



Smart ForTwo Smarter

Review | When the first Smart entered the market in 1998, it caused a small revolution. Never before was a car so radically different. And it paid off, because since then the compact two-seater car has conquered the world. Now Smart introduces the fourth generation of the world's favourite city car and it is even smarter than before...

The name says it all: "smart" wants to be cleverer than the rest. Smart doesn't merely focus on advanced technology, but rather on ideas. Smart rethought just about every aspect of the car. What is the point of a powerful engine when driving fast isn't allowed? Why should a car be big if it only carries two people? And why would one lug a back seat around when it is used only once or twice per year?

The result is a two-seater car which only measures 2.7 metres in length. Yet, it isn't all about leaving things out. More than with other small cars Smart pays more attention to luxury, safety and looks.



That's because the Smart ForTwo isn't meant to be a budget car, but rather a clever means of transportation. And that's why Smart has always been popular amongst innovators, trendsetters and of course companies who love to print their name on the side of this cool little car. Compared to the previous generations, the new Smart ForTwo looks more self assured, to make it clear this isn't a cuddly toy.

To emphasise that the ForTwo is at least as strong and safe as a bigger car, the roll cage is visible on the outside of the car. The "Tridon" safety cage can be executed in a contrasting colour to give the ForTwo a unique look.



The inside can be customised as well. For example, the test vehicle was executed in a combination of white and blue that no other brand would even consider, but it looks great on this car!

Trim levels

The layout of the cabin is also very "smart": minimalist and still posh. To save both weight and cost, Smart installs one-piece seats. These are big enough to sit tall adults comfortably and safely.

As it should be with a modern car, much attention has been paid to integration of mobile phones. Right in front on the radio a cradle can be mounted. The installed smartphone will block most buttons, but this is no problem since the device will be used to take over the function of most buttons on the dash. Smart doesn't go for technology that is still in development, like MirrorLink. Instead it offers its own app which is ready for use right now (hint: use the "cross connect" app, not the old "Smart Drive 2" app and do activate Bluetooth).



Next to this budget solution, a proper integrated audio, communication and navigation unit is available. Sat nav is by TomTom, so it's guaranteed to plan the best possible routes. A nice detail is the round shape in the dash over which the display seems to hover. A rev counter doesn't come as standard, but can be mounted on top of the dashboard.

Engines

The ForTwo is available with two petrol engines. Both have just three cylinders and both are mounted in the rear of the car. The base engine develops 52 kW (71 PS) and as an alternative a more powerful 66 kW (90 PS) turbo engine is available.



Perhaps the biggest news: the new Smart is no longer fitted with an automatic gearbox as standard. Smart used to opt for an automatic gearbox because there was simply no room for the necessary lever and wires. However, combined with the small engine it was nearly impossible to make the automatic gearbox shift smoothly.



Forced by the market, the new Smart is now fitted with a very decent manual five-speed gearbox. As an option an automatic gearbox with dual clutch will be available.

For this road test, the 71 PS engine with a manual gearbox was driven. It's performance is sufficient, but no more than that. The ForTwo easily comes along with the flow of traffic and it is quiet yet frugal. It's only when really pushed that the ForTwo will flex its muscles making it easy to quickly overtake other cars or merge on a busy highway.

Despite many fuel saving technologies, the ForTwo isn't any more efficient than other small cars. During the test drive the car used 4.9 litres per 100 km and that's about the same as the average four-seater city car.



Handling

Its short wheelbase is both the strongest and weakest point of the ForTwo. The advantage is that the car is extremely agile, making it easy to cut through dense city traffic. The turning circle is almost ridiculously small; the ForTwo seems to want to bite its own tail!

The disadvantages of a short wheel base are mediocre "straight line stability", susceptibility to side winds and a bumpy ride on bad roads. With the new generation of the ForTwo, all of these problems have been solved.



The so-called "Dynamic Steering" makes the car stable

at high speed, while being alert at low speeds. The "side wind assistant" is an extension to the electronic stability programme ("ESP") that helps the ForTwo drive in a straight line even if the wind pushes from the side. Thanks to more advanced suspension, comfort has improved while handling is excellent.

Thanks to these technologies, the ForTwo is a true joy to drive. Just like a powerful sports car invites the driver to speed, the ForTwo feels right at home in the city. The Smart driver outmanoeuvres all other cars in city traffic; not because it has to, but because it is so easy.



Conclusion

With the fourth generation of the ForTwo, Smart doesn't start another revolution, but the clever city car does make a big step forward. Compared to the previous generations, handling has been improved and the notorious automatic gearbox has been discarded. Thanks to the high build quality and refined underpinning, the car feels more mature. This means the biggest objections to driving a Smart ForTwo have effectively been eliminated.

At the same time the ForTwo is still the odd man out. When taking the price and fuel efficiency into consideration, the ForTwo hardly offers any advantages over more traditional city cars. It's only those who live in a big city who will prefer the ForTwo because of its agility.

What remains are its positive image and that it's fun to drive. Driving a Smart car is a true joy! And to add to the fun, the looks of the ForTwo can be customised more than ever before. No matter what the attraction is, the ForTwo is still a smart choice! ■



Specifications

Smart ForTwo

Size and weight



Length x width x height	270 x 166 x 156 cm
Wheelbase	187 cm
Kerb weight	780 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Fuel capacity	28 l
Luggage space	260/350 l
Tyre size	165/65R15

Engine and performance

Capacity	999 cc
Cylinders / valves	3/12
Max power	71 PS @ 6000 rpm
Max torque	91 Nm @ 2850 rpm
Drive	rear wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	14.9 secs
Top speed	151 km/h
Average mileage	4.1 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	unknown
Mileage extra urban	unknown
CO2 emissions	93 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 11,820
Price base model	Â£ 11,125