BMW 6 Series Gran Turismo – First Impressions

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The grand BMW 6 Series Gran Turismo makes its UK debut.

David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) has been driving it…

Launched to the UK's motoring media last week, aptly in the Valley of the Racehorse, Lambourn, Berkshire where fine breeding and horsepower of the four legged variety are commonplace, was the new BMW 6 Series Gran Turismo which makes its official sales debut on 11 November 2017.

The five door long wheelbase all-new 6 Series Gran Turismo replaces the 5 Series Gran Turismo which was first launched in 2009. This move to a new designation follows other

moves in the BMW line-up where 1, 3 and 5 Series Coupés and Convertibles became 2, 4 and 6 Series versions. The new 6 Series Gran Turismo is based more on the latest luxury 7 Series Saloon and will sell, for now, alongside the 6 Series Coupé and Gran Coupé which are based more towards the latest 5 Series models. The Coupé and Gran Coupé are expected to be replaced during the next two years by the new 8 Series line-up.

BMW 6 Series Gran Turismo prices start at £46,810 and rise through eight variants to £57,570, but there is a host of extra cost options which will push those on-the-road prices much higher. Currently there are two petrol and one diesel engine options and all have an eight-speed automatic gearbox as standard. The BMW TwinPower turbocharged engines are 2.0 litre, 630i four cylinder petrol 258 hp and 400 Nm (295 lb.ft) of torque, the 640i 3.0 litre, six cylinder petrol 340 hp/450 Nm (332 lb.ft) and the 630d 3.0 litre, six cylinder 265 hp/620 Nm (457 lb.ft) turbodiesel. The BMW xDrive 4WD system can be ordered with the 640i and 630d M Sport specification engines and adds £2,000 to the price over rear wheel drive models. Each engine is available with SE and M Sport equipment, and added technology and equipment with M Sport have a price premium of £3,600 over SE.

Alex Morgan, BMW's UK Product Operations Manager for large cars told the media this week, "The new 6 Series GT will appeal to those customers that want an alternatively styled flagship model. In essence it's a Crossover, combining the driving dynamics of a saloon, the elegance of a coupé roofline, the elevated driving position of a Sports Activity Vehicle and the convenience of an estate. The new model is designed for 'great touring' with its emphasis on long distance comfort and convenience".

He added "During the seven years life cycle of the vehicle UK sales will total around 7,500 units and we will sell 1,500 next year, its first full year of sales. China will be the largest global market taking 37% of production, followed by Europe at 30% or around 60,516 units".

Regarding the UK market he added that the most popular engine will be the 630d, 50% of customers will take the xDrive option, 80 to 85% will choose the M Sport spec level and 75%

of sales will go to retail customers with fleet and business user-choosers taking the remaining 25%. The single best-selling version will be the 630d xDrive M Sport, priced at £56,605. The main competitors are the Mercedes CLS and the Audi A7.

Using a version of the BMW 7 Series Saloon platform the 6 Series GT is 87 mm (3.43 in) longer than the outgoing 5 Series GT it replaces. The new dimensions are 5,091 mm (16.70 ft) long, 1,902 mm (6.24 ft) wide, 1,538 mm (5.05 ft) high, with a long wheelbase of 3,070 mm (10.07 ft). Using a combination of aluminium and high strength steel the average weight reduction of the new 6 Series GT is 115 kg (254 lb) over the 5 Series GT, contributing to a 15% reduction in fuel consumption and emissions. Combined Cycle fuel consumption, depending on the model chosen, ranges from 35.3 to 55.3 mpg, and CO2 emissions from 135 to 183 g/km.

In addition to much improved rear passenger legroom over the 5 Series GT, due to the longer wheelbase, the boot and load space has been increased by 110 litres (3.88 cu.ft) to 610 litres (21.54 cu.ft) with the 40/20/40 split rear seats in use, and when folded this goes up to 1,800 litres (63.57 cu.ft). The boot sill has been lowered and is now flush with the boot floor for easier loading capability. The rear seat backs can be lowered and raised electrically from switches in the load area, and as an option the backrest angle of the rear seats can be electrically adjusted.

Upfront in the interior, the 6 Series GT provides a raised seating position for the driver, optimising the all-round view and with electric front seats and driver’s memory function. Centrally-positioned in the twin cockpit front design is a freestanding 10.25-inch touchscreen for navigation, communication and infotainment functions. Standard equipment includes automatic climate control with an option to scale up to a four-zone system, also 18-inch light-alloy wheels are standard but other wheels up to 20 inches can be ordered. M Sport offers specific 19-inch light alloy wheels, leather upholstery with exclusive stitching and piping in contrasting colours plus illuminated door sill strips. A panoramic glass roof is standard on M Sport models and optionally available on the SE models. Reversing assist camera is standard across both trim levels.

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As M Sport is the most popular spec level the additions over the SE level also include aerodynamic exterior styling tweaks, M Sport suspension and brakes, sports front seats and leather-covered dashboard. Core SE and M Sport spec items include Bluetooth with audio streaming, BMW Emergency Call, BMW icon adaptive LED automatic headlights, BMW Professional Multimedia, touchscreen navigation, DAB radio, reversing camera, multi-function sports steering wheel.

Safety items are Collision and Pedestrian Warning with City Collision Mitigation as standard, while the list of options includes the new improved version of Active Cruise Control, which is operational at speeds between zero and 130 mph. Lane Departure and Lane Change Warning systems that operate between 44 and 130mph are also options, as are Side Collision Warning and Evasion Aid, which both come to the driver's aid with corrective steering inputs.

The options list also features a Surround View camera, Crossing Traffic warning system, the Crossroads and Wrong-Way warning, BMW Night Vision and Remote Control Parking.

Exterior styling highlights include the latest version of the famous BMW kidney grille, flanked by icon Adaptive LED headlights under a long, typically BMW, bonnet. There is an eye-catching side coupé profile, and viewed from the front or rear the vehicle has a muscular stance. Above the waistline the A-pillars are much more heavily raked than its predecessor, while the flowing roofline and sweeping side window design add to the coupé look. New horizontal lines, sharp edges and tapering surfaces magnify the sporting nature.



Being a BMW it cannot just be about style, specification and space, although the new 6 Series Gran Turismo has all those elements in abundance. For most BMW owners driving pleasure and image play a big part in the ownership proposition. The newcomer is unashamedly a grand sports tourer. It is a big muscular car even though it's technically a large hatchback. The specification, interior luxury, long legroom for the rear seat passengers and huge boot space also matter, as does travelling comfort and driveability.

My brief outing at the UK media launch was in the best selling version – the 630d xDrive M Sport version, which costs £56,605 but the vehicle was fitted with a host of options to showcase what extras are available. It rolled up at the handover point carrying a price-tag of £71,145, mostly taken up in even more interior spec items and driver support aids. Even

though all versions have rear axle air suspension, one of the options fitted was the £1,670 front and rear axle ‘air’ option which will be one of the most popular additions.

The 6 Series GT is a big car; it’s wide, it’s long and it’s comfortable, but it filled the narrow winding roads during my test driving in the Valley of the Racehorse Berkshire. The driving mode in Eco-Pro suited me and the big car best. The Comfort setting was too soft. giving a ‘floating’ road holding performance around the winding narrow roads and too ‘floating’ for precise handling, and will be best suited for long distance open road travel.

The Sport mode sharpened the engine, transmission and handling responses but on rural roads and the busy traffic conditions which prevailed even in the countryside, its use is limited except again for more open A-roads. So Eco-Pro was the best compromise for this high-speed cruiser in rural driving conditions. A brief dash along a short motorway section proved this is the best domain for the new 6GT although it would be nice to waft along, or more likely during stop/start travel in inner city driving, either as the driver or more likely the well-healed passenger reclining in the rear.

The 630d, straight-six TwinPower turbodiesel engine is a strong performer through a wide range of driving conditions, slow crawl to relaxed high speed cruising. With 265 hp and a massive 620 Nm (457 lb.ft) of torque from 2,000 rpm, matched with the eight-speed automatic/manual sports transmission and xDrive all-wheel drive grip, it has the ability to be smooth and refined but can show its teeth without growling under hard acceleration. Top speed is limited to 155 mph and zero to 62mp takes just 6.0 seconds. Officially the Combined Cycle fuel economy figure is 49.5 mpg, but on my more sedate run around the highway and byways of Berkshire the figure was 40.2 mpg. With CO2 emissions of 154 g/km, VED road tax is a reasonable for a car of this class and size, £500 First Year rate and then £140 Standard rate for year two onwards. However added to that £140 figure is the £310 supplementary charge each year for five years as the vehicle costs more than £40k. Company car executives will pay 32% Benefit-in-Kind tax. Insurance groups are yet to be confirmed but expect Group 40 plus.

VERDICT

With a 6 Series line-up for now consisting of the Coupé, Grand Coupé and now the Gran Turismo, BMW have this niche sector well and truly covered with the latter providing more space and long distance travelling refinement rather than outright sharp handling agility. It's one for the open road cruisers and a potential worthy alternative for the current 6 Series Coupé and Gran Coupé replacements which are expected to form part of the yet to be announced 8 Series line-up.

For: A high pedigree classy and roomy long-legged cruiser, huge size and kerb appeal, luxurious interior, high specification as standard with loads of extra cost options, comfortable and relaxing ride, strong and responsive engine.

Against: Not as agile as other more sharper handling 6 Series models, limited rear visibility through the tailgate window, extra cost options add significantly to the final on-the-road price.

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Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec in Brief:

BMW 6 Series Gran Turismo 630d xDrive M Sport.

Price: £56,605 (£71,145 as tested with options).

Engine/transmission: 3.0 litre, straight-six, TwinPower turbocharged diesel 265 hp, 620 Nm (457 lb.ft) of torque from 2,000 rpm, eight speed automatic with xDrive all-wheel-drive. Performance: 155 mph (restricted top speed), 0–62 mph 6.0 seconds/

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 49.5 mpg, (40.2 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 154 g/km, VED £500 First Year rate then £140 + £310

supplementary rate for five years as it costs over £40k, BiK company car tax 32%.

Insurance Group: TBC but expect Group 40+.

Warranty: Three years/unlimited mileage.

Dimensions/capacities: L 5,091 mm (16.70 ft), W 1,902 mm (6.24 ft), H 1,538 mm (5.05 ft), wheelbase 3,070 mm (10.07 ft), boot/load space 610 to 1,800 litres (21.54 to 63.57 cu.ft), five doors/five seats.