



Mazda 5 (2005 - 2010)

Box of tricks

Review | Modern MPV's are boxes of tricks on wheels. Extra seats and luggage space appear out of floors, false bottoms and hidden panels. The one manufacturer has found even better use of space than the other. Handling and performance are at a continuously increasing high level, so choosing an MPV no longer feels like dragging along in a delivery van in service of the family. If what Mazda claims is true, then the new "5" is the smartest MPV at the moment. Such a claim is asking for a test.

How does one test an MPV? The most important thing is to keep the target market in mind. An MPV is not bought in the first place for its looks or handling and performance. Instead, practical options and space for the family are most important when choosing an MPV. So therefore, take a few children and let them have a go in the car. Preferably take some children that often have a lift in different MPV's from friends, which makes them experts on the subject.

Karakuri

They find out what a "Karakuri"-interior is faster than the test driver. Even before the editor has found the instruction manual, the children have already worked out that the seats of the left- and right backseat can be lifted up. Under one of the seats there is a table, under the other a cushion. With these either a table or an extra seat can be created between both backseats.

The middle seat is narrow and only offers enough room for a small child. The outer backseats are on rails, which is also why they offer enough leg and headroom for adults. Even the floor is perfectly flat (no high tunnel from front to back) which is favourable to the amount of space. Remarkably the interior has been constructed in a way, which always keeps the middle space free. That makes it noticeably easier to talk to the explorers in the back.





No matter how hard the young car testers try, the promised sixth and seventh seats can not be found. In the end it turns out that the test vehicle is the basic model, which is not equipped with a second backseat. In more expensive models this backseat folds out of the floor. Instead, this "Exclusive"-version has an enormous boot that offers more than enough room for all holiday luggage of the five people for which there are seats.

The number of pockets and compartments in the interior is huge. The longer one uses the car, the more room for storage is found. It is a shame though that although the glove compartment has a big lid, the actual space behind it is very limited. This basic model does not have a pocket for sunglasses either.

Accessibility

Space alone does not necessarily make a good MPV. The space has to be easily accessible and for that the "5" has two tricks up its sleeve. Inconspicuous, but nonetheless quite useful, is the rear door, that can be opened in two stages. First it reaches a height of about 1.8 metres. This way even smaller people can still close the rear door. An extra push though is enough to open the rear door some 10 cm further, so that taller people won't walk into it.

The most striking trump-card of the "5" is the sliding doors, unique in this segment. An important advantage of sliding doors is that they require little room around the car to be opened. If after a long journey children are a bit too enthusiastic in opening the doors, a sliding door can never cause any parking

damage. Furthermore, the aperture of a sliding door is big and makes getting in and out of the car much easier. The "children's jury" adds that the big windows in the sliding doors are very nice.

Design

In designing the car Mazda has cleverly disguised the rails of the sliding door. These are part of a line that runs from the nose to the rear lights. With this the rails are no disfigurement to the silhouette of the car, but rather an accent in the game of lines.



The "5" attracts attention by its design anyway, for both the exterior and the interior look less like a driving nursery and more like a multifunctional business car. Even when the owner is not out and about with the family, but with a business relation, this car is not an embarrassment. More strongly, the interior is much like that of the Mazda 6 with dark synthetic panels in smooth shapes (apart from the "stick-on strip" over the glove compartment that has come loose already), which is only interrupted up by a conspicuous silver coloured central console.

In it, as in the basic model too, are the controls for the air-conditioning and the standard audio system. The more expensive models make even more of the title "box of tricks" with a rain and light sensor, smart card and an mp3-player among other things. Even though the test vehicle being a basic model is not flooded with luxury, the car never gives the impression of driving in a scanty basic model.

Engines

The same goes for the engine. At the moment the "5" is only available with a 1.6 or 2.0-litre petrol engine. Only in a later stage are two diesel engines planned. The test vehicle has the lightest petrol engine which again does not give the impression of dealing with a "ready-to-go" car. The engine performs well and sound levels are extremely civilised. Comparing it to likewise MPV's with similar engines/performances, the Mazda shows a slightly higher fuel consumption. Several competitors get a few more miles out of a litre of petrol or perform better with the same fuel consumption.

The "5" convinces with a lively handling and performance. The car never feels like a large MPV, but is manoeuvrable like a compact mid range car. The road holding too is excellent and the driver doesn't need to alter his driving style to any possible shortcomings of the MPV. It is therefore rather unfortunate that the steering is extraordinarily light and insensitive, otherwise this newcomer would have had the best handling and performance of all MPV's.

Nevertheless it doesn't feel in any way like driving a delivery van. Only with side winds is it noticeable that this is a large car. The Mazda5 is therefore absolutely no sacrifice for years to come for the pleasure of occasionally being able to take the whole family out. The driver is happy, the children are happy; the test is a success.



Conclusion

The test driver has done the miles and the children have explored the interior from top to bottom. Considering the handling and performance the Mazda5 is notable for its excellent road holding qualities, good brakes and decent performance of the 1.8-litre basic engine. The steering is very light and the fuel consumption is slightly above average.

There is no fault to be found in the practical options: the Karakuri-interior with interchangeable middle backseat works. Furthermore, the car offers enough room for children and adults. The sliding doors also make use of the room easy and safe. ■



Specifications

Mazda 5 (2005 - 2010) Mazda5 1.8 TS

Size and weight



Length x width x height	451 x 176 x 162 cm
Wheelbase	275 cm
Kerb weight	1.370 kg
Trailer	600 kg
Trailer - braked	1.300 kg
Fuel capacity	60 l
Luggage space	112/857 l
Tyre size	

Engine and performance



Capacity	1798 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	115 PS @ 5300 rpm
Max torque	165 Nm @ 4000 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	11.4 secs
Top speed	182 km/h
Average mileage	7.9 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	10.7 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	6.3 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	190 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 14,515
Price base model	Â£ 14,515