



## 2013 MAZDA CX-5

MSRP: **\$21,490**  
MPG: **26 CITY / 32 HWY**  
ENGINE: **2.0L, 4-CYLINDER, 155 HP**

By Matt Stone

### THE BIG PICTURE

The compact crossover market segment stretches far and wide – from cars like the [Nissan Rogue](#), [Honda CR-V](#), and [Toyota RAV4](#) to the [Kia Sportage](#), and some would say, the BMW X-3. Mazda wants a piece of this action, and the new from-scratch CX-5 will get a big bite of it. It does nearly everything well. It looks sharp, drives sporty, holds a lot, doesn't use too much gas, and is really affordable.

### AN INSIDE JOB

The Mazda CX-5 will soon replace the always-popular [Mazda CX-7](#) in the carmaker's lineup. The outgoing CX-7 is a dandy rig, but the Mazda CX-5 has nearly the same interior volume, is a lot less expensive to buy and gets far better fuel economy. That means the CX-5 is a strict two-row five seater; if you need more body count, step up to the still excellent Mazda CX-9, which has been recently given a mid-life refresh, and is a consistent top player in the three-rows-of-seats crossover class.

No matter, the CX-5's cabin, as with all Mazdas, focuses first on the driver, but leaves plenty of comfort and satisfaction for the other four occupants as well. For a compact, there's plenty of room front or back, and Mazda has worked hard to wrap this cabin in handsome materials that smack of quality. The instrumentation is clear and easy to read, and the rest of the controls are close at hand and logical to operate. The standard cloth and vinyl used in the Touring level interior is high quality durable stuff and never feels cheap or cheesy.

The rear seats split 40/20/40 and the seats' flip and fold functions could not be easier, from either rear side door or from the large rear hatch opening. There are plenty of cup holders, armrests and lighted vanity mirrors to go around. Other model levels offer handsome faux brushed metal or "piano black" glossy plastic trim panels that look good and feel nice to

the touch. Of course you can step up to leather trimmed seats, although you get a leather wrapped steering wheel and shift knob in all levels. Nearly everyone will be happy in the Mazda CX-5 interior.

## FAMILY FRIENDLINESS

They don't come much friendlier than this. The doors open wide for super ingress and egress, plus, as we mentioned, flipping and folding the rear seats is a snap. Visibility is superb from all positions and in all directions, so everyone's comfy here.

## DRIVING IMPRESSIONS

We tested a wide variety of Mazda CX-5 models, from a manual transmission-equipped, front-wheel drive Sport to a fully loaded AWD Grand Touring model, and ultimately enjoyed them all a bunch. Mazda gives all CX-5s sporty handling, beefy wheels and tires, well connected steering, and capable four-wheel disc brakes with ABS. So there's no roly-poly, poor handling, cheapo version to avoid.

Remember, Mazda is the Zoom-zoom brand and insists that anything it builds will have a measure of driving fun included as standard equipment. Our wheel time included hot laps (in the rain, no less) at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca in the Monterey, Peninsula area, intended at showcasing this car's superb chassis and high speed handling characteristics, plus lots of real world on-road miles confirming that it is fun-to-drive in an everyday attitude. We felt safe, even driving at high speeds in the rain. Certainly a great feeling when hauling the family around town.

The 4-cylinder, 155 horsepower engine is up to the task but just barely. With one passenger and no cargo aboard, it's fine for most drivers and driving conditions, but ultimately not as zoom-zoomy as we had hoped. Unless you spend your time with a full load of passengers and cargo, towing a trailer, up and down the hills of San Francisco, you'll find the engine adequate, not thrilling. It makes lusty sounds out of its sporty dual exhaust pipes, but just won't overwhelm you with power. But it's as zippy as any of its competition, and likely costs less to buy, plus it gets better fuel mileage than all of them.

Handling, steering, stopping, ride — you won't have any complaints in any of these areas; in fact, you'll absolutely enjoy how well it handles and steers, happy to attack those twisty roads on the way to your cabin. Wind noise is commendably low, and it has a firm, well controlled, yet smooth ride quality. Mazda has done its homework here, and done it right.

## SAFETY

The Mazda CX-5 is all new, from scratch purpose-built for crossover duty; that is to say it's not a compact sedan given some rear glass and a hatchback, and then pumped up into a crossover. This translates into a well-handling machine that steers well, holds tight in corners, and brakes the way you want it to.

It features advanced dual front airbags, front side-impact airbags, and front-and-rear side air curtain bags with rollover protection. Several trim levels offer a blind spot warning system and a back-up rear view camera with dash mounted screen. Naturally, LATCH rear child safety seat anchors and tethers and a Tire Pressure Monitoring system are standard.

## GIZMOS AND TECH

Each Mazda CX-5, no matter the trim level, has keyless entry and push-button start, standard. No more fishing for a key or fob. The standard audio system is an AM/FM/CD/MP3 radio with automatic level control.

There's also an AUX jack for your device of choice, and Bluetooth connectivity is standard or optional, depending on the model. As you creep up the trim level hierarchy, you can get HD radio or SIRIUS satellite radio. Ditto a digital nav with a bright, clear, hi def 5.8-inch color screen; the nav is touch screen, easy to program and proved highly accurate during our several-hundred miles behind the wheel.