



Weekend roadtest: Mazda MX5 2.0 Z-Sport

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Summer is never complete for me without testing the latest Mazda MX5 roadster, writes Robin Roberts.



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 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 engines. Our latest summer treat was the fabric topped and fun-filled *2.0 Z Sport*.



This is the newest limited edition model of just 300 cars in the UK, with a 160ps 2.0 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 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 40mpg most of the time but ended up about 38mpg 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.



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.

Fast facts:	Mazda MX-5 2.0 Z-Sport (limited edition) £25,595
Insurance: 29E	Mechanical: 160ps 4cyl 1998cc, 6sp



Max: 133mph	0-62mph: 7.3sec
Fuel: 38 mpg on test	Emissions: 161gkm
BIK: 33%, £515FY, £140SR	Warranty: 3yrs/ 60,000 miles
Sizes: L 3.92m, W 1.74m, H 1.23m	Boot: 130 litres Kerb: 1075kg
For: Looks, trim, ride & handling, powertrain, visibility	
Against: Oddments & boot space, some road noise,.	
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