



Smart ForTwo One up

Smart makes the best city car in the world. The Smart ForTwo is unparalleled in its nimbleness, extreme safety and practicality. Now the special model ForTwo tuned by Brabus is one up on all the other Smarts. Is this the ultimate city car?

What is a Smart? The Smart ForTwo is one of the few really innovative cars over the past couple of years. Moreover the Smart really lives up to its name.

Stupid!

Why the Smart is so clever can be best illustrated by first showing how it shouldn't be. Perhaps the least intelligent car currently is the SUV, the urbane all-terrain vehicle. In all the years that the undersigned has had a driver's license, the tarmac has never just ceased unexpectedly resulting in it being impossible to complete the journey without four wheel drive.

Also the number of times that it was absolutely necessary to pull a trailer of three and half tonnes behind the car can be counted on one hand, even after lighting fireworks with a very short fuse. In short: the SUV is a solution to a problem which few people experience.

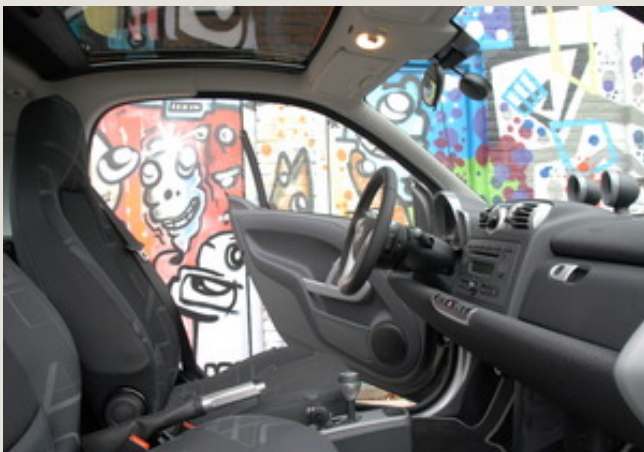


Nice, exciting but just as unnecessary is the sports car. This is also the answer to the question which is never posed. Nor was it ever necessary to have more than 300 bhp under your right-hand foot just to get home. There has never been a traffic situation which can only be conquered by throwing many hundreds of horsepower into the arena. Consequently,

these overdeveloped, inflated and souped-up racers frequently have a misplaced effect on the other sex: drivers of such boy-racers are clearly desperate with their tomfoolery.

Clever!

On the other hand, Smart offers the solutions to the problems with which motorists are confronted on a daily basis. In the city, it is extremely practical to drive in a car which is only 2m70. The Smart ForTwo is extremely nimble and darts through the rest of the traffic like lightning. It's possible to park in the smallest and most bizarre places. Because a Smart is pretty inexpensive, the car can be also left behind without a care in the world. A small, light car is economical by nature and thus Smart offers a constructive solution to the environmental issue.



The average car transports one or two people at the most. Consequently, the Smart ForTwo has only two seats, but then these are two staggeringly roomy seats. Moreover, there has been some thought given to the necessary luggage space. Behind the front seats there are 220 litres of luggage space which is more than the average city car can offer! In the lid of the boot, there is a handy "secret" storage compartment.

Safety

Since extremely small cars raise concerns about safety, Smart has given much attention to the rigidity of the car from the outset. The Tridon safety cage is even visible from the outside of the car. Meanwhile from crash tests it appears that the Smart ForTwo is able to magnificently withstand accidents even with large cars.



Even so, there are still disadvantages attached to the particular concept of the ForTwo. The second generation Smart which was test-driven on this occasion is extremely sensitive to side winds. This is inconvenient on the motorway. Even at gale force strength 4, it is necessary to continually make steering corrections, which is exhausting. On top of that, the wind noise while driving is distinctively audible. With its shorter wheel base, the ForTwo is less stable on the road than other conventional city cars.



Brabus

The reason for this test is the introduction of the Smart ForTwo Brabus. The German tuner Brabus has taken the ForTwo firmly to task and refined it on all counts. The original aim hasn't been forgotten along the way: the Smart Brabus is also a clever city car and not some over-dimensioned sports car.

Consequently, little of the engine capacity is initially noticeable. In the city, the Brabus takes off super quickly at the traffic lights, but not much faster than the other Smarts. Particularly on the motorway the Brabus offers an agreeable

extra where other Smarts are lacking. The acceleration up to 100 km/hr requires less effort, which translates into more comfort. Moreover, above 100 the km/hr the engine keeps on going better making the car feel more comfortable in the right hand lane.

Thanks to its power training, the Smart Brabus has a somewhat higher top speed. Smart promises a maximum of 155 km/hr; in reality the needle of the speedometer indicator creeps somewhere beyond 160 km/hr. At that speed, the wind shrieks around the car and it seems to be a lot quicker than it is.

Since the suspension is adapted to the improved performance, this fast Smart hasn't become some two seater kamikaze coupé. The suspension is stiffer; the car leans less; and feels more stabile at higher speeds.



Gear change

One point which has not been noticeably improved is the frequently cursed and abused automatic gearbox. This is due to lack of comprehension. Notably a cold engine offers little suppleness and unfortunately the computer doesn't take this into account.

Fortunately, it is possible to change gear sequentially. A tap on the gear shift paddles behind the steering wheel is sufficient to move from the next or previous gear. Even so, changing gears in the Smart ForTwo is an art in itself. When the gears are changed too early, there is too little available power and the car drops back. Changing gear too late results in a kick in the back, since there is too much available power. Once you have a good feeling for the car, it is possible to change gears smoothly and easily (a little tip: leave off the acceleration a little bit while changing gear).

De ultimate Smart

Apart from the extra capacity and better road handling the Smart Brabus offers a full finish and the toughest furnishing in all the Smarts. With its aerodynamic package including spoilers, skirting and sturdy but light metal rims, this little Smart Brabus looks very handsome. Inside the car there are aluminium accents and an indispensable quantity of Brabus logos.



As a bonus the test car is equipped with a sticker packet. At the moment, every new Smart is decorated for free with these special prints. The test car with its "Camouflage" print is without a doubt one up!

Conclusion

The Smart ForTwo has been taken to task by the tuning specialist Brabus. It hasn't been redesigned as a sports car, but an even finer city car. Its suspension is more stabile and consequently more trustworthy. The extra engine capacity is especially noticeable on the motorway. Mid-accelerations are made more easily and the comfort at high speed has increased slightly. Existing problems such as the uncomfortable automatic gearbox and extreme sensitivity to side-winds still haven't been tackled.

Consequently, the Smart Brabus is fairly exclusive. Inside and outside the car has been beautified, making the Smart ForTwo Brabus not only the best but also the ultimate city car. ■



Specifications

Smart ForTwo 72 kW BRABUS Xclusive

Size and weight

Length	270 cm
Width	156 cm
Height	154 cm
Wheelbase	187 cm
Kerb weight	780 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Fuel capacity	33 l
Luggage space	220/340 l



Engine and performance

Capacity	999 cc
Cylinders / valves	3/4
Max power	98 bhp @ 5500 rpm
Max torque	140 Nm @ 3500 rpm
Drive	achterwielen
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	9.9 secs
Top speed	150 km/h
Average mileage	5.2 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	6.5 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	4.4 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	124 gr / km

Price

Price	£ 13,520
Price base model	£ 6,900