



Mini MINI

Forever young

Review | What if the MINI was a person? The MINI is from 1959, so it's coming of age. If the MINI was a person, he would have grey hair by now but still manage to tie it in a ponytail. He would still wear a denim jacket, but at the same time carry the latest smartphone. Meet the fourth generation of the car that's forever young: the MINI.

Even the fourth generation (internally known as "F56") must be faithful to the original. So a brand new design was out of the question. A new interpretation of the base model was the most logical approach. So even this 2014 model is still instantly recognisable as a MINI, albeit the lines are more abstract.

The headlights are more streamlined to improve aerodynamics. The tail lights are too big for the car and seem to be from a completely different model; this really doesn't suit the MINI at all. The new MINI has grown considerably while the relative proportions are less harmonious than before. More than ever, a suitable colour and a flashy set of rims work miracles on its appearance. MINI chose to enlarge the car because a larger vehicle makes for an easier sell. A small, expensive car is hard to sell.

"The Cooper D feels as quick as the petrol powered version, while the numbers prove differently"



Inside, the growth is hardly noticeable. Tall drivers will hit the ceiling with the top of their head, especially when the car is fitted with the optional sunroof. Small drivers complain about the pedals, which are hard to reach. The seatbelts are not adjustable in height, which is also uncomfortable for those who are taller or smaller than average.

The space on the back seat is poor for a car of this size. The boot measures 211 litres, which is also disappointing. The biggest gain is the increased width, which gives the driver and passenger more room to move around their seats.



Trim levels

Once on the way, the minor inconveniences are easily forgotten. The materials are of top quality and build quality is better than before as well. After repeatedly shifting and adjusting, the (sports) seats turn out to be

pretty comfortable after all.

The dashboard still follows the basic lines of the original MINI, but once again with a modern interpretation. For example, the original MINI had a speedometer the size of a station clock in the middle of the dashboard. Its round shape has been preserved, but it now encloses a display. The edge of the circle is made up of multi colour LEDs which act like a rev counter, a "fun counter" or an economy gauge.



The audio system and satnav are clearly carried over from BMW, which owns MINI. Just for MINI, some functionality has been added, which isn't useful but certainly is fun. For example, a technical check-up can be performed after which the results are shown in a comic book style.

Just like with the big BMWs, the system is operated by a single rotary commander. However, the centre console of the MINI is so short that the driver has to twist his/her arm to reach the knob. In a BMW the screen is mounted too far from the driver to comfortably touch it while driving, but in a MINI a touch screen would have been a much better choice.



When it comes to safety and drivers' aids the MINI made a huge leap forward. The car can now alert the driver of any pending doom and automatically brake for obstacles. The climate control has two zones and reverse parking is made easier by a rear camera. The best new option is the "head-up display"; it projects essential data like the speed and instructions from the satnav right in the driver's vision.

Cooper S

As usual, the "Cooper S" is the most exciting of the bunch. The previous Cooper S was pushy and nervous, like a dog that jumps up at his master to encourage him to play. Of course the new Cooper S is more than spritely, but this time there's no trace of aggression.



For MINI standards, steering is on the light side. The

suspension is firm, but not rock hard. The only thing that is noticeable is the increased width, because the driver really feels like they are operating a large car.



At the same time the MINI has grown more mature, because noise levels have decreased significantly. On the open road only the tyres are audible. Depending on weather conditions, the A-pillar may cause some wind noise.

The unusually tame character can be explained by the "magic" button near the gear lever. It selects a normal, green or sporty character. The test drive started off in normal mode. Once the sports mode has been engaged the ring around the central display turns red, the steering is more direct, all 192 horsepower are ready to go, and the driver should brace for launch! Now the Cooper S turns into a true entertainer and handling is almost addictive!



Despite the relatively simple technology (no limited slip differential or variable power distribution) the front wheels can easily handle the power. Thanks to the increased track width the MINI is even more stable in fast corners than the previous generation.

Cooper D

Still, the biggest surprise is the all-new "Cooper D". It is powered by a daring three-cylinder diesel engine which is at least as lively as the petrol plant. The Cooper D feels as quick as the petrol powered version, while the numbers prove differently. On the open road the Cooper D is remarkably strong. For example, accelerating from 130 to 150 km/h is done with incredible ease.



A downside of the three-cylinder architecture is the unusual sound. Inside, this is hardly noticeable, but outside this tough looking MINI sounds a bit like a moped.

The biggest advantage of a three-cylinder is its good fuel economy. By selecting the green driving mode, the ring around the central display turns green, the response to the accelerator is less fierce and all power guzzling accessories (aircon) are turned down a notch. If the driver still dares to speed, a warning appears on the display. According to MINI the Cooper D consumes just 3.6 litres per 100 km (78 mpg). Because of its lively nature it was hard to resist the playful character of the car. Still, fuel consumption was limited to a mere 5 litres per 100 km (56 mpg).



Conclusion

The "New MINI" was aging and so it was time for yet another rebirth. The new looks are less harmonious than before and the MINI gained some weight. To reduce costs, many stock BMW parts were used which leads to awkward ergonomics (unreachable controls, uncomfortable seating position).

The biggest improvement is the switchable driving mode. This means the car is as playful as before, but it can also act more grown-up thanks to the green driving mode. The petrol engines do what they advertise on the tin. The all-new diesel engine sets new standards when it comes to sheer driving pleasure combined with low emissions. That the MINI is still young at heart is proven by the many electronic gadgets, which make living with this modern day icon safer and more comfortable. Thanks to this ongoing renewal the MINI truly is forever young. ■



Specifications

Mini MINI

Size and weight



Length x width x height	385 x 173 x 141 cm
Wheelbase	250 cm
Kerb weight	1.210 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Fuel capacity	44 l
Luggage space	211/731 l
Tyre size	175/65R15

Engine and performance



Capacity	1496 cc
Cylinders / valves	3/4
Max power	116 PS @ 4000 rpm
Max torque	270 Nm @ 1750 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	9.2 secs
Top speed	205 km/h
Average mileage	3.5 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	4.3 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	3.1 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	92 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 16,395
Price base model	Â£ 13,750