

Car Review - Full Verdict

Mazda MX-5



ON THE ROAD

Performance ★★★★★

The MX-5 comes with either a 124bhp 1.8- or a 158bhp 2.0-litre engine. Both normally have five-speed gearboxes but the 2.0-litre is available with an optional close-ratio six-speed unit. Both engines work best when revved hard. Still, in the MX-5 you don't need to be going fast to have fun.

Ride & handling ★★★★★

The cabin remains free from shakes, so the ride is comfortable and controlled over broken surfaces, especially in the hard-top roadster coupe, which has slightly softer suspension settings. Both hard and soft-top models are impressively agile. The steering is precise and full of feel, while the rear-wheel-drive chassis offers fluid handling with bags of grip.

Refinement ★★★★★

With the roof down, the breeze is well isolated and the high-backed sports seats help prevent draughts around the driver and passenger. Roof up, the fabric does a decent job of blotting out wind noise. However, if you do much winter motorway work, it is worth paying the extra for the £1200 for the Roadster Coupe. Unfortunately, even with the roof down, the exhaust emits a dull drone.

OWNERSHIP

Buying & owning ★★★★★

The MX-5 remains a sought-after product. As a result, it retains its value well. We expect it to hold on to at least half its new price over three years. Fuel economy is sensible and so are insurance groups for a sports car, so it's not expensive to run.

Quality & reliability ★★★★★

The number of 10-year-old MX-5s you see in pristine condition should answer any doubts over durability. They're simple and super-reliable if regularly serviced. We expect the new model to be an equally hardy performer. The cabin and hood are durable, and now that the soft-top locks flat when folded, it should be less prone to snagging. The Roadster Coupe's folding hard top is also very neat.

Safety & security ★★★★★

The MX-5 comes with twin front and side airbags. The 2.0-litre cars add electronic stability aids. An immobiliser and an alarm are fitted as standard, but any car with a canvas roof is less secure than a metal-roofed one, hence the decision to introduce the Roadster Coupe with a metal roof.

IN THE CABIN

Behind the wheel ★★★★★

With a lower-slung seat it's easy for taller drivers to get comfortable. The dash has a classy appearance but some of the plastics, although durable, are not of the highest quality. All the major controls are in a simple logical layout. There are few storage areas for any of your driving paraphernalia.



Space & practicality ★★★★★

The MX-5 is one of the easiest-operating drop-tops in production. Simply undo the central retaining handle, lift the roof over your shoulder and, hey presto, alfresco motoring. The boot is not very wide, but the omission of a spare wheel means you'll have little trouble fitting in a couple of overnight bags.

Equipment ★★★★★

The MX-5 is not exactly dripping with standard equipment but electric windows and mirrors and remote central locking are fitted to all versions. Trade up to the 2.0-litre model and you'll gain handling improvements and electronic driver aids. The top-of-the-range models gain leather upholstery, 17-inch alloy wheels and aluminium foot pedals.