# MINI News and More MINI Models – First Impressions

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# More MINI News and More MINI Models

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

“One out of every 40 new cars sold in the UK is a MINI” was the headline statement at the MINI Media Driving Day held last week. Headline act at the event was the global premiere of their special edition MINI 1499 GT.

Although a termed a global reveal the 1499 GT three door Hatch is only available for the home UK market and just 1,499 units will be built at the Oxford Plant from November until February next year, and prices start from £16,990.

The MINI 1499 GT has been inspired by the classic British Mini 1275 GT first sold 48 years ago in 1969 when it combined performance and affordability. The new 1499 GT is available in two colours, Pepper White with distinctive bodywork graphics in black or Midnight Black

with gold 1499 GT side stripes.




Additional exterior features include the MINI John Cooper Works Sport Pack featuring 17-inch Track Spoke alloy wheels in Black, dark tinted windows and white indicator lenses. The styling pack includes distinctive JCW front and rear bumpers, side skirts, a split level spoiler and JCW door entry plates.

Interior features include JCW sports seats in Dinamica and leather and JCW badges, a JCW steering wheel in perforated leather with Chilli Red stitching and multi-function controls, cruise control, a Visual Boost radio with MINI Connected smartphone compatibility and Piano Black interior trim, along with Carbon Black interior details and an Anthracite

headlining.

A sports suspension completes the MINI 1499 GT package, which also includes all of the standard equipment found on the MINI One Hatch. This includes features such as independent rear suspension, a six-speed manual gearbox with sports-car inspired rev matching technology, air conditioning and all-round disc brakes.

As for performance the three-cylinder turbo petrol engine has a modest 102 hp, taking the special edition MINI from zero to 60 mph in 10.1 seconds.

Other impressive figures involve the low-cost of owning one proposition. MINI Financial Services has launched an enticing new finance offer. MINI Ready Fuel Go importantly includes one year's inclusive insurance (subject to terms) with a £299 customer deposit and £299 monthly payments over 48-months.

At MINI's roll out the 1499 GT for the Media debut unfortunately the new model was only for static display so no driving impressions from me I'm afraid.

THE GROWING MINI JOHN COOPER S WORKS 210 RANGE




In addition to the MINI John Cooper S Works 210 three door Hatch model the same power and styling upgrades are now available for the MINI five door Hatch and MINI Convertible, but only for the UK market.

On-the-road pricing starts at £22,755 for the new JCW 210 five door Hatch and £25,800 for the Convertible. The existing JCW 210 three-door Hatch is priced from £22,155 on-the-road.

The John Cooper Works Pro Tuning Kit increases the power output on MINI Cooper S Works 210 models from 192 hp to 210 hp, along with some distinctive styling features. In addition to the already purposeful Cooper S styling, the JCW Aerodynamic Kit adds race-inspired front and rear bumpers, a split-level boot spoiler and sculpted side skirts, while it also gets 17-inch black Track Spoke alloys and unique Works 210 badging. Additional exterior

equipment includes JCW door sill finishers, white indicator lenses and chrome-tipped centre exit twin exhaust pipes.

If the styling looks ‘loud’ then it can sound loud as well as the MINI JCW 210 range also includes a unique feature specially designed for track day fun. Using a Bluetooth controller, the driver can open a valve that bypasses the rear exhaust silencer. “This special track-only feature gives Cooper S Works 210 models a louder, more purposeful exhaust growl, so that drivers can fully exploit the aural delights of its TwinPower Turbo engine” MINI’s words not mine!

THE FIRST ELECTRIFIED MINI – THE MINI COUNTRYMAN PHEV




The Countryman is the largest MINI ever built aimed at the C-segment (lower-medium) family cars. The five door SUV styled estate is available with front wheel drive or ALL4 traction and the mainstream models have 1.5 or 2.0 litre turbo petrol and 2.0 litre turbodiesel engine options. But now the Countryman range gets a plug-in petrol/electric hybrid powertrain.

Sales of Alternatively Fuelled Vehicles, which include all-electric, hybrids and PHEV plug-ins, were up by 41% for the September new registration plate sales month and have increased by 34.6% for the year-to-date.

The new Countryman Cooper S E, to give its proper title, is already sold out for this year in

the UK despite its price of £31,575 on the road but this reduces once the Government's £2,500 plug-in vehicle grant has been applied. Other conventional powered Countryman models have prices starting from £23,035. The Countryman PHEV is built at MINI's factory in The Netherlands but an all-electric MINI Hatch, due to arrive in 2019, is scheduled to be built in the UK at their Oxford Plant.

The Countryman PHEV has Cooper S specification with ALL4 traction. The 1.5 litre, three cylinder turbo petrol engine with 136 hp drives the front wheels whilst a rear under-floor 88 hp electric motor drives the rear wheels. The total power output is 224 hp and 385 Nm (284 lb.ft) of torque, most of it from standstill thanks to the electric motor. Top speed is 123 mph and zero to 62 mph takes 6.8 seconds. It has a 25 miles driving range using only electric power so proposed zero emission inner-city driving zones will not be an issue. Officially the Combined Cycle fuel economy is 134.5 mpg and CO2 emissions are 49g/km. That means VED road tax as an alternatively fuelled vehicle is £10 each year and company car Benefit-in-Kind tax is 9%. Insurance is Group 26E and the warranty is three years/unlimited mileage.



The Countryman PHEV, from the inside and out, looks like any other Countryman SUV estate with Cooper S specification. The specification is high, the quality of the interior is first class and it's generally a comfortable car. It actually rides better than conventional Countryman models on country roads and over poorer roads surfaces due to the extra weight of the lithium-ion battery pack and electric motor. Whilst the ride is more composed the extra weight does affect the car's agility; it feels a heavy vehicle but the acceleration is swift, as the figure shows, thanks to the significant amount of immediate torque produced by the electric motor and then from the petrol engine.



On my short test drive around the winding country roads of Berkshire and with some rural town stop-start driving, the real-life fuel economy was 84.3 mpg, well short of the official figure but not unlike other PHEVs once the battery power has run out. However once the battery was low the petrol engine and auto gearbox did a good job by ‘harvesting’ power through deceleration and braking, and keeping some electric power available, so maintaining the constant figure shown. The Countryman PHEV has three driving modes, Auto eDrive operates at up to 50 mph using the electric motor and then the petrol engine under hard acceleration, Max eDrive does the same as above but operates at speeds up to 78 mph, Save mode uses the engine keeping battery power stored for use at other times, say zero emission zones or in-town stop/start driving.

Those drivers who commute short distances will benefit most from the Countryman PHEV providing it is regularly charged from the mains, which takes between 2.15 and 3.15 hours depending on the power source. However all owners will benefit from the low cost road tax and company car drivers from the very low Benefit-in-Kid tax costs.

## VERDICT

The only drawback is the relatively high purchase price and so for many owners a conventional petrol or diesel powered Countryman is more practical and cheaper to buy. But the initial high sales of this model and other competitor PHEVs, shows there is strong and growing demand for such vehicles.

For: High initial UK sales demand, low running costs, low taxes, an important addition to the popular Countryman range due to the high sales demands for PHEV type models, high specification, easy to drive, swift acceleration.

Against: Costly to buy, the plug-in facility must be used for maximise fuel and low CO2 efficiency, not as agile as a petrol/diesel powered Countryman due to its extra weight, real-life fuel economy, as with other PHEVs, is not as good as the official combined Cycle figures.




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

## MINI Cooper S E Countryman ALL4 PHEV.

Price: £31,575 excluding the £2,500 plug-in vehicle grant.

Drivetrain: 1.5 litre, three cylinder turbo petrol engine with rear electric motor, total system output 224 hp and 385 Nm (284 lb.ft) of torque, automatic gearbox with ALL4 traction. Performance: 123 mph, 0–62 mph 6.8 seconds

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 134.5 mpg (84.3 mpg on test), electric power only driving range 25 miles.

Emissions and taxation: CO2 49 g/km, VED road tax £10, BiK company car tax 9%. Insurance Group: 26E.

Warranty: Three years/unlimited mileage.