



Mazda MX5 Roadster Coupé

A Breath of Fresh Air

Car review | Along the coast, there's a storm with force 10 winds. The rain isn't falling vertically, but horizontally. Nevertheless, a couple of daredevils have ventured out into the North Sea with their surfboards. A test ride with the new Mazda MX5 doesn't seem the best idea either. But in fact these are the perfect circumstances to get know the MX5 Coupé; will the best known roadster withstand the storm?

The new Mazda MX5 which was launched a year ago, is equipped with a traditional cloth roof. Mazda choose it as they felt that the cloth roof is the best match with the pure character of this roadster.

Coupé convertibles are de rigueur at the moment. With their roofs open, they offer just as much freedom as an ordinary convertible; whereas when the roof is closed, the comfort is equal to that of coupé. But these ingenious metal hinged constructions add a fair amount of weight to the car, which of course has a negative effect on the driving quality. The success of the MX5 has always been due to its lively driving style, which would disappear with the additional kilos of metal and hydraulics.

Hard top

Thus it was a great surprise when Mazda MX5 launched the Coupé at the London Motor Show in 2006. This test drive is proof that Mazda hasn't just succumbed to whims of fashion and has still retained the pure character of the MX5. The roof construction is much simpler than those of other coupé

convertibles. The roof consists of a couple of panels and a relative simple hinge mechanism. Moreover, the design doesn't impede on the luggage space, which has remained unchanged at a roomy 150 litres and still entirely utilisable even when the roof is open.



In reality, Mazda's 'simple' coupé convertible attracts attention because of the quickness of the roof. With its cloth roof, the MX5 remains the fastest opening convertible in the world. Hardly surprising with the following procedure: loosen the flap, throw open the roof. But this coupé hasn't complicated the issue: loosen the flap, press the button and admire how quickly the roof opens. All in all, within twelve seconds, the show's over.

Convertible

Once the roof is open, there is little difference between the MX5 Coupé and the trusty soft top MX5. Moreover, the MX5 Coupé is a delicious and very neat convertible which gives it a great sensation of freedom. The comfort of the open roof is average. The passengers are protected from the wind, but at high speeds the fun does disappear quickly. A long driving holiday along by-roads would be an absolute party in the MX5, whereas daily long distance commutes along the motorway could become pretty tiring pretty quickly.



With the roof closed, the MX5 Coupé differs very little to the well-known MX5. The sound level is certainly not comparable to that of Volkswagen Eos, Peugeot 206 CC or Mercedes SLK. On the motorway, the wind does tend to shriek around the car, with the extremely audible roll of the tyres. Even in these severe conditions during the photograph shoot, the coupé did however feel safer; the rain doesn't tick on the roof as if the passengers are sheltering under a tent. The coupé roof is also 100% watertight even in the heaviest of rainfalls.



Just as under a cloth roof, the MX5 has only enough room for drivers who under 1m80. Taller than this and you have to contort yourself just to get behind the wheel, which subsequently is then perfectly positioned in your lap, with the drinks holders in the door stabbing into the backs of your knees. As is the case in all convertibles, all the storage compartments can be

locked allowing you to leave the MX5 parked with its roof open. After a rain shower, both the synthetic interior and the seat coverings dry off without any lines or rings.

Driving

The lack of comfort is directly opposed to the abundant driving pleasure. By choosing a simple roof construction, Mazda has been able to save weight. The MX5 Coupé is only 37 kg heavier than an ordinary MX5, whereas the average coupé convertible is a whopping two hundred kilos heavier than the basic model without such a clever roof. Whereas these heavy coupé convertibles only achieve their performances with just as heavy engines, the MX5 Coupé offers just as much fun and dynamicism as the MX5 convertible.

Just like the MX5 convertible, the Coupé is available with a 1.8 and 2.0 litre four cylinder petrol engine. After several days driving around the back roads of Portugal, the 1.8 litre model was the clear favourite as it performed well and was livelier than the heavier 2.0 litre engine. However, a week driving around the UK presented a completely different picture. Here, the 2.0 litre engine was preferable as this can be kept in lower revs and is consequently less tiring in heavy traffic. At high speed, the 2.0 litre engine keeps going much better than the 1.8.

The metal roof construction of the Coupé means that there is a little bit more weight on the rear wheels than the convertible soft top. To compensate for this, Mazda has made some adjustments to the car's suspension. If possible, the MX5 Coupé steers even more tightly and with even more feeling than the convertible. The road handling is outstanding, which means that the driver will never be surprised with the rear end escaping. If you switch off the stability control, you still have complete control. The MX5 Coupé feels perfect; and according to the driver's wishes can move through turns wither either in a tight and controlling fashion or in a spectacular traverse. On an almost deserted beach boulevard full of shifting sand, the temptation was irresistible ...



Conclusion

A week with this car highlights the good and the bad. The bad news is that the Mazda MX5 Coupé is no more comfortable or quiet than the soft top MX5. Moreover, the MX5 Coupé doesn't offer any more headroom than the ordinary MX5, which restricts it to drivers shorter than 1m80. Comparable coupé convertibles are roomier, more comfortable and are consequently more suitable as a daily mode of transport. The metal roof of the MX5 Coupé does give a greater sense of security and safety than the ordinary MX5.

The good news is that the MX5 Coupé is just as much fun as the ordinary MX5. Thus Mazda is able to offer a lot more driving pleasure than its competitors. The hard top has little influence on the driving characteristics, thus the Coupé offers the same experience as the soft top version. The Coupé is a valuable addition, resulting in it still being the world's best sold convertible even in the winter "storm". ■



Specifications

Mazda MX5 Roadster Coupe 2.0i Sport

Size and weight

Length x width x height	400 x 172 x 125 cm
Wheelbase	233 cm
Kerb weight	1.192 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£ 21,015
Price base model	Â£ 18,515