



Mazda 2 Hazumi

Review | What is the best place to test drive the new Mazda2? Of course, the car will eventually be used in Europe. But to fully understand the car it is better to get acquainted at its very birthplace: Japan. That is because Japanese work ethics differ from European ones. In Japan, perfection is the norm and one always strives for more. Is the Mazda2 indeed more than perfect?

"Hazumi" was the name of the first prototype of the Mazda2. That name was chosen well, because it means "a big leap ahead". And that is exactly what Mazda wanted to accomplish with the new "2": vast improvement.

However, Mazda does so in a different way than other manufacturers. Most brands opt for new technology, while Mazda refines existing technology to eventually reach the same goal. "In that way even a new car is reliable and familiar", states Mazda.



Of course, the visual design also took a big step

forward. The flowing lines remain, but they are now combined with sharp edges which give the car a stronger presence. Whilst the dimensions are modest, the Mazda2 looks as powerful and accomplished as the bigger models of the make.

Space

Compared to its main rivals the Mazda2 is larger, yet the wheelbase and therefore the cabin space are average. The space in the front is just fine and the seats can be adjusted in so many ways that drivers of any which posture can find a pleasant seating position. Despite its aim of being beyond perfect, Mazda did make a mistake: the seat belts obscure the lever to adjust the height of the front seats (one has to unbuckle to adjust the seat).



The space in the rear is average for a car in this segment. That means that adults can sit reasonably well, but there's no room to spare. Thanks to the soft backside of the front seats, the rear passenger can gently push their knees into the front seats for a bit of extra room without annoying the driver.

The boot measures 280 litres (expandable to 950 litres) which again is average size. Regrettably the access to the boot is narrow. The almost round shape makes it harder to load large pieces of luggage, despite the fact that they easily fit in the boot itself.

Spec levels

The space may be just average, but the layout and build quality give the impression of driving a car from a higher segment. The test vehicle is executed with a half leather interior, while body colour is reflected in the colour of the stitching. Gorgeous!



The spec levels aren't just high for a compact car, they would fit a luxurious company car as well! For example, the Mazda2 can be fitted with a head-up display ("Active Driving Display"); a glass panel that sits on top of the steering column. On this panel essential information like the speed and instructions from the satnav are projected right in the eyesight of the driver.

The Mazda2 features the same integrated audio, satnav and communication system as the bigger Mazda's. It can be operated by voice commands, by a big button on the centre console or by touching the screen. That's the way to do it: make the customer decide! Thanks to an online connection, Google can be used to look up nearby fuelling stations, while considering the actual fuel prices. In the centre console two (!) USB connections can be found to charge various mobile devices while driving.



When it comes to safety, the Mazda2 also offers the same features as larger cars. For example, a "smart" camera looks ahead with the driver and will issue a warning when accidentally crossing the markings on the road (read: when not indicating). When there's another car alongside the Mazda2, a warning light in the wing mirror lights up. To make parking even easier, a reversing camera is available.



Diesel

As stated before, Mazda chooses not to develop new technologies but perfects existing technology. While other carmakers are actively downsizing their engines, Mazda offers a traditional four-cylinder diesel engine with a conservatively large displacement of 1.5 litres.

It is ignited by a push of a button and runs so smoothly that one hardly realises this is a diesel! It is only when idling that the diesel is less refined than a petrol engine. In all other circumstances the "1.5D SkyActiv" is exceptionally quiet.



In Japan this engine can be combined with an automatic transmission. Again, Mazda takes it one step further than usual, because the automatic gearbox can be controlled sequentially using levers

behind the steering wheel. During the various test drives these were hardly used, because the electronics seem to know exactly what the driver wants. When the accelerator is pressed harder, the turbo needs a split second, after which all 105 horsepower come to life and the "Mazda2 1.5D" performs very well.

A technological marvel is the "i-stop" idle start system. When the car comes to a complete stop at a traffic light, the engine is stalled to save fuel. The intelligent bit of "i-stop" is that the engine is killed exactly when the cylinders are in the perfect position to enable a quick re-start. When combined with petrol engines the effect is minimal, but with this diesel the advantage over regular idle start systems is obvious.



By improving existing technology the Mazda2 offers more comfort than the downsized engines of competing brands. On the other hand: the Mazda is not nearly as frugal. This means the Mazda2 is more expensive to buy and run.

Driving

Yet, the high build quality and generous spec levels aren't what makes the Mazda2 special. The biggest leap ahead is in the underpinning. As stated before, the test drive took place in Japan with a Japanese spec car. As a general rule, the Japanese prefer soft suspension and, ditto, steering.



However, even the Japanese spec Mazda2 has surprisingly firm suspension. Yet, comfort on poor road surfaces is perfect and this combination adds to the feeling of driving a superior vehicle.

Steering isn't especially light or heavy, but just right. The "straight line stability" is also exceptionally good, which means that on long straight roads hardly any steering corrections are required. At the same time, even the slight notch on the steering wheel is enough for an instant reaction and that makes the Mazda2 feel very agile.



Conclusion

In Japan perfection is the norm and one always strives for more. This is clearly reflected in the new

Mazda2. Compared to other cars in its class, the Mazda2 always takes things one step further. The Mazda2 is the very top of the B-segment. That doesn't just go for the spec levels, but especially for the refinement of the underpinning and engines.

Compared to the previous generation, the new Mazda2 is more stable and no longer gives the driver the feeling of driving a small car. When it comes to looks, specs and handling, the new Mazda2 also made a huge leap ahead. Hazumi! ■



Specifications

Mazda 2 1.5 SkyActiv-D Sport

Size and weight



Length x width x height	406 x 170 x 150 cm
Wheelbase	257 cm
Kerb weight	1.115 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Fuel capacity	44 l
Luggage space	280/950 l
Tyre size	185/60R16

Engine and performance



Capacity	1499 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	105 PS @ 4000 rpm
Max torque	220 Nm @ 1400 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	10.1 secs
Top speed	178 km/h
Average mileage	3.4 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	3.8 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	3.2 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	89 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 16,995
Price base model	Â£ 11,995