



Mini Convertible

Always open

Car review | Is it plain crazy? Over enthusiastic? Or is it simply faith in a product? Fact is that the new MINI Convertible was presented to the world press in the Austrian Alps. The slogan for the new car is "Always open", so Autozine is snowbound with an open top and an open mind.

This is it: the new MINI Convertible. And it looks just like the old drop-top. That isn't because of a lack of imagination, but simply because the car is based on a style icon from the past and that doesn't change. But the new MINI Cabrio is refined and improved in many ways.

The previous MINI Convertible was recognisable by large rollover safety bars behind the seats. These have been replaced by bars that only pop up when the electronics detect a crash. As a general rule car makers prefer fixed roll bars because they leave room for luggage and/or the back seat can be folded.

Thanks to an ingenious construction MINI is the first to combine the best of both: the roll bars are out of sight and still there is enough space for luggage and the back seat can be folded.



Also very smart is the optional bicycle rack. This is not mounted on a trailer hitch (that affects the looks of the car), but uses the openings in the bumpers for towing the car. Also the bicycle rack is placed on hinges, so that the boot can still be opened.

Convertible

Regretably the roof is of no more than average quality. At high speeds wind can be heard between the cloth roof and the windows. Also the Convertible is significantly less silent than the fixed head MINI. On top of that the rear window is impractically small (and seems to attract dirt!) so that visibility is poor.



The slogan for the new Convertible is "Always open", so let's open the top! The hood is opened and closed fully automatically. It opens in two stages: first only the part above the seats opens to create a "sun roof". When the button is held longer, the whole roof folds away.

From that moment on the "Always open"-timer starts measuring how long the roof was down. Those who say such a gadget doesn't serve any purpose don't understand the aim of this car. The MINI is a fun car and a fun-counter belongs in this car just like a rev-counter does.



Because the roll bars do no longer obstruct vision, the new MINI Convertible gives a greater feeling of freedom than ever before. It feels like the fun doubles as soon as the roof is gone!

The occupants don't cowardly look at the winter landscape from behind glass, but fully experience it! Still it isn't cold in the cabin at all. Because the windscreen stands up straight, the driver and co-driver are protected from the wind very well. Only on the back seat a true polar wind blows, but because of the minimal legroom in the back no one will sit there anyway.

Handling

The MINI is chosen for the sheer driving pleasure and even in the snow the MINI behaves exceptionally well. This new generation is a bit larger than its predecessor and therefore grip and stability is better than before, while the lively character is still unprecedented.



The electronic safety systems allow for a little spin, so that the driver can happily slide through the snow while still being protected. Even the steering wheel feels better than in other car, which also contributes to the sublime feeling the MINI gives.



As usually with MINI the fastest versions are being manufactured first when introducing a new model. Therefore for this test drive the 175 HP / 177 lb-ft strong "Cooper S" was driven. Even in slippery conditions the front wheels have no problem converting the engine power to the ground.

No matter what the rev counter indicates, the Cooper S always has plenty of power available. It is noticeable that the convertible is a lot heavier than the every day hatchback. Therefore the Cabrio is a little less aggressive and eager, but still much quicker than most competitors. Between shifting gears a deep "boom" sounds from the dual exhausts to add to the sensation.



Environmentally friendly

The new MINI is kinder to the environment than ever before thanks to "Efficient Dynamics". All parts that normally work mechanically (waterpump, power steering) are now electrical. When braking or free wheeling the energy that would normally go to waste, is now converted into electricity. That "free" electricity is later used to power the electrical systems.



Next to this the MINI is fitted with a shift indicator that suggests the most economical moment to select the next gear. When the advice is followed strictly, the

counter hardly ever reads more than 1,500 revolutions per minute and a deep, resonating sound can be heard from the exhaust. At first that is really exciting, but when driving slowly one doesn't want more sensation.

Snowbound

At the end of a long day of snow and fun, the mechanics of the roof are frozen shut. With a row of blinking warning lights and unstopable warning sounds the test car pulls into the garage of a hotel. Only hours later the roof has been defrosted so that the car can be parked safely.

It hardly affects the experience. A normal MINI is fun, but the MINI Convertible is fun to the second power! Therefore the next day the roof is opened again!



Conclusion

It seems crazy to introduce a new convertible to the world press in the heart of winter sports land. But after driving through the snow for a couple of days it all makes perfect sense. The normal MINI already proved itself being an excellent car with sublime handling. Now the open air version also proves its capabilities when the going gets slippery.

The MINI is bought as a fun car and the convertible doubles that fun. It makes sense to enjoy this car by opening the top whenever possible. The MINI Convertible is very comfortable so even in freezing conditions the car can be enjoyed fully. In short: the new MINI Convertible is always open for fun! ■

Specifications

Mini Convertible Cooper S

Size and weight



Length x width x height	371 x 168 x 141 cm
Wheelbase	248 cm
Kerb weight	1.230 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Fuel capacity	50 l
Luggage space	unknown
Tyre size	195/55R16

Engine and performance



Capacity	1598 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	175 PS @ 5500 rpm
Max torque	240 Nm @ 1600 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	7.4 secs
Top speed	222 km/h
Average mileage	6.4 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	8.1 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	5.4 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	153 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 18,995
Price base model	Â£ 15,995