

2016 ND Mazda MX5 REVIEW

On Saturday 8th August 2015 Jarrett Mazda at Mount Barker invited the MX5 Car Club of SA to preview the latest model of this classic sports car, and give those that wanted to a chance to test drive one. Upon arrival a warm welcome was extended by all the staff, and refreshments were made available, before Graham Jarrett welcomed us with a short speech extolling the virtues of this newest model. There were 3 model available for our perusal, a Soul Red manual & automatic Roadster and a Ceramic manual Roadster GT, which came equipped with leather heated seats, heated mirrors, upgraded sound & navigation systems, running lights and other comfort features. Both the automatic and manual transmissions are 6 speed. The 2 manual cars were used for the test drives and we were paired up to drive a course that looped around twice giving us a chance to swap drivers at the half way point. This drive would give each pairing around 15 minutes to enjoy the car with the top folded down, in fine and sunny conditions.

With this model Mazda have retained the original MX5 philosophy of producing a sports car that is not only affordable, but is a true "driver's" car. This model is over 100kg lighter than its predecessor, yet comes equipped with the latest technology, including traction and stability control, ABS, airbags, satellite navigation, multi function media centre, heated seats and mirrors and much more. Mazda have also reverted to presenting a car with smooth flowing lines, typical of the true sports classics throughout history, with the slanted slit style headlights and wider rear stance providing a car that appears to have attitude while still sitting stationary in the car park.

Mazda Australia have only released the 96kw (150Nm torque) 1.5 Sky-Activ version at this stage with the more powerful 2.0 litre to be release hopefully later in the year. With top gear in the manual being 1:1 the close ratio gearbox with a positive short throw shifter is a real pleasure to drive and with the fast responsiveness of a free revving engine, performance is quite startling from such a small power plant. This coupled to a well balanced light weight car proved to make for a thoroughly enjoyable driving experience, with the car not only being very responsive, but totally predictable as it gripped the road gloriously as it got pushed through the few bends and kinks that made up part of the test route. A quick dab of the brakes coming into one of the tighter bends and the car just stuck and felt as if it was on rails. At the same time the suspension gave a smooth comfortable ride over the bumps, proving that Mazda's research and development department had worked hard to bring us a low priced sports car that is a pleasure to drive in any situation. Comfortable enough to drive across this huge country, yet able to handle the prospect of being driven in a very lively manner, along the winding mountainous roads that many of us love to transverse. Even with the top down the cabin was free of wind buffering and was silent enough to carry on normal conversation without any need of raised voices.

In summary, I believe that the ND MX5 is a greatly balanced responsive and predictable sports car that will bring pleasure to most that drive it, and has the potential to become one of the real classic sports car legends of the future. It is also likely to introduce a complete new group of fans as it targets the two income, no kids sector of the current generation.

A huge thanks to Jarrett Mazda at Mount Barker for inviting the club to the launch, giving us a chance to evaluate this latest evolution of the largest selling sports car in the world.