675LT's, P1's and 650S's are registered as 12C's. McLaren did this to avoid re crash testing.

Owning experience & Upgrades

44. The McLaren Owners Group on Facebook is a wealth of knowledge and can be joined by following the link below; there are currently 100+ members and growing with many social meets, drives, private track and karting events.
<http://www.mclarenowners.org.uk/>
45. McLaren Life is the largest forum, it is US based and can be found here:-
<http://www.mclarenlife.com/>
46. For track days and events see Pure McLaren:-
<http://cars.mclaren.com/experiences>
McLaren organised trackday's cost around £700 or £850 (at time of writing) for Silverstone per day. They include the pre & post checks, full factory backup, drives of new models, coaching (most of the time by Bruno Senna). Dinners and hotels are also arranged so overall they are an experience and good value for what you get.



- 47. Some owners like to change the brake fluid and pads to Pagid RS29's and RBF660 fluid, apparently the feel and power is better but we can't confirm this.
- 48. Do not open your doors if the window does not come down when the door unlocks. This is common in freezing conditions. This will lead to a smashed window and is not covered by any warranty.
- 49. The car is quite wide but also manageable. As such if taking your car abroad on the Eurotunnel book in as a high vehicle, that way you will get into the wider carriage and will not need to worry about kerbing your alloys on the sides.
- 50. As well as being very quick McLarens are very frugal. The best we have seen is 40mpg but averages of 32mpg on the Motorway and 27mpg for mixed driving are very common. Of course track and city work will reduce these figures considerably.
- 51. Servicing costs appear to average around £1,500 pa
- 52. Good prices for tyres have been obtained from Oponeo & Tyreleader

McLaren Owners UK

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www.mclarenowners.org.uk