New BMW X1 Road Test

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New BMW X1 xDrive 2.0d Sport Road Test

By Robin Roberts (via Miles Better News Agency)

X-marks the spot for BMW UK sales successes, with a 12.5% increase in the UK last year to a new record of 167,391 new car registrations. This allowed the German brand to take over the UK's number one sales position for premium brand cars from Audi.

Part of BMW's growth has come from their SUV series which begins with the X1. Since its launch in 2009 over 40,000 have been sold in Britain. Late in 2015 the second series was announced and first orders are now being delivered to customers.

The new X1 range runs to five models from about £31,225 to £36,060 with a choice of three diesel engines – 1.8 litre 150 hp, 2.0 litre 190 hp or the 2.5 litre 231 hp, plus there is a 192 hp 2.0 litre petrol unit. The best seller, as tested, is expected to be the 190 hp 2.0 litre turbodiesel which develops 400 Nm (295 lb.ft).

There is a familiar but updated appearance to the X1, but in reality it's roomier and taller, to improve rear seat head and leg room. Luggage space is improved as well, benefitting from three-section split and folding rear seat backrests for optimum practicality.



The fascia has been restyled and angled towards the driver while the iDrive Control Display has a standard 6.5-inch or optional 8.8-inch monitor.

The EU 6 compliant engines are all new while the xDrive powertrain is further refined to improve front wheel or four wheel grip. As an example engine power and delivery has been improved and the 2.0d gains 7 hp over the previous version, but it also uses less fuel and produces fewer emissions, so it’s a win-win x1.

Another key change is a new chassis platform and suspension linkages intended to sharpen

responses and to provide a more compliant ride. The new body design incorporates air deflectors and even underbody smooth panels to ease its passing, so reducing energy needed and drag.

There is no doubting the new model is an improvement, principally because it's smoother and quieter in character.

The latest 2.0d 190 hp turbodiesel engine is a good starter and pulls with ease and efficiency, the automatic changes are seamless and mechanical noise levels are very low.

Brakes and steering give a lot of feel and feedback, work well and endow the X1 Sport with great agility and responses over most surfaces and types of road. A mixture of winding country lanes and more open sweeping roads showed off the X1 to be in its element. The xDrive 4×4 system will provide for some light off-road driving.

The on-road ride has been improved but it's not as compliant as I was expecting. The big wheels and tyres on the test car found all the rough edges of worn and ridged tarmac, sending the worst of impact shocks into the vehicle.

However, inside the vehicle, the seats did a good job of smoothing out the worst of the ride imperfections. They gave very good support with a wide adjustment range available, and even those in the back would have plenty of knee and head room.

The standard automatic opening fifth door opens from bumper level to reveal a wide, flat and deep compartment and the capacity rises from just over 500 litres (17.66 cu.ft) to maximum 1,550 litres (54.74 cu.ft) as the rear seats gradually fold away.

Access for the driver and passengers was good, and visibility clear all round; the wipers were effective and quiet in operation.



For any BMW driver, the major and minor controls relationship and operation are paramount and the X1 will not disappoint. From the moment you slip behind the wheel, everything seems in the right place. Everything works very well and the new wrap-around fascia and straightforward dials are clear.

Heating and ventilation seemed comprehensive and worked well on our short test drive. Powered windows are standard on all but entry level models, but a sunroof is not available. Oddments room was only modest however, with just small compartments to stow items, and most things would end up on the floor or back seat, which is surprising in what many consider a family car.



VERDICT

There is no doubt the new BMW X1 is a big step up over the predecessor. It now does very well what its larger X3 stablemate has done so far. It makes it an even tougher challenge for any rival compact SUVs to better, particularly when you look at the predicted and all-important enhanced residual values further down the line of ownership.

For: Refined powertrain, performance and economy, fit and finish, room and practicality.

Against: Firm ride with larger wheels and tyres, modest oddments space, company car tax increase April 2016.

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

BMW X1 xDrive 2.0 Sport.

Mechanical: 190 hp, 4 cyl, 1,995 cc turbodiesel, xDrive, 8-speed auto.

Performance:

0-62mph: 7.6 seconds.

Top speed: 137 mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 58.9 mpg (41 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 128 g/km, VED £0/£110, Bik company car rating from April 2016, 25%.

Insurance Group: 30.

Warranty: 3 yrs/unlimited mileage.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,477 mm (14.69 ft), W 2,058 mm (6.75 ft), H 1,545 mm (5.07 ft), boot/load space 505 to 1,550 litres (17.66 to 54.74 cu.ft), 5 doors, 4/5 seats, braked towing capacity 2,000 kg (4,409 lb).

Price: £31,550 (£40,465 as tested).