

It's no wonder they call this car a "5-Door" rather than a hatchback, as it is and always has been halfway to what several others are now calling a crossover. Mazda3 is a small car with big possibilities.

You can buy a Mazda3 in three versions of four-door—155-hp 2.0L Sport or Touring, 184-hp 2.5L Grand Touring—and four of this five-door hatch—those same three or optionally a 2.5L in the midrange Touring 5-Door, 29 extra horses (19 percent more) for just \$150 more (a less than one percent bump).

Our Grand Touring 2.5L 5-Door tester is only \$1500 more than that and adds leather interior, foglights, Bose audio and an LED light option. Other upgrades, such as 18-inch wheels, already kicked in at the Touring level. In fact, many features are included in the base level.

Now double your possibilities: every model is available with a 6-speed manual. With the automatic, double your choices again with Sport mode (we wanted to just leave this on, but you need to reengage it at every restart).

Fit and finish are exceptional. The car is so airtight, we sometimes had to close the door twice. Its size and weight make it a tight little handler, though aggressive driving could inspire some torque steer—though this, in turn, is countered by the car's G-Vectoring control.



Mazda is a leader in heads-up display at such price points, an effective system that even works with polarized sunglasses.

The infotainment interface gets an A for contents and abilities, a B for the number of steps some missions require. Fine-tuning the Bose Centerpoint surround sound system is well rewarded, coaxing what seems like 13 speakers' worth of sound from just nine.

The 5-Door holds 63 percent more cargo, is some five inches shorter (same wheelbase) and weighs less (as low as 2875 pounds)—a car for driving enthusiasts with places to go, with stuff. Top speed is the same with either body style and either engine. Fuel mileage is very close among two transmissions, 5-Door or 4-Door, even the 2.5L versus the 2.0L. On Grand Touring, you can add i-LOOP regenerative braking and active grille shutter.

A base Mazda3 is well outfitted at \$17,845, though each dollar from there to our optioned Grand Touring 5-Door is well spent. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINESKYACTIV-G 2.5L DOHC 16v 4-cyl w/VVT
HP/TORQUE.....184 hp / 185 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION6-spd auto (6-spd manual avail)
DRIVETRAIN / TOP SPEED.....FWD / 130 mph
BRAKES.....FR: 11.61" vented, R: 10.43" solid discs
SUSPENSION.....FR: independent McPherson strut;
 R: independent multi-link
WHEELS / TIRES.....18x7J alloy, 215/45R18 all-season
LENGTH / WHEELBASE175.6 in / 106.3 in
SEATING / CARGO CAPACITY.....five / 20.2 cu.ft
WEIGHT3098 lb
MPG.....26/35/30 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE**\$24,945**
SNOWFLAKE WHITE PEARL PAINT200
CARGO MAT.....75
REAR BUMPER GUARD160
SCUFF PLATES / DOOR SILL TRIM PLATES.....125
PREMIUM EQUIPMENT PACKAGE: LED auto headlights, LED DRLs, LED combo taillights, adaptive front lighting, navigation, auto-dim Homelink rearview mirror, heated steering wheel, paddle shifters1600
I-ACTIVE SAFETY PACKAGE: High beam control, lane departure warning, lane keep assist, smart brake support, radar cruise control, traffic sign recognition1100
DESTINATION CHARGE835
TOTAL**\$28,980**

ENTHUSIASTIC AND AIRTIGHT

By Joe Sage

