



BMW 1-Series

Lean yet mean

Car review | Once, a new BMW was praised by its power, sheer excitement and -of course- driving pleasure. The more, the better. But, with the new 1-Series it all seems to be about less: less fuel consumption and lower CO2 emissions. The highlight of a modern BMW is its efficiency and not the number of horsepower. "Fun to drive" is something mentioned in a byline on the last page of the brochure. So the question arises: does the new 1-Series drive like a true BMW?

On to the race track! That seems an unlogical start, but the time of previewing is over. Before the 1-Series was taken into production, BMW proudly talked about its green credentials. Now that the first examples are available for testing, emphasis is on handling, just like before.

Handling

This is why the test car has been fitted with sports suspension. The 1-Series has razor sharp steering and feels right at home on the twisty track. Even this smallest BMW is rear-wheel driven, to avoid the torque on the front wheels disturbing the feeling in the steering wheel. The weight of the car has been distributed evenly over the front and rear wheels. Wherever possible, weight has been reduced, because that benefits both performance and fuel economy.



Steering is very direct: it takes no more than two turns to move the front wheels from the far left to the far right. A car that reacts very directly on the throttle feels superior; in a similar way the new 1-Series feels super agile because of its direct steering. The smirk that should be on the face of any BMW driver, therefore appears within a few yards of test driving.

Once outside the race track, that smile quickly

vanishes. On bad road surfaces comfort is poor. As an alternative, adaptive suspension is available. With a push of a button the 1-Series is more than sporty (even firmer than with the fixed sports suspension) or comfortable. The latter mode doesn't make the 1-Series glide over the road, but the bumps certainly make less of an impact on the occupants.



For daily use, standard suspension is the best choice. It simply offers the best compromise between comfort and sportiness, so the car remains enjoyable on the long run.

Diesel

Once it was easy to deduct the engine displacement from the name of a BMW model. A "116d" meant a 1.6 litre diesel engine and "120d" was a 2.0 litre diesel. The new 1-Series is available with just two engines, which develop different powers depending on the programming. The "116d" is in fact a 2.0 litre four-cylinder diesel engine with an output of 116 PS / 250 Nm. The "120d" is almost the same power train but it delivers 184 PS / 380 Nm.

The "120d" isn't especially quiet or refined, but does perform very well. A slight touch of the throttle is enough to accelerate fiercely to a top speed of well over 200 km/h (125 mph) (and even then the car feels stable and controllable). The eight-speed automatic gearbox can be operated manually, but the computer does such a good job that this is hardly ever necessary.



Petrol

The 1.6 litre petrol engine (from MINI) develops 136 PS / 220 Nm in the "116i", while almost the same engine in the "118i" has an output of 170 PS / 250 Nm.

Compared to the previous 1-Series, the sensation of speed is lacking. Although the 118i sprints from 0 to 62 mpg in just 7.4 seconds, there's no thrill at all. Also, the engine seems a bit hesitant at lower speeds. Only at high engine speeds is the 118i eager to perform.

After a day of fun and play on the track, the trip computer displays an average fuel consumption of 11.8 litres per 100 km (38.5 mpg). This differs significantly from the 5.8 litres per 100 km (78.3 mpg) promised by BMW. So, it is time to leave the track and try the 1-Series on public roads.



Eco Pro

While "sport"-mode was engaged on the track, once on the open roads "eco pro" was selected instead. This makes the response of the accelerator less direct. The electrical systems also choose a more economic programme, which certainly makes a difference with heavy users like the air conditioning.



In addition, the system makes suggestions to the driver to save fuel. This starts with a shift indicator, which isn't a luxury. In "eco pro" the 118i allows for extremely low engine speeds. At speeds as low as 30 km/h (18 mph) fourth gear can be engaged! On the display the energy flow from the engine and the battery is shown, including tips on how to economise. As an incentive, the trip computer shows how much longer a visit to the petrol station can be postponed by following all the advice.

Because engine power is strongly reduced in "eco pro" mode, speed drops almost automatically. Luckily, the same goes for the fuel consumption. When driving slowly, the computer now shows an average fuel consumption of 5.9 litres per 100 km (47.8 mpg). Driving at more realistic speeds costs an extra litre (40 mpg).

Trim levels

The car that was such a joy to drive on the track, is now a very comfortable vehicle. Noise of the tyres and wind are minimal. Now it is all the luxury on board that makes the 1-Series a very enjoyable car.



As usual in this segment, the 1-Series can be fitted with many driving aids to prevent accidents. With a few exceptions (like head-up display), all luxury items available on the bigger BMW's are also available on the 1-Series. Just like most other German cars, this luxury comes at a price. The amount shown in the brochure is no more than the start of negotiations.

Connected Drive

A remarkable option is "Connected Drive". In its simplest form the 1-Series has an internal phone which is used to fetch traffic information and weather forecasts. In case of an accident, the 1-Series automatically contacts the emergency services and passes on the current GPS location.

Less useful, but certainly fun, is the iPhone integration. BMW offers its own "app" with the 1-Series to remotely control the vehicle. Using this app it is possible to honk the horn, blink the headlights or unlock the doors. According to BMW this can come in handy when one loses the car in a big car park.



great fun to drive. Both the "118i" and "120dA" tested here perform well.

When the driver takes it a bit slower, the new 1-Series shows its economic side. Particularly when making use of the "eco pro" programme, fuel economy dramatically improves. Then the 1-Series proves to be an excellent car for long distances. The modern technologies then offer extra comfort and improve safety. ■

Once inside the vehicle, the iPhone can be placed in a cradle. The output of tailor made apps running on the phone can be shown on the central display. The iPhone is controlled by the centrally placed knob which is also used to operate the audio system and satnav.

The apps can be used to show incoming messages on Twitter and Facebook directly on the display in the car. While driving, one can answer these messages by choosing from a list of standard preset replies. For example, a push of a button is enough to inform the world about the destination of the journey, including the estimated time of arrival.



Conclusion

Can a BMW be lean yet mean? Yes, the new 1-Series certainly proves that. When given the chance, the new BMW 1-Series is a thoroughbred BMW which is



Specifications

BMW 1-Series 120d Urban

Size and weight



Length x width x height	432 x 177 x 142 cm
Wheelbase	269 cm
Kerb weight	1.345 kg
Trailer	710 kg
Trailer - braked	1.200 kg
Fuel capacity	52 l
Luggage space	360/1200 l
Tyre size	205/55R16

Engine and performance



Capacity	1995 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	184 PS @ 4000 rpm
Max torque	380 Nm @ 1750 rpm
Drive	rear wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	7.3 secs
Top speed	228 km/h
Average mileage	4.4 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	5.2 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	3.9 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	116 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 24,720
Price base model	Â£ 19,375