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Mazda MX-5 2.0 Z-Sport – Road Test

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Mazda MX-5 2.0 Z Sport for 2016.

By Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

Summer is never complete for me without testing the latest Mazda MX-5 convertible.

It is arguably the most successful modern sports car and exudes excitement from its simple but clean lines and combines ability with agility so it covers the miles and makes winding country roads a delight to drive as well.

It's really no wonder it was to Mazda that Fiat turned to when it wanted to create its latest



sports model, and their joint venture has been a success based on a proven formula and shared chassis.

You can buy the traditional soft-top roadster we tested this month or the folding metal-roof model, the RF, and they come with 1.5 or 2.0 litre petrol engines. Our latest summer treat was the fabric topped and fun-filled *2.0 Z-Sport*.

This is a limited edition model of just 300 cars in the UK with a 160 hp 2.0 litre engine and distinctive cherry-red fabric roof, BBS black alloys and sand coloured leather seats under a machine grey metallic painted body.



Based on the Sport Nav spec, the Z-Sport also gets unique mats and scuff plates, numbered



plaque on the dash and limited slip differential, with Bilstein dampers and a strut brace to tighten up the handling responses.

It all worked so well on the test car, giving it tauter and more responsive handling without shaking you to bits, while its eye-catching colour and trim produced many comments of praise and questions from passers-by.

Now I am a firm fan of the smaller 1.5 version for everyday use but a longer journey is easier in the 2.0 model because you benefit from greater engine flexibility, reduced gearchanges and a generally quieter trip.

The mechanical noises were very low, the suspension, road and tyres noises being noticeable but not really intrusive, just there in the background as the miles zipped under the black BBS wheels.

I was edging just over 40 mpg most of the time but ended up about 38 mpg overall on this test.

The power flows from the engine when needed, the easy clutch and flick-of-wrist gearchanges make light work of traffic while it sharply follows the steering and showed immense stopping power under braking with just modest pedal pressure.

You soon become aware that the handling is safe and surefooted with a tendency towards a lightness at the back end, but it's never a problem. Ride quality is very good over all but the worst bumps and body roll is extremely slight while pitching and dipping is modest as well.

The minimalist approach of the MX-5 designers mean there is little oddments room but the boot will take one or two soft sports bags or some top-up shopping, but eating less means you keep down weight and ultimately improve the MX-5's performance!



Access is fairly easy as you drop into the two seats but climbing out is slightly more of a problem if you need to fully open the doors in a tight space.

The seats are small but generally very comfortable with reasonable support and adequate adjustment for all but the tallest of users.

Visibility is truly excellent all round and not very restricted by the erect hood, with good wipers and lights for bad conditions.



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VERDICT

The fourth-generation Mazda MX-5 proves that cars do not have to be complicated high tech gadgets on wheels and the Z-Sport epitomises the ethos of what is best about a simple sports car, it's fun.

For: Classic looks, quality trim, ride & handling, powertrain, visibility, uprated 2.0 litre engine with lower CO2 emissions on its way.

Against: Limited oddments & boot space, some road noise, ungenerous warranty.



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Late news: Since our road test was completed Mazda UK has just announced their 2019 model year MX-5 line-up on sale from 1 September in time for the new 68-plate sales month. Improvements include raised power of 184 hp for the 2.0 litre engine and the 1.5 litre unit's power goes up to 132 hp. All versions gain i-Activesense safety technologies and a general upgrading of equipment. Prices start from £18,995 and range up to £25,795 for the convertible whilst the RF metal-top versions start from £22,595 and rise to £29,195.



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

Mazda MX-5 2.0 Z-Sport (limited edition).

Price: £25,595.

Mechanical: 160 hp, four cylinder, 1998cc, six speed.

Performance: 133 mph, 0-62 mph 7.3 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 40.9 mpg (38 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 161 g/km, VED First Year road tax £515 then £140
Standard rate, BiK company car tax 33%.

Insurance Group: 29E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

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

Boot: 130 litres (4.59 cu.ft).