



Mazda CX5 (2011 - 2017)

Oasis

First impression | Finding a needle in a haystack is not impossible. It is a lot of work, but one knows the needle must be there. Finding an oasis in a desert is much harder. Maybe there is no oasis at all. Searching for a strong yet frugal, spacious yet compact and sporty yet comfortable SUV is just as tricky. Mazda says it offers such a car and it is called "CX5". Autozine investigates.

The first part of the mission is: find a car that is spacious but still looks cool. When an estate car or an MPV is too ordinary, an SUV is the usual answer. While all SUVs look tough, sportiness is often lacking. Most of the time mighty or tough translates into huge and bulky.

The CX5 on the other hand looks muscular and self assured. The windscreen has been placed further to the back and has a steeper angle than normal. When extending the lines beneath the side windows, they end in the heart of the wheels. This gives the CX5 the silhouette of a runner that is about to sprint.

The nose is unusually low for an SUV, which is Mazda's way of showing that the CX5 is a so-called "crossover" and not an off-roader. This sleek front benefits both aerodynamics and pedestrian safety. The fact that the approach angle is poor (the maximum angle of a slope than can be climbed) and ground clearance is severely affected by this, is no objection in this case.

possible compliment to its engineers"

"The CX5 doesn't feel like a big car and that's the biggest



Room

Despite its good looks, practical use has not been forgotten. That doesn't just apply to the room inside, but also to visibility all around. Because the a-pillar (the beam between the windscreen and front doors) has been placed as far as possible to the back, it does not block the view of the driver. However, this construction does cause extra wind noise at high speeds.

The mirrors have also been moved backwards a little and that gives better visibility to the left and right just in front of the vehicle. The bonnet can be easily seen from the driver's seat, thereby offering visual orientation that is lacking in many other cars.

The space in the front is fair, but no more or less than normal. The space in the back is very good. Legroom in the rear is far above average and headroom is fine as well. The back seat can be folded up in three separate parts (by just moving a lever in the boot). While folding the seat moves downwards a bit, so a perfectly level boot floor remains.



Gadgets

Especially for the CX5, Mazda has developed tailor-made satellite navigation together with TomTom. Thanks to the cooperation with TomTom it can be offered at a much lower price than usual. Also, TomTom offers the best quality of maps and routes on the market, which is also a great reason for choosing this system. The combined audio, navigation and communication system can be controlled in three ways: by buttons on the steering wheel, by a central commander on the centre console and by touching the screen.

Thanks to "Smart City Brake Support" the CX5 is able to brake automatically for obstacles in its path. At higher speeds the system just reduces speed to reduce damages. From a technical point of view it is no problem to make the car stop from higher speeds, but the consequences are unimaginable if ever the computer brakes for the wrong reasons at motorway speeds.



A little light in the mirror warns for objects outside the view of the driver. This only works at speeds above 30 km/h; so regrettably it does not work in city traffic to avoid collisions with bicycles. Just like many other cars the CX5 reads the markers on the road and warns the driver whenever they accidentally (read: without indicating) cross a line. Mazda does this in an original and highly effective way: from the loudspeakers a noise is emitted that sounds like the car is driving on a bad surface.

Engines

Even harder to find than a beautiful and spacious SUV is a frugal SUV. Environmentally friendly and sports utility vehicles (SUV) are complete opposites, is the general opinion. However, the CX5 is the first Mazda that features "Sky Active" technology.

That's marketing speak for a package of systems to improve fuel economy without affecting performance. This isn't done by simply refining existing technology but also by making brand new designs where efficiency comes first. Next to mechanical changes, "Sky Active" also comprises improved aerodynamics and weight reduction.

The only available petrol engine has a displacement of 2.0 litres and develops 165 PS / 210 Nm. Thanks to the relatively low weight (the CX5 weighs about 100 kg less than a comparable car from other brands) that's enough for fair performance. The petrol engine develops its power very smoothly. This is why the CX5 feels slower than it actually is and therefore the promised sporty feeling is lacking. Mazda says it chooses the smooth (read: boring) build up of its engine power to make sure the driver is never surprised by a sudden burst of performance.

The optional automatic gearbox does its job, no more, no less. The conservative technology of the automatic gearbox with torque converter is a strange contrast to the innovative techniques used elsewhere in the car. According to the engineers a traditional automatic still delivers most comfort when accelerating. This did not work out during the test drive, because the engine often revved for no apparent reason.



On a short and not too demanding test drive (the drive was done using very costly, hand built prototypes) the average fuel consumption was 6.5 litres per 100 km. That is exceptionally low for an SUV; even some normal cars use more fuel!

Diesel

The CX5 is also available with a 2.2 litre diesel engine which, depending on the chosen version, delivers 150 of 175 PS. With a diesel engine under the bonnet the CX5 gives a mightier feeling. Even the base engine performs very well and never gives the driver the feeling of driving a base model. The stronger "HP" version performs even better and makes the CX5 a seriously quick car.

The diesel engines excel in quietness and refinement. These power trains aren't just quiet expressed in decibels. The engine noise has little disturbing frequencies, so the sound is never experienced as disturbing.



Despite the engine, the clutch takes some getting used to. Thanks to the short gear lever the CX5 shifts like a sports car!

All engines feature a stop/start system. For some inexplicable reason a shift indicator is missing. Because all engines are very torquey at low revs (the diesel develops 200 Nm at 1.000 rpm, 80 km/h is 1,500 rpm) a shift indicator really does come in handy. The test drive with both diesel engines cost 6 litres per 100 km.

Handling

The biggest problem when looking for a good SUV is handling. An SUV has a high centre of gravity and it is heavy, two things that severely affect handling. As stated before, the CX5 is a bit lighter than normal. The suspension is downright firm. So opt for 17 inch rims, because with the 19 inch there's not much left for comfort on bad surfaces.



The CX5 has pleasantly direct steering. The CX5 doesn't feel like a big car and that's the biggest possible compliment to its engineers. Because the power steering is electrical, rather than mechanical, a certain resistance is missing which results in less confidence at high speeds.

While the CX5 doesn't achieve the impossible, it still stands out from the crowd. Handling is very good for an SUV, yet not as good as a comparable luxury car. Also the CX5 isn't capable of (serious) off-roading. The optional four-wheel drive is meant for extra safety in extreme weather. Therefore the oasis hasn't been found, but the thirst has been quenched because the CX5 is a rarity.

Conclusion

Is the Mazda CX5 an oasis in a desert of bulky, gas guzzling and unsafe SUVs? No, that's putting it too strong. But... the CX5 is a modern SUV that offers everything the competition offers and then goes a bit further. Its looks are just a bit more refined, ergonomics are a tad smarter.

All engines perform well, while fuel economy is always better than average. Handling is also above average. On top of that the CX5 has a sporty character, meaning the unique "Mazda DNA" can also be found in this SUV. ■



Specifications

Mazda CX5 (2011 - 2017) 2.0 (2wd) SE-L

Size and weight



Length x width x height	454 x 184 x 167 cm
Wheelbase	270 cm
Kerb weight	1.290 kg
Trailer	690 kg
Trailer - braked	1.800 kg
Fuel capacity	56 l
Luggage space	463/1620 l
Tyre size	225/65R17

Engine and performance



Capacity	1998 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	165 PS @ 6000 rpm
Max torque	210 Nm @ 4000 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	9.2 secs
Top speed	200 km/h
Average mileage	6 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	7.5 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	5.1 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	139 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 22,995
Price base model	Â£ 22,995