



Mazda MX-5 Roadster Exclusive – Road Test

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Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales) writes...While the tidal wave of the latest electric powered models washes into showrooms, one conventional car floats above them and remains an example of simplicity, style and sales success over a stunning and enviable 37 years.

The Mazda MX-5 not only saved Mazda's fortunes in the 1990s but it also effectively revived the traditional affordable sportster sector which seemed doomed under the wheels of hot-



hatchbacks from accountant-administered big brands.

Conceived, created and delivered by a dedicated design department working for Mazda, the joint American & Japanese project reached public exposure in Chicago in 1989 and buyers fell in love with it, and continue to keep it at the top of sales charts where-ever it is available.

From the launch in 1990 until 2026, over 1.3 million MX-5 models have been sold with more than 135,000 ending up in the eager hands of UK drivers across four generations of the car, which is currently available as a soft-top Roadster or with metal roof which flexes as the Rigid Folding or RF model.

The highly acclaimed Mazda MX-5 has received external, internal and mechanical changes for this year, intended to keep its appeal to enthusiasts but adding refinements to make it an even better buy.

While the powertrain is essentially the same as before offering a choice of 132 PS 1500cc or 184 PS 2000cc Skyactiv-G engines, the more powerful models have been fitted with a new limited slip differential, engineered to enhance grip and feel during cornering.



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Mazda's 132 PS 1500cc Skyactiv-G petrol engine.

The Roadster and RF models come in Prime-line, Exclusive-Line and Homura grades with prices from £28,605 to £36,065.

Our mid-range 1500 cc Exclusive-Line test car is the most popular and certainly seemed to lack nothing but delivered good performance which could be enjoyed through a flick-of-wrist gearchange, long legged final drive and beautifully balanced steering and brakes as well as reassuring safe handling on twisting roads through Wales.





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Not only was it a very responsive and agile car, but it proved very economical and consistently returned fuel economy in the high-40s, once just over 50 mpg.

Being comparatively lightweight, this helped the economy and the acceleration as well as the handling but thankfully its shape let the air smoothly flow over it so wind noise was very low and it was not blown about at speed.

Being a comparatively short wheelbase of 2.31 m (7.58 ft) it did suffer a little from a rougher ride over some poorer roads and the suspension and tyre noises were noticeable.

Generally it was a smooth ride, mostly thanks to the surprisingly comfortable and supporting seats but taller users may feel legroom to be restricted even if headspace was good when the soft-top was erect.

Oddments space was also an issue unless you're very organised and travel light because door bins were slim, console tray small and a lockable compartment at shoulder height between the seats was compact. The deep boot took a small suitcase but was not long and needed the width to slip in irregular shaped objects to fill the available space. With the hood erect a small rear parcel shelf is revealed but it cannot be used when the folded roof sits on it.

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Dropping or raising the roof is a simple one-handed job and it securely latched down for open air enjoyment along with the powered windows and a surprisingly strong air conditioning system with the roof closed.

Secondary controls for the driver were all very close to hands and fingers but some may find the left-offset pedals needed familiarisation. Switches on the wheelspokes covered many media or safety assistance features with more on the central console for A/C below the new larger infotainment screen which is better for showing navigation and other displays.



The simple instruments' binnacle ahead of the driver was dominated by the tachometer with speedo and multi-gauges either side.

It was a well thought out display and assistance systems, compact yet clear and really puts to shame many more expensive cars.

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Upgraded lights gave better night-time performance, the wash/ wipe was effective and thanks to the low waistline there was clear visibility when pulling into traffic, turning or parking.

VERDICT

So, the latest Mazda MX-5 Roadster was easy to live with, economical and very enjoyable so long as you don't want a lot of room but instead a car which is fun, affordable and may hold its value a lot better than a new electric model and thereby turns the tide.

For: Dynamic handling, economical, great powertrain, easy use soft-top, good equipment, sophisticated sportster.

Against: Tight fit with small boot and oddments spaces, road noises, occasionally bumpy ride.



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FAST FACTS

Model: Mazda MX-5 Roadster Exclusive

Price: £31,255

Mechanical: 132 PS 4 cyl 1.5 litre petrol engine, 6 speed manual

Max Speed: 127 mph



0 - 62 mph: 8.3 secs

Combined MPG: 48.9

Insurance Group: 27E

C02 emissions: 140 g/km

Bik rating: 34%, £560FY, £200SR

Warranty: 6 years/ 100k

Size: L 3.92 m (12.86 ft), W 1.74 m (5.71 ft), H 1.23 m (4.04 ft)

Bootpace: 130 litres (4.59 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,031 kg (2,273 lb)