Mini Happy Returns – News and MINI Road Test

Published: August 12, 2019

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Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/mini-happy-returns-news-and-mini-road-test/



60th ANNIVERSARY EDITION MINI A[illegible] MINIS BUILT AND COUNTING.

By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

(Photographs by David, and from MINI).

The original Alex Issigonis designed British Mini was launched in 1959 under BMC's Austin and Morris brands priced from £497 to £537. It had an 848cc, 33 hp normally aspirated transversely mounted four cylinder petrol engine and until its decline in 2000 it sold over 5.3 million units worldwide. Minis were produced at Plant Oxford until 1968 before

production was moved to Longbridge Birmingham where it continued until 2000

In 2001 Mini (lower case letters) became MINI (upper case) under the ownership of the BMW Group of brands but production of most, but not all, new generation models still come from the Cowley Plant in Oxford, built at a rate of 1,000 cars a day or one new MINI every 67 seconds. Around 80% of Oxford built MINIs are exported to 110 countries. How the MINI range has developed in terms of models available, quality, specification, power and performance, global demand and of course price.

Last week MINI celebrated production of the 10 millionth Mini and MINI built under British and BMW ownership periods. The landmark car was a MINI 60 Years Anniversary Edition just like the one I have been test driving. To celebrate the 60th anniversary MINI brought together at Plant Oxford one car from each year of production – 60 cars from 60 years.


PLANT OXFORD. THE HOME OF MINI.
164 UYP
822 TBG
OX18 TEN
621 AOK



A motoring sensation for its time – the original 1959 BMC Mini.



‘Wizardry on Wheels’ – from 1959 the BMC Minis provided a spacious interior within a compact body shell.



The BMC Mini's 848cc A Series engine was developed from the 948cc unit of the Austin A35, but in the front wheel drive Mini was installed transversely on top of the gearbox. For its time this motor provided sprightly performance, excellent fuel economy (around 45 to 50 mpg) and was reliable.

To celebrate 60 years of the BMC Mini and MINI from the BMW Group, 500 units of the Anniversary Edition Three Door Hatch in British Racing Green IV paint finish with Cooper S specification (with its standard seven speed Steptronic automatic gearbox) were made available for UK customers and these are more or less sold even allowing for its £29,995 price tag. That's a substantial £5,660 more than a standard spec Cooper S auto three door Hatch (less optional extras) on which the 60th Anniversary Edition model is based.



Distinctiveness and exclusiveness could probably justify part of this price hike and no doubt this 60th Anniversary Edition model will be a ‘keeper’ for most of the 500 UK owners so that’s its exclusivity value.

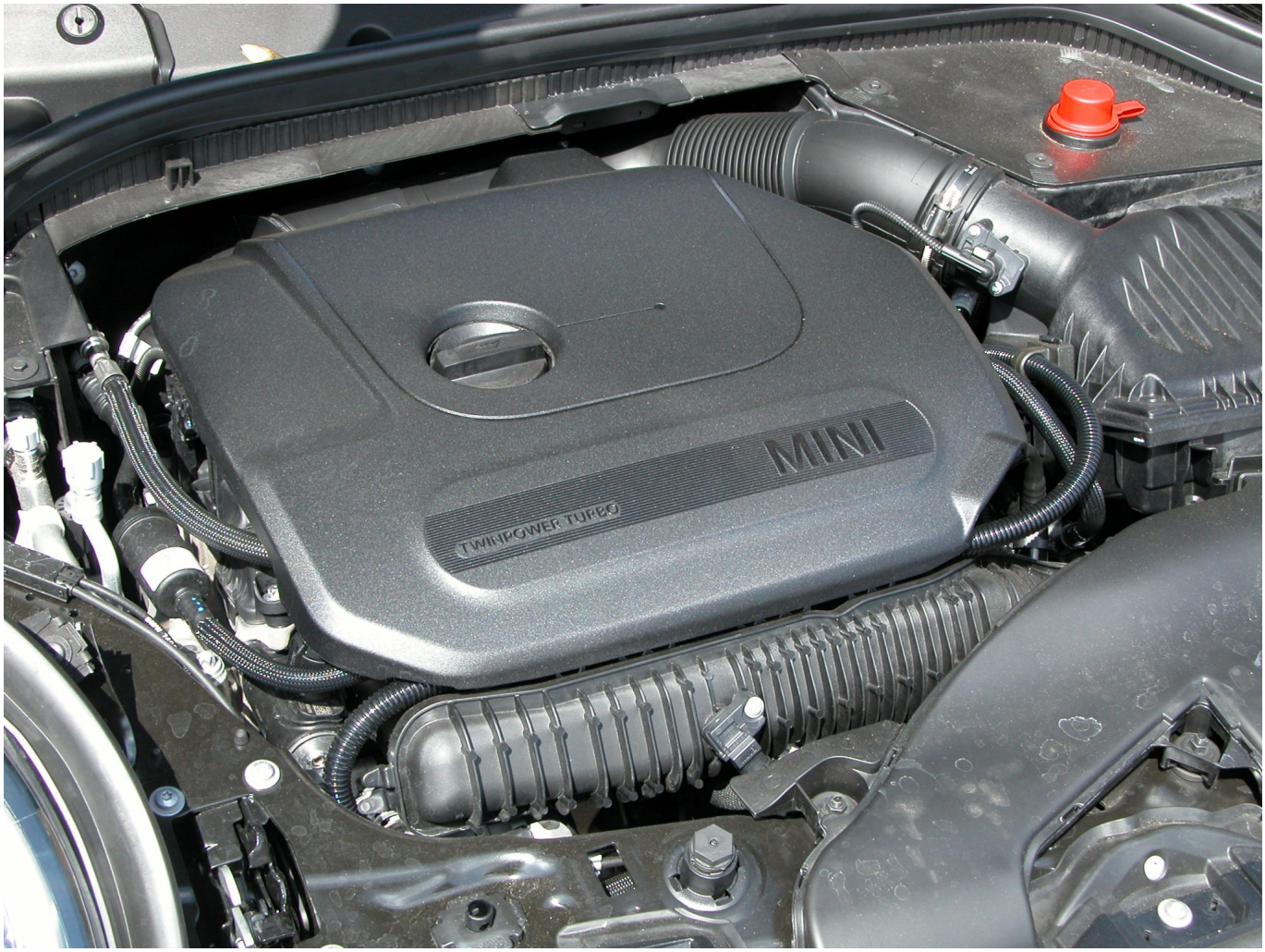
Its distinctive value is because of the deep rich British Racing Green IV colour and contrasting black roof. Add in some matching bonnet stripes with a 60th anniversary logo and the luxury leather seats finished in ‘Dark Cacao with contrast stitching and piping plus more 60th anniversary graphics, an LED projection logo from the driver’s door and the distinctiveness elements are almost complete.

But to partially justify that high price there is more spec such as unique two-tone 17-inch

alloy wheels, twin radiator grille front spotlights and piano black exterior trim including door mirror caps. Navigation Plus pack is included, providing a larger 8.8-inch touch display with Satellite Navigation, Apple CarPlay, Bluetooth connectivity, concierge service and wireless charging. In addition, a rear view camera, folding exterior mirrors and front and rear Park Distance Control can be found on the vehicle, courtesy of the included Comfort Plus Pack.

As with all third generation BMW owned MINI Hatch models, this unique edition vehicle has a high level of standard equipment including LED front and rear lights, intelligent emergency call, ambient lighting, automatic headlights with a rain sensor plus much more.

Under the bonnet is the familiar 2.0 litre Cooper S four cylinder 192 hp turbocharged petrol engine which only comes as standard with a seven speed auto Steptronic gearbox. This responsive engine has 280 Nm (207 lb.ft) of torque available from just 1,350 rpm, and that is available right up to 4,600 rpm, so there is ‘grunt’ on demand from low to high speeds, ideal for leisurely or sportier ‘cut and thrust’ driving. It’s refined and has a nice, but not intrusive, exhaust growl that identifies it still having a sports nature despite its ‘posh-frock’ specification.



Top speed is 146 mph and the zero to 62 mph acceleration time is 6.7 seconds which is swift enough given the car's high quality and specification nature – which also includes having an easy driving automatic gearbox but that does have gearshift paddles for manual changes.



The Combined Cycle fuel consumption figure is 44.1 mpg and during my week of driving, short runs, winding country roads where the car excels, and open road cruising the figure was a real-life 43.5 mpg. With CO2 emissions of 122 g/km First Year petrol VED tax costs £170, followed by the Standard rate for year two onwards of £145. Company car drivers will pay 28% Benefit-in-Kind tax, insurance is Group 29E and the warranty is three years/unlimited miles.

Perhaps it's a shame that this 60th Anniversary Edition model is only available as a three door Hatch but I guess that is a tribute to the original two door Mini saloon with its tiny boot with drop-down bootlid.

Access is never great with three door hatchbacks and with all the sumptuous padding of the interior trim and sports front seats, access to the two equally well padded rear seats is not easy for adults. However unlike the original Mini the BMW MINI Hatch has fold-down rear seats which increases the small 211 litre (7.45 cu.ft) capacity to a much more usable 731 litres (25.82 cu.ft), but that of course means no rear passengers can be accommodated. At 3,850 mm (12.63 ft) in length, 1,932 mm (6.34 ft) wide with a height of 1,414 mm (4.64 ft) this third generation MINI Hatch is just as easy to park and scuttle through traffic as the original. But of course this model is about as far away from the original generation Mini as you can get in terms of performance and price.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

VERDICT

As sophisticated as the latest generation MINI is, particularly with Cooper S performance and the 60th Anniversary Edition specification, the test car still felt like an original Mini in many ways. It is neat and nimble to drive, fun to look at and easy to live with, although not for affordable general family use as the original was. But of course everything has risen – performance, spec, price, but at least the Mini or MINI still exists – happy 60th anniversary.

For: A 60th anniversary tribute to the birth of the British Mini, high spec, high performance, limited edition exclusivity value, built in Oxford.

Against: Only available as a three door Hatch, mostly all sold already despite its significant price, limited rear passenger seat access, harsh ride at times and too much road noise intrusion due to low profile tyres.



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

MINI 60 Years Anniversary Edition three door Hatch, automatic.

Price: £29,995.

Engine/transmission: Cooper S 2.0 litre, four cylinder turbocharged petrol, 192 hp, 280 Nm (207 lb.ft) of torque from only 1,350 rpm, seven speed Steptronic auto

gearbox, front wheel drive.

Performance: 146 mph, 0–62 mph 6.7 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 44.1 mpg (43.5 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 122 g/km, VED £170/£145, BiK company car tax 28%. Insurance Group: 29E.

Warranty: Three years/unlimited miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 3,850 mm (12.63 ft), W 1,932 mm (6.34 ft), H 1,414 mm (4.64 ft), boot/load space 211 to 731 litres (7.45 to 25.82 cu.ft), three doors, four seats.

Kim adds: Wheels-Alive will soon be further covering, in-depth, the original Mini – Watch this space!