

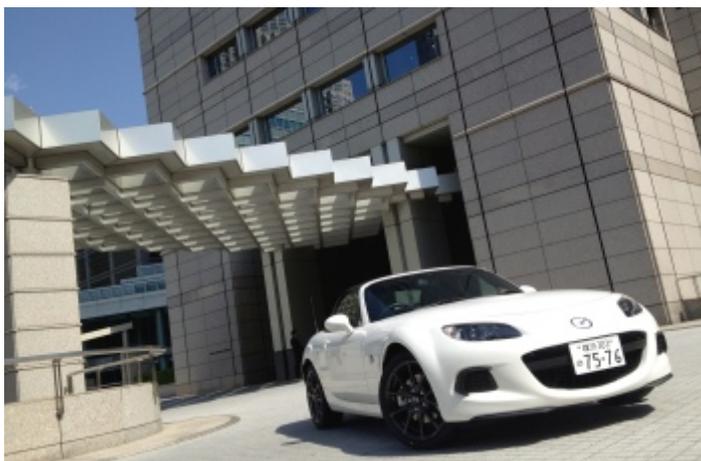


Mazda MX-5 (2005 - 2015)

Trip around Japan

Review | What is the best car for a journey around Japan? It must be a Japanese car, that's appropriate. Autozine's favourite Japanese car is the Nissan GT-R. However, it is so fast that the trip would be over too soon. A Lexus LS perhaps? Too comfortable, it would be like sitting on a comfy couch watching the landscape go by from behind a window. In the end there's only one obvious choice: the Mazda MX5. With this pure roadster the driver can see, feel, smell, hear and thus fully experience Japan.

The journey starts at the "Park Hyatt Hotel" in Tokyo. Japan fans will know this from the film "Lost in Translation". When the test car appears on the driveway of the hotel, it has the dignity of a movie star! Executed in pearl white with black accents the MX5 looks gorgeous!



Tokyo

After just a few minutes of driving through Tokyo it becomes obvious that the MX5 was the right choice.

The skyscrapers are impressive and their height can only be fully admired from an open top car. Besides that: this city buzzes! In front of many stores sales girls try to sell their merchandise using their high-pitched voices. Just about every spare inch is utilized by billboards that try to attract attention with both sight and sound.



And then there's the huge masses of people, the spritely bicycles and of course the countless cars that meander through the city. For some this might be tiresome, instead it gives the test driver enough

energy to immediately forget the seven-hour jetlag.

With the roof open comfort is good. The occupants of the MX5 are shielded well from both the noise of the wind and of the mechanics. Still, just outside of Tokyo the roof is closed again. The first destination is Kyoto, 560 km ahead. The first half of the drive consists of boring highways and therefore to prevent skin burn it is wise to close the roof.



To save weight, Mazda opted for the simplest roof construction possible. It isn't operated electrically and that's a good thing. With just one lever the roof is locked or unlocked, after which one gesture is enough to either close or open the top.

The lightweight construction does mean sound insulation isn't as good as with other cars that have a cloth roof. To make matters worse, headroom is very limited; those taller than 1.8 metres have a hard time finding a comfortable seating position.



Kyoto

The MX5 has a decent audio system, so while enjoying some "J-Pop" the hours fly by. Kyoto offers everything the travel brochures promise it would. The hotel is in the middle of "Gion", the area where the geisha girls live and where the shrines are plentiful. The next day turns out to be a treat for the photographer.



On Sunday it is time to get to know the outskirts of Kyoto. The landscape around Kyoto is just as breathtaking as the historic city. On weekdays the Japanese work very hard; an 8-hour workday is unheard of; 12 hours is more a rule than an exception. The hard earned money is spend on tuned cars and fast motorcycles which are fully enjoyed at the weekend.



With some basic knowledge of the language, a big smile and a brand new convertible, new friends are easily made.



As a general rule, the Japanese are very much law-abiding. Even in the middle of the night a Japanese pedestrian would not cross a zebra if the traffic light was red. If something isn't allowed, one does not do it. Crime is almost non-existent. Yet... the maximum speed of 80 km/h is exceeded by everyone! It is even safer to drive fast, because those who don't are like a moving chicane.



The test car has a 2.0 litre engine which develops 160 PS / 188 Nm. When not provoked, the MX5 is a very docile car which happily trots along with traffic. For 2013 the reaction to the throttle has been changed, so that the car is more lively when requested. Push the pedal to the metal and an unexpected roar sounds from the twin exhausts, after which the Roadster accelerates fiercely.

Route 162

Those new friends don't have a clue what a "Mazda MX5" is. This car is known as "Roadster" (pronounce: "Loadstah") here. Route 162 turns out to be the most popular road through the mountains. And for good reason! The MX5, sorry Roadster, really shines here. The MX5 is a classic sports car with the engine in the front which feeds the power to the rear wheels. This is why the feeling in the steering wheel is pure (it isn't disturbed by the power of the engine) and the car handles brilliantly in the corners.



The gearbox ratios have been chosen so that the MX5 can quickly accelerate to its top speed of just over 200 km/h. The tiny gear lever makes it possible to shift gears by just a flick of the wrist. Sixth gear is not a fuel saving "overdrive", but rather an extra gear to be able to perform well at high speeds. This does mean that mechanical noises increase significantly at speeds of over 100 km/h.



Hamamatsu

After the touristic trips, some business meetings are on the agenda. The first one is at the Toyota factory in "Toyota City". The next day the headquarters of Suzuki will be visited in the city of Hamamatsu. Instead of a boring business hotel, a traditional Japanese "ryokan" in a tiny beach resort right between the two factories was booked.

Regrettably, the planned photo session at the beach literally goes down the drain. It is late May and the rainy season has started. From now on, it will rain every day.

Luckily, the MX5 has already proved itself. With the MX5 it isn't just about reaching a destination, it is about making the journey itself as pleasant as possible.



Conclusion

Is the Mazda MX5 the ideal car for a trip around Japan? Yes it is! The difference between a fixed head and a drop top car is like the difference between a black and white and a colour TV. Yet the MX5 is more than just a convertible. It is suited to enjoying the scenery at a leisurely pace, while, thanks to its classic layout, it comes alive when driving at a sporty pace.

For model year 2013 the steering, underpinnings and engine have been improved for even better handling, making it even more of a joy to drive. That is why the Mazda MX5 isn't just the favourite roadster of

customers worldwide, it is also Autozine's first choice for a journey around Japan. ■



Specifications

Mazda MX-5 (2005 - 2015) 2.0i Sport

Size and weight



| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Length x width x height | 400 x 172 x 124 cm |
| Wheelbase | 233 cm |
| Kerb weight | 1.155 kg |
| Trailer | unknown |
| Trailer - braked | unknown |
| Fuel capacity | 50 l |
| Luggage space | 150 l |
| Tyre size | 205/45R17 |

Engine and performance



| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Capacity | 1999 cc |
| Cylinders / valves | 4/4 |
| Max power | 160 PS @ 6700 rpm |
| Max torque | 188 Nm @ 5000 rpm |
| Drive | rear wheels |
| Acceleration 0 - 62 mph | 7.9 secs |
| Top speed | 210 km/h |
| Average mileage | 7.7 l / 100 km |
| Mileage urban | 10.6 l / 100 km |
| Mileage extra urban | 6 l / 100 km |
| CO2 emissions | 183 gr / km |

Price

| | |
|------------------|-----------|
| Price | Â£ 18,965 |
| Price base model | Â£ 15,665 |