



BMW 7-Series (2001 - 2008)

No news is good news

Car review | Almost secretly BMW introduced the renewed 7-Series. No flashy presentations at motor shows, no grand advertising campaign, no promotions on the Internet. Nothing! All of a sudden it was there. Why so modest? After all, the 7-Series is BMW's flagship. All thinkable luxury and new inventions are always offered first in the 7-Series. Furthermore, the sporty undertone still makes this limousine a favourite amongst chauffeurs.

This is just about how it works at BMW: the makers of the 3-Series get the assignment to make the best driving car within the business driver's budget. The designers of the 5-Series are allowed to combine these characteristics with luxury and space. But the lucky dogs that make the 7-Series get a blank cheque. They are responsible for all innovations within BMW and for that there are no limits. Not even to the price of the eventual car.

Ergonomics

With an on the road price ranging from £ 48,000 to £ 83,000, the buyer expects quite a lot more than just a large car. In this class a car has to dazzle with luxury and beauty. And so it has! The interior of the face-lifted 7-Series is a beautiful and rare combination of modernism and tradition. Tradition comes from the beige leather upholstery and real wood inlay that has not been polished to smooth plastic but still has its natural feel and warm appearance. Modernism lies in the equipment as well as ergonomics. BMW has reconsidered every single detail. Everything that can be better or more convenient is just that.



At first this makes the test driver feel a bit out of place. How to adjust the seats? What use is there for this collection of blank buttons? What are the four handles on the steering wheel for? How does one get this thing to move at all?

Equipment

Every question results in a short discovery tour where time and time again the answer gives the satisfaction of knowing that BMW made the 7-Series more sophisticated than other cars. During the first day of testing the different buttons were pushed at random only to fall from one surprise to the next. This car is never different to be distinctive; this car is different to be better. This ranges from doors that close automatically to regal seats. The latter can almost be taken literally as there will be mainly royalty, presidents and captains of the industry travelling in the back seat.



In the front as well as in the back the 7-Series pleases its passengers with all imaginable and sometimes even unimaginable luxury. Particularly because a chauffeur will often drive this car, many functions have dual control. The driver can operate most functions with both hands on the wheel or via a button on the dashboard. Besides that, separate buttons in the back can operate everything that has to do with comfort.

Double iDrive

For the occasion, the car is implemented with a double iDrive system. This system operates climate control (left/right, front/back separate), telephonics, navigation and entertainment with a single push/turn button. For the 7-Series the system is more comprehensive than in other BMW's, which unfortunately makes it more confusing. In practice the extra functions are hardly ever used but make the

whole more complex and irritatingly slow.

The "double iDrive" has a colour widescreen with its own controls in the front and in the back. Wherever it is logical the functions are combined (the navigation system has the same destination in the front and the back) or sensibly separated (navigation in the front, watching a film with cinema sound in the back). In the area of entertainment the test vehicle impresses with four CD players: one "single shot" in the dashboard, one 6 CD stacker in the dashboard, a 6 DVD stacker in the back and a "single shot" DVD in the back. Additional to the DVD there is of course also TV on board.



Automatic drive

One of the four control handles selects the automatic drive. With a subtle handle either driving or parking is selected. The location as well as the operation require some getting used to, but turn out to be more convenient and quicker than a traditional automatic gearbox. Furthermore, this computer operated automatic drive also lends itself to sequential gear changing with buttons on and behind the steering wheel. Again: it appears complicated, but after a short introduction it is more convenient and sportier than the well-known "spoons" behind the wheel of other sequential gearboxes.

The "automatic drive" is connected to an engine that regardless of its size is extraordinarily fast. Even with the lightest diesel, the 7-Series is faster than the average sport coupé. The test vehicle goes a lot further than that with a 5-litre 8-cylinder engine. Together with the high level of comfort this power

source makes any speed appear like walking speed. Performance is so easy that all other cars look like toys. Passengers experience the sprint from standstill merely as "brisk acceleration", while the rest of the traffic witnesses an explosive take-off.

Handling

As it should be with BMW, rear-wheel drive and an equal distribution of weight on the front and rear wheels make for an optimal handling. Also thanks to active suspension (incline is actively prevented) excessive high speed in bends is possible. While the chauffeur looks at the speedometer almost flabbergasted, the dignitary in the back doesn't have the slightest idea how fast it is really going. The surface of the cup of coffee doesn't show any sign of a ripple, the engine remains silent.

Precisely in city traffic is where the car is confronted with its limits. Here the driver, like a truck driver, needs to make an educated guess whether an entrance or a turn in the road is wide enough for this 5-metre long limousine. Because of its lively handling this turns out to be even more treacherous. The 7-Series reacts very alertly and precisely to every steering movement, which makes the car feel smaller than it really is.

Again, the passengers in the back will enjoy the ride care-free and in all luxury, while the chauffeur will find it a privilege to be in the front seat. To both, the 7-Series is so comfortable and relaxing that speed is of minor importance. The populace outside are tearing along the road, the 7-Series make for a pleasant stay and there is no reason why that shouldn't last a bit longer.



Conclusion

Not a lot of news about the face-lifted BMW 7-Series but this car is still brand new where innovative techniques are concerned. The look is less radical and the outsider therefore realises even less how extraordinary this driving monument of technology and luxury really is.

The luxury is not only a result of the newest technology BMW has in store. Every detail has been reconsidered. What was possible to improve has been improved, which makes the 7-Series most of all progressive. The enormous size doesn't only provide much room in the back, but also results in stable and calm road handling. The chauffeur particularly experiences the 7-Series as the most lively and sporty limousine in its class. ■



Specifications

BMW 7-Series (2001 - 2008) 750i

Size and weight



Length x width x height	504 x 190 x 149 cm
Wheelbase	299 cm
Kerb weight	1.985 kg
Trailer	750 kg
Trailer - braked	2.100 kg
Fuel capacity	88 l
Luggage space	500 l
Tyre size	

Engine and performance



Capacity	4798 cc
Cylinders / valves	8/4
Max power	367 PS @ 6300 rpm
Max torque	490 Nm @ 3400 rpm
Drive	rear wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	5.9 secs
Top speed	250 km/h
Average mileage	11.4 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	16.9 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	8.3 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	271 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 61,770
Price base model	Â£ 51,420