

Light utility

BY JOE SAGE

The Mazda CX-30 appeared notably small to us in its photos prior to arrival. Curiosity led us to compare it to the diminutive MX-5 Miata sports car, and a range of results from googling suggested we were not the first. (The CX-30 is a bit longer and wider than Miata, seats four, has 1.6 inches more ground clearance, and is exclusively AWD.)

Actually related is the entry-level Mazda3 compact (sedan or hatchback, with the hatch seeming especially comparable to the CX). That is indeed small. Which is fine. It's why things come in sizes. Plus everybody everywhere always loves the Miata, and we've also always enjoyed the Mazda3.

We often doublecheck positioning of an incom-

ing Mazda, still absorbing their change to (mostly) double-digits for their crossovers—moving from CX-5, CX-7, CX-9 to CX-50, CX-70 and so on—with some just renumbered, but others new products. (The CX-5 was always so popular, it has remained, with some size and positioning overlap.) All that said, there's no question the CX-30 is small. Yet with all that as our starting point, it then seemed notably larger when it showed up in person.

Our CX-30 is in the 2.5 S group, with a standard 186-hp powertrain. The S lineup has six trims, ours a new midrange Aire Edition. There is also a CX-30 2.5 Turbo group, at 250 hp, in two more trims, with pricing starting just above where 2.5 S leaves off. The base engine gets 31 mpg hwy, the turbo 30 mpg, and both use regular fuel. All have the same 6-speed automatic and AWD, as well as the same

simple suspension setup. All are built in Mexico.

With Mazda now positioning itself as a premium brand, this smallest crossover has high value from the lower end on up. In the upper end, the power spec favors bumping to the 2.5 Turbo if you can, but it's a close-to-5-grand bump—still an apparent value, though, for a top-top version.

Interior style and finishes are simple and nice, with sort of a premium-economy leatherette feel. Instruments and controls are all familiar and effective. Size can be a factor in here, but you do adjust.

As it turns out, we used the CX-30 for a mission more typical of a bigger SUV or crossover, loading it up for a weekend flea market in the high country. (This event allows you to sleep in the vehicle, too, but just a load or just a nap would be pushing its small size. Both? Not a chance.) Rear cargo vol-

ume is limited, and optimizing it can push the first row forward a bit. But with our best Tetris skills, we did pack in quite a bit, including in the front passenger seat, but it probably took an hour and a half to make it work, instead of maybe 15 minutes.

On the plus side, as with the little Miata, the team at Mazda has again proven capable of some really clever and complete packaging, providing full fun and function in any given volume of space.

The CX-30 can clearly step up to the plate for a decent load, within its limits. We were comfortable over a few hundred miles of driving, and we seemed to roughly achieve our fuel mileage. We did perceive a difference in power at 5,000 or so feet altitude, perhaps another vote for the Turbo. It's possible this can handle 80-90 percent of your needs, and for its price and daily convenience, that may suit you. It just depends whether you have predictable specific duties beyond that or might choose more space, or power, just in case. ■



A hat tip for the paint on ours. It always seemed that nothing touches the deep lustrous feel of famous Mazda Soul Red—until maybe this—Deep Crystal Blue Mica—a knockout as soon as we saw it, so deep it's almost black in some light (and quite distinctive among a currently wide range of blue paints industrywide).



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....Salamanca, Mexico
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD	.....Mexico / Thailand
PARTS CONTENT	.....Mexico 65% / Japan 15% / US/Canada 10%
ENGINE	.....SKYACTIV-G 2.5L 16v 4-cyl DOHC, var valve timing, alum alloy
HP/TORQUE	.....186 hp / 186 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....13.0:1
TRANSMISSION	.....SKYACTIV-DRIVE 6-spd electronically controlled sport automatic
DRIVETRAIN	.....i-ACTIV AWD
TOP SPEED	.....127 mph (lim)
SUSPENSION	.....F: MacPherson strut w stblzr bar; R: torsion beam
STEERING	.....pwr assist rack & pinion
BRAKES	.....F: 11.6 vented; R: 11.9 solid
WHEELS	.....18x7J aluminum alloy, black metallic finish
TIRES	.....215/55R18 all-season
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....173.0 / 104.4 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....8.0 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....37.4 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....37.8 / 38.3 in
LEGGROOM (F/R)	.....41.7 / 36.3 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....20.2 / 45.2 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....3395 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....reg unl / 12.7 gal
MPG	.....24/31/27 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	.....\$29,850
AIRE EDITION: exterior: black side mirrors, black roof rails, black signature wing, black badges; interior: white leatherette seats w gray cloth inserts, synthetic suede IP middle pad, light gray stitching	.....incl
CARGO COVER	.....165
ILLUMINATED DOOR SILL PLATES	.....575
MAZDA NAVIGATION SYSTEM	.....450
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1495
TOTAL	.....\$32,535

2026 MAZDA CX-30 LINEUP

CX-30 2.5 S 186-hp 2.5L SKYACTIV-G, 6-spd auto, AWD	
2.5 S	.....\$25,975
2.5 S Select Sport	.....27,660
2.5 S Preferred	.....29,290
2.5 S Aire Edition	.....▼ 29,850
2.5 S Carbon Edition	.....31,030
2.5 S Premium	.....33,240

CX-30 2.5 Turbo 250-hp 2.5L SKYACTIV-G Turbo, 6-spd auto, AWD	
2.5 Turbo Aire Edition	.....34,410
2.5 Turbo Premium Plus	.....37,900