BMW X1 – Road Test

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The BMW X1 xDrive2.3i petrol-hybrid M Sport tried and tested by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

As the motor industry increasingly turns in on itself and concentrates on niche models it’s good to see the BMW X1 arrive, genuinely offering something for everyone.

Sport, xLine and M Sport trim levels currently span seven models including three or four cylinder petrol-hybrid units including a PHEV, four-cylinder diesels and an electric version to ensure there is something for every requirement or preference. Prices range from £34,365 (petrol) to £56,045 (electric). An M35i xDrive M Sport version is due early next year estimated to cost £45,995

To that mix you can add two or four wheel drive for soft-roading and outdoor pursuits and an enormous range of expensive accessories to personalise your car and make it your own.

This is the third generation X1 which launched in 2009 as a sort of beefed up 3-Series, the second tranche turned to the group's MINI platform in 2015 and in 2022 it was delivered on a new base with the financially important hybrid powertrains available to still further cut costs.

The latest version is a significant step for the X1, dressed in a new sharply styled body with imposing nose and much more room than before for occupants and luggage. The BMW engineers have also ensured the bigger footprint of the X1 has not led to slippage in driving dynamics and our all-wheel-drive test car was pin-sharp and positive on the road irrespective of what the surface was like beneath.

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The engine of our xDrive 2.3i petrol-hybrid model, priced at £42,445 without options, was an instant, quiet starter which pulled well with its electrical assistance and the smoothness belied its capacity to ease along the 1,655 kg (3,649 lb) car. It showed respectable acceleration to the legal limits and once on a motorway it settled down to a near silent hum.


BMW
YH72 ZVB

The refined seven-speed gearchange does a fairly good job but sometimes it was hunting for a ratio to suit a situation and moving off or reversing when parking followed a jerky selection. You have normal drive or sports settings on the selector button and up-and-down paddles on the column including a boost facility for short term added oomph when overtaking if necessary.

Changes up or down were better when on the move and the gearbox decided what it wished to do while the brakes underfoot were really well balanced and strong with only light pedal pressure producing rapid and controlled deceleration – but there is no separate parking brake to the lock-on gearbox settings, which was strange and might be inconvenient in some situations.

Steering ratio was reasonable for manoeuvring, and feedback was fairly good on twisting sections.

Secondary controls for lights, indicators and wipers/ washers were all well placed and operated smoothly, and supplementary buttons on the spokes were used for the infotainment and telephone controls, probably being less distracting than diving into the big central screen atop the console. For the driver, the regular tacho and speedo were not a conventional shape but easy to read and their display could be changed with Mymodes button from the console, offering about five themed backgrounds.

You may think that’s overkill – and combined with the enormous selection of technology in that central display, I began to think it was added technology for its own sake, because the engineers can do it. The question is – would you think the same?

Personally, I think it is too much and distracting when driving, particularly on busy roads. Better to pick a theme and stick with it from setting off and I wonder how many owners would do the same.



For the technophobes there is a lot to select and the sound system by Harman Kardon is a very rewarding experience, filling the cabin with clear and sharp sound.

Wide-ranging heating and ventilation was highly efficient, helped by powered windows all round and the optional full-length sunroof on the test car.

Lights were very bright, intelligent units to prevent dazzling oncoming vehicles, with a wide reach into hedgerows and pavements, and the washers and wipers both ends cleared a lot of glass, with big door mirrors including hazard detectors. Sensors front and back with camera support meant you could very precisely place the BMW X1 in a parking bay.

Oddments room was good front and back with decent sized door bins and seat pockets,

console bins and trays, plus an inductive charge pad for a mobile phone.

The loadbed floor was a useful height and did not have a lip over which to lift heavy items, under a powered tailgate that lifted high out of head knocking range. It was flat, wide, deep and long, extending when the offset split seat backs were dropped nearly flat.



Access through passenger doors was easy and once inside the leg and headroom was really good despite the sunroof, and their adjustment range was generous. I liked the M Sport's thigh-extension support in front and the overall shape and support of all the seats for a long journey.

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The comfort of the seats was a welcome highlight and they cushioned the driver and passengers from an overall firm, sometime jiggly ride through the 20-inch wheels and low profile Continental tyres, which may be a good choice for sporting drivers but not necessarily overall comfort.

VERDICT

The latest BMW X1 series is probably the best to date and an attractive proposition in the quality SUV sector now it has gained some extra inches inside.

Unlike some competitors it also delivers a lot of dynamic driving qualities that set it apart.

For: Very roomy with excellent seats throughout, very good build quality and highly sophisticated, economical, effortless powertrain, safe surefooted handling

Against: Slightly firmer ride, very fiddly infotainment system and touch screen, expensive options to raise equipment levels.

FAST FACTS

Model: BMW X1 xDrive 2.3i M Sport

Price: £48,945, inc £6,500 extras

Mechanical: 218 hp 4 cyl 2.0 petrol-hybrid 7sp auto

Max Speed: 145 mph

0 – 62 mph: 7.1 sec

Combined MPG: 39.2

Insurance Group: 31

C02 emissions: 154 g/km

Tax costs: Bik rating 35%, VED £635FY, £560SRx5-years

Warranty: 3 years/ unlimited mileage

Size: L 4.50 m (14.76 ft), W 1.85 m (6.07 ft), H 1.65 m (5.41 ft)

Bootspace: 500 to 1545 litres (17.66 to 54.56 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,655 kg (3,649 lb)