BMW latest 4 Series Coupé – First Impressions (plus BMW model news)

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BMW'S NEW 4 SERIES COUPE, FIRST DRIVE NEWS AND VIEWS.

David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) reports...

In these days of health and safety in this Covid era, holding mass motoring media product test driving events is not easy, you need space.

And to meet that space requirements for this week's BMW UK Media Showcase event of their new and updated models they used an aircraft hangar at the Bicester Heritage Centre for the media to assemble and collect their test drive cars.

This event heralded the arrival of numerous updated models for the 2021 model year, new RDE2 emission compliant engines, more hybrid and PHEV versions but centre stage of this Showcase event was the UK launch of the new 4 Series Coupé..

BMW 4 Series Coupé

The original 4 Series was a range extension of the 3 Series that happened in 2013 with 4 Series name being given to Coupé, Convertible and Gran Coupé models to promote their sportier nature. They were facelifted in 2017.

For the 2021 model year the more muscular styled 4 Series Coupe is 4,768 mm (15.64 ft) in length, 128 mm (5.04 in) longer than its predecessor and 27 mm (1.06 in) wider at 1,852 mm (6.08 ft). The wheelbase has grown by 41 mm (1.61 in) to 2,851 mm (9.35 ft) but only 6 mm (0.24 in) has been added to the vehicle height which is now 1,383 mm (4.54 ft). The increased muscular looks allow increased track widths of 28 mm (1.10 in) at the front and 18 mm (0.71 in) at the rear. The body has short overhangs, slender pillars, long doors with frameless windows and a flowing roofline combining to deliver a sleek aerodynamic look with huge purposeful kerb appeal.



A very striking element of the front end design is the huge BMW kidney grille in its latest enlarged form with its upright elements connected in the centre. BMW insists it reprises a design featured from the company's past but adds a modern twist. It is framed by surfaces with a three-dimensional structure and like the contours of the headlights and the bonnet's arrow shaped lines they all zero in on the grille. I'm still not sold on its design but it's becoming more familiar. Bold air vents in the lower front apron add to its hefty front end design.

Full LED headlights are fitted as standard with two U-shaped fibre-optic light guides in the lower section serving as the daytime driving lights. Adaptive LED Headlights with BMW Laserlight, including Selective Beam non-dazzling high beam assistant, are available as

options. Slim LED fog lights are standard on all models except the BMW M440i xDrive Coupe and BMW M440d xDrive Coupé, they have their own high spec alternatives. The rear end styling incorporates slim full LED rear lights and dual-branch tailpipes. Added carbon-fibre exterior trim items are available in a Visibility Package.

Under the skin the new 4 Series Coupé, whilst using the same platform and most components as the latest 3 Series models, has received specific changes to the bodyshell and platform to lighten and strengthen it in keeping with its sports handling.

At launch this month the new range is available with the following model line-up with turbocharged engines. The starter model and likely best selling version is the 420i petrol 184 hp, 300 Nm (221 lb.ft) M-Sport priced at £39,870. Next is the 430i M Sport 258 hp, 400 Nm (295 lb.ft) petrol at £44,055 followed by the flagship M440i xDrive 374 hp 500 Nm (369 lb.ft) petrol at £53,875. For diesel customers there is the choice of the 420d M Sport 190 hp 400 Nm (295 lb.ft) at £42,440 or the same engine and xDrive all wheel drive at £44,030. Mild hybrid technology with a 48V starter-generator and second battery is fitted to all diesel engines and the straight-six petrol unit of the flagship M440i xDrive version.



440i engine…

Arriving in March next year will be straight-six turbodiesel 430d xDrive M Sport 286 hp 650 Nm (479 lb.ft) of torque and the M440d xDrive with 340 hp and 700 Nm (516 lb.ft). The prices of these two models are to be confirmed. All current 4 Series models have an eight speed Steptronic auto/manual sports transmission as standard. Also in the future; just announced are M4 Coupe 480 hp and M4 Competition Coupe 510 hp six cylinder turbo-petrol variants but no UK prices yet.

For now all 4 Series have the brand's most popular M Sport spec as standard but for the first time for any BMW model there is an M Sport Pro Package option but this includes numerous options all in one bundle to simplify ordering. Other packs are also available and some are listed below in my test car report

Inside the 4 Series Coupé has a four-seat layout with the usual driver-focused cockpit design with modern premium ambience and all have leather upholstery. The instrument panel is based around horizontal lines with the Coupé's width emphasised by the contour lines extending into the door areas. The start/stop button is now positioned in a control panel in the centre console, where the newly designed selector lever is joined by the iDrive Controller and the buttons for the Driving Experience Control switch and electromechanical parking brake.

New style front sport seats are standard and they feature contoured side bolsters to provide support during hard cornering. All models also include front-seat heating as standard and electrically adjustable sports seats including memory function are available for customers who choose to upgrade to the Comfort Plus package.

There is an M leather steering wheel with more user-friendly multi-function buttons, door sill plates and digital instrument cluster display bearing the M logo. A Harman Kardon surround sound system is optionally available. There are of course other items of connectivity, sat-nav, digital cockpit and driving support systems as standard. But practicality hasn't been overlooked either; the Coupé has 40:20:40 split rear seat backs, an array of larger storage areas and the boot space has been increased to 440 litres (15.54 cu.ft).

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

For my 4 Series Coupé brief test drive around the busy Oxfordshire roads I got behind the wheel of the expected best selling version now that diesel new car sales are falling, the 420i M Sport priced at £39,870. This is a shade under the £40k price level which incurs a penalty of £325 added each year from the second year of ownership to the £150 Standard rate VED road tax cost. But it's not simple in reality because the test car showcased several options which finally pushed the price up to £48,425.

These options included the M Sport Pro Package at £2,500 with its additional items

including 19-inch Bicolour double spoke alloy wheels, adaptive M Sport suspension and red or blue M brake calipers, uprated sound system, run-flat tyres, M aerodynamic body styling kit and LED front fog lights. The Technology Plus Pack at £3,650 adds Driving Assistant Professional, Park Assist Plus, Head-Up Display, Drive Recorder, uprated Bluetooth with wireless charging, Gesture instrument control and Wi-Fi hot spot preparation. The Comfort Pack at £1,950 adds heated steering wheel, powered boot lid and electrically operated front seats with driver seat memory function.

Now a two-door, four-seater Coupé isn’t a sales contender for the majority of new car buyers, they are just not practical enough but the new looks alone will sell this new model to a number of affluent motoring enthusiasts who plainly enjoy driving; a niche band of customers who will enjoy its exclusivity appeal.



The new looks are an immediate wow factor, the proportions are well-balanced, the front end looks really aggressive so that might not sit well for ‘woke’ members of the public. Under the muscular bonnet and behind the like or hate large grille, is the 420i engine. This translates as a four cylinder, 2.0-litre, BMW TwinPower turbocharged petrol engine with 184 hp and 300 Nm (221 lb.ft) of torque from just 1,350 rpm. This torque is available all the way up to 4,000 rpm so the powerband is huge and wide spread. Mated with the eight speed Steptronic auto transmission with manual mode and gear-shift paddles performance is impressively refined. Not only is it responsive for acceleration from low through medium

speeds, it still remains eager to accelerate at higher cruising speeds when needed. Top speed is 150 mph and the zero to 62 mph time is 7.5 seconds. That's not blistering pace but more than adequate and the torque response is ideal for the UK's congested roads where overtaking quickly is more important than outright speeds. The official Combined Cycle fuel consumption range is 48.7 to 53.3 mpg with CO2 emissions starting at 122 g/km depending on wheel size and other options. With all the options my test car had a CO2 figure of a whopping 152 g/km. During my brief test drive it returned a figure of 42 mpg but with better traffic conditions the figure could improve on that.

The high CO2 figure means VED First Year road tax cost for this model with the options listed is £540 with a Standard rate of £150 but if you venture over the £40k on-the-road price by adding options then add another £325 a year for five years to that Standard rate charge. The dreaded company car tax rate is 33%. Insurance is yet to be confirmed but could be Group 31E, the same as the outgoing version. Warranty is three years unlimited mileage.

As for other aspects of driveability; the steering is razor sharp in terms of directional response, it's firmly planted at the front end during high speed cornering and I suspect able to provide a controlled rear wheel drive drift when track driving is pursued. It had a near perfect overall handling balance as always from BMW and the lower centre of gravity helped. The ride comfort was really good for a car of this sporting nature, firm but not harsh.

VERDICT

Overall the 4 Series Coupé looks terrific, it's pleasing to drive plus there's a top quality interior to enjoy as well if you are in the market for a mid-sized Coupé.

For: Statement making new aggressive sports styling, wide stance, muscle-car kerb appeal, high quality interior, well laid out easy to use proper controls, larger information screens, new connectivity functions, higher spec and safety features, sure-footed well balanced handling, needle-sharp steering response, wide torque band.

Against: As a two door coupé rear seat access is always compromised, limited rear and rear quarter visibility, adding options will add significant tax costs, aggressive styling and oversized grille could be seen as divisive by some potential owners.



Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

BMW 420i M Sport Coupe auto.



Price: £39,870 (£48,425 as tested).

Engine/transmission: 2.0 litre, four cylinder, TwinPower turbo-petrol, 184 hp, 300 Nm (221 lb.ft) of torque from 1,350 rpm, eight speed Steptonic man/auto transmission, rear wheel drive.

Performance: 150 mph. 0 – 62 mph 7.5 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 48.7 to 53.3 mpg depending on added options, (42 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 of test car 152 g/km but other models start from 122 g/km, test car VED First Year road tax £540 then £150 Standard rate plus £325 each year for five years as it costs over £40k, BiK company car tax 33%.

Insurance Group: TBC but 31E looks likely.

Warranty: Three years/unlimited mileage.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,768 mm (15.64 ft), W 1,852 mm (6.08 ft), H 1,383 mm (4.54 ft), wheelbase 2,851 mm (9.35 ft), boot 440 litres (15.54 cu.ft), two doors/four seats.