Mazda6 Sport saloon – Road Test

Published: January 10, 2022

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Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/mazda6-sport-saloon-road-test/



Mazda6 2.5 194 PS GT Sport Auto saloon sampled by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency)…

When it comes to choosing your new car in 2022 it's not always obvious that the better choice is not your first choice.

Buyers who pore over print or on-line reviews can become numbed to the choices and models laid out before their eyes.



Badge envy may blur vision and the surreal experience is sometimes far from reality.

You have to physically get into a car and experience it to fully appreciate it and anyone who tells you different either does not want to sell you the car or is secretly worried its shortcomings may show up and you'll shove off to another dealership.

For instance, if you're looking for a small to medium sized executive class experience you may not immediately consider the Mazda6 and that would be a big mistake.



While recently moving to an exclusively petrol range, Mazda also took the opportunity to refresh its line-up and added the powertrain from their acclaimed CX-5 crossover to create the Mazda6 GT Sport, as tested here.

The Mazda6 range spans seven models with four Saloons and three Tourers. Matched exclusively to the 145 PS Skyactiv-G petrol engine, both the Saloon and Tourer ranges start with the SE-L grade with automatic or manual transmission. Sport models get the 165 PS version of the same engine and a six-speed manual transmission.

The flagship 194ps 2.5-litre Skyactiv-G engine from the CX-5 is a high-output petrol comes exclusively attached with a six-speed automatic gearbox and flappy paddles.



There’s a unique gunmetal grille, Brown Nappa leather, front seat ventilation and heated outer rear seats.

Other materials unique to this range-topping Mazda6 include Ultrasuade NU trim on the lower dashboard and door trims, real Japanese Sen wood on the upper dashboard and door trims, unique steering wheel stitching with a chrome centre wheel bezel and a frameless rear view mirror.

Additionally, white LED interior illumination, a 7-inch TFT instrument set and a safety pack, that includes a 360 degree monitor, adaptive LED headlights, Rear Smart City Brake Support and Driver Attention Alert, means the technology tally is improved as well.

Across all models, the Mazda6 features wireless Apple CarPlay and the option of Polymetal Grey paint has been introduced to the Mazda6 for the first time.

So it doesn’t lack anything most drivers and passengers could want and possibly includes a few surprises for those who have not considered the Mazda6 as an executive choice.

The powertrain packs a useful punch when pulling away, overtaking or motorway cruising and only its lack of cylinders let it down if you are hard on the throttle and the noise level rises through the changing gears. Ease off and the engine is both quiet and smooth.

The overall fuel consumption we obtained was really very close to the WLTP assessment of 38 mpg but push it hard and that dipped to the low 30s. We also noticed on more than one occasion that the test car’s engine skipped or hesitated when cruising but that may have been due to some contaminated fuel.

The changes in the box were clean and crisp whether accelerating or decelerating and the ability to select a sport mode through a push-button transformed the responses.

The Mazda6 steering returned a lot of feel and precision without any vibration or kickback while the brakes soon brought it to an undramatic but quick stop and the electric parking brake with its auto-hold function did a good job.



The secondary controls were close to hands and fingers but I would have appreciated clearer markings on the lights and wipers stalks which were not in direct sight and there were a few occasionally used switches low down on the right hand side of the fascia and not immediately recognisable.

The switches on the wheel-spokes and under the infotainment panel were very clear by contrast and the display was of a sensible size without being distracting. Heating and ventilation was easy, efficient and effective in the cabin, aided by a heated steering wheel, front seats and outer rear seats, and the test car’s powered windows and sunroof were welcome. The front seats also had a chilling setting for warm summer days, if anyone can remember them.



Power adjustment eased front settings and you had a memory facility if a few different users were seated.

Access to the front and back seats was good as it was into the boot and its capacity under 500 litres (1.76 cu.ft) would probably double when the backrests were dropped. The loadspace was long and wide rather than deep and the underfloor compartment held some assistance tools.



The front seats were particularly well shaped and comfortable, the rear bench type seat lacked support but all gave good leg and headroom.

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For the driver, the visibility was generally very good with a low waistline, lots of glass and excellent 360-degree cameras to cover the usual blindspots when reversing or parking. Automatic headlights were effective and had very good main and dip beams, with decent front wipers and washers.

The Mazda6 oozed sophistication with its styling, soft-touch trim, brightwork and wood finishing and its dynamic abilities were satisfying; however, the refinement was diminished by the amount of road rumbles and suspension noises which intruded the cabin.

Most of the time the ride was very good but occasionally a bump or pothole would overcome the system and ruffle the refinement.

It would also make the car skip around if that happened mid-corner when it would otherwise plant itself firmly on line and stick with that through a curve. Roadholding was surefooted otherwise and the handling felt very safe and predictable.

VERDICT



What is probably the most surprising feature of the Mazda6 is its all-round competence at this price level. Other marques can match it, but only at a significantly higher price.

Mazda6 appeal is down to value and that's an often overlooked choice in the buying process.

For: Stylish and very well equipped, excellent automatic, roomy with large boot, reasonably good ride, very good handling.

Against: Noisy engine and suspension, road rumbles, engine prone to hesitation when running, partly hidden markings on column stalks, high tax costs, ungenerous warranty.



MILESTONES AND WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC. IN BRIEF:

Mazda6 Saloon 2.5 194 PS GT

Price: £33,640

Mechanical: 194 PS 4cyl 2488cc petrol engine, 6 speed auto

Max Speed: 142 mph

0 – 62mph: 8.1 sec

Combined MPG: 38

Insurance Group: 26E

C02 emissions: 167 g/km

BiK rating: 37%, £555FY, £155SR

Warranty: 3 years/ 60,000 miles

Size: L 4.87 m (15.98 ft), W 1.84 m (6.03 ft), H 1.45 m (4.75 ft)

Bootspace: 480 litres (16.95 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1610 kg (3,549 lb)