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NEW MAZDA5: THE MULTI-ACTIVITY SIX-SEATER SPORTS VEHICLE MULTI-ACTIVITY SPORTS VEHICLE

IRVINE, Calif., -- The MAZDA5 is a new type of vehicle. There is nothing like it on the market today. It is a six-seater but you'd hardly know it by its sleek styling and compact size. One could say it's a vehicle that's right where everything else isn't.

When Mazda launched the MAZDA6, it set out to build a vehicle that offered superb comfort for six – and the versatility to complement the lifestyle of active people.

“The MAZDA5 is a new approach to multi-faceted motoring,” says Weldon Munsey, MAZDA5 vehicle line manager. “It has the dimensions, ease of use and value of a compact car, yet it combines this with the sophistication, refinement and features of a premium import. It has the Zoom-Zoom quality inherent in all new Mazdas and also has seating for six as well as the versatility to carry a mixture of people and cargo.

“Like the Mazda RX-8, the MAZDA5 breaks convention in seating access and interior design to create an entirely new type of vehicle.”

MAZDA5 is available in two configurations, Sport and Touring. Either one offers the same multi-adjustable seating configuration, the same innovative lightweight sliding rear doors for superior access, unmatched value and the same Mazda signature driving experience.

MECHANICAL SOPHISTICATION MEANS IT'S GREAT TO DRIVE

MAZDA5 is powered by a 2.3-liter, four-cylinder engine, good for 157 horsepower at 6,500 rpm and a gutsy 148 lb-ft of torque at 3,500 rpm. Similar to the MZR-series engine in the MAZDA3 and MAZDA6, the engine has 16-valves, double overhead camshafts and is all-aluminum for light weight, which in turn improves handling by minimizing weight over the front axle. Lightweight pistons help improve smoothness, throttle response and the engine's ability to rev, while variable induction mixes good low-end torque with strong high-revving power. The power goes to the road through a short-shift, fast-moving, five-speed manual gearbox.

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A sophisticated four-speed electronically controlled Sport A/T automatic gearbox with manual-shift mode is optional, if your level of multi-activity doesn't quite extend to changing gears yourself.

The suspension is fully independent, as on the best sports cars. Anti-roll bars are fitted front and rear for flat handling, minimal body roll and great driver feedback. Steering is by a precise and responsive rack-and-pinion setup. Its variable ratio electro-hydraulic power assistance provides low-speed parking ease and great high-speed feedback. Large disc brakes are fitted front and rear, and the fronts are ventilated for extra cooling and better stopping power in tough conditions – such as repeated braking on long downhill sections of road. Anti-lock Brakes (ABS) prevent lock-up and maintain steering even when braking heavily.

Electronic Brakeforce Distribution (EBD) and Emergency Brake Assist (EBA) further enhance braking performance when you're in a hurry to stop fast. EBD ensures correct balance between front and rear braking in an emergency, irrespective of the vehicle's load, while EBA gives added boost to the braking power in an emergency stop.

Attractive 17-inch alloy wheels, similar to those used on Mazda sports cars, are standard. So are a body-color sports grille, front and rear fascias and door handles. It is also a light vehicle. At just 3,333 lbs., the MAZDA5 's light weight contributes to its high performance, responsive handling and good gas mileage.

So far, then, it sounds like a sports car.

But how many 'sports' cars have six seats?

Only one...

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GREAT STYLE THAT'S COMPLETELY PRACTICAL

“The MAZDA5 is part of a class of vehicle that is hugely popular in Europe and Japan, where space and utility must be maximized and driving performance is held at a premium,” says Kenichi Fukunaga, MAZDA5 chief program engineer. “It was designed at the outset to be really good to drive. Yet it was also designed to be versatile and practical. The attractive looks and good performance in no way compromise packaging and versatility.”

With an overall length of 181.5 inches, width of 69.1 inches, height of 64.2 inches, and sitting on a 108-inch wheelbase, the MAZDA5 delivers roomy comfort while being surprisingly compact. The long wheelbase helps give it extraordinary passenger space for its modest external dimensions, and the short front and rear overhangs help handling and parking ease. Despite the long wheelbase, MAZDA5 features an impressive tight turning circle of less than 35 feet, making it remarkably easy to maneuver in tight situations.

It looks brilliant, the sort of car you'd want to have on display in your driveway. Sleek, sweeping and wedge-shaped, the metal skin is drawn tight over the body. Panel gaps are tiny, a sure sign of top quality craftsmanship. With a low drag coefficient of 0.29, it is aerodynamically efficient, cleaving the air quietly and maximizing fuel economy.

Despite the sharp looks, the MAZDA5 has been designed from the inside out – like all the best multi-function vehicles. Mazda designers set out to build a vehicle that offered superb comfort for six – and the versatility to complement the lifestyle of active people. So no matter whether you want to carry people or sporting equipment, the MAZDA5 delivers.

Step one was to make the cabin as spacious and comfortable as possible. Three features contribute to the MAZDA5's roomy interior: a low profile fuel tank, a compact multi-link rear suspension, and a stepped floor. The latter permits excellent legroom for all – especially those sitting in rows two and three. Even in the back row, legroom is a generous 30.7 inches. In row two, legroom is a comfortable 35.2 inches.

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The ingeniously flexible interior takes convenience and versatility to a whole new level. The second row has separate individual seats for big-car levels of comfort. They slide and recline and can be folded flat without removing their headrests. They feature a one-touch lever that automatically tips the seatback forward and slides the cushion to its front-most position to allow access to the third row.

The third row seats are split 50:50. They can be tipped forward individually and folded flat to create a flat load area, ideal for carrying mountain bikes or bulky sports equipment. With the rear-most seats folded flat, carrying capacity is an enormous 44.4 cubic feet. Fold the second row and the load floor area is over 63 inches long. Even with all six seats in the ‘up’ position, the luggage area is still large enough to carry a standard baby carriage.

Interior storage space includes 45 compartments, including a vast, illuminated glovebox and half-liter bottle holders in each front door pocket.

The MAZDA5 features ‘theater-style’ seating. The stepped floor referred to earlier means each row is mounted a little higher than the one in front to improve visibility for all. The driver, too, benefits from excellent visibility, improving primary safety as well as making driving more enjoyable. Additionally, three-point seat belts and head restraints are offered for all six seats.

Safety is further improved by advanced front air bags that use sensors to measure seat occupants’ weight, severity of the impact and distance from seat to dash, before deploying. Side airbags also are standard, as are curtain airbags that run the full length of the cabin to protect occupants in all three rows of seats. LATCH-style rear child safety seat anchors and tethers are fitted to both the second and third row seats.

PREMIUM CABIN BOASTS INNOVATIVE SLIDING DOORS

Like a premium import, the MAZDA5 uses superior trim and fabrics. Aluminum-color finishers are used in the interior. The fabric is soft and the black upholstery muted and tasteful.

Comfort is further enhanced by the superb ride quality, a result of the fully independent coil-sprung suspension and generous cushioning of all six seats.

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Superbly practical manually operated sliding rear side doors can be operated with one finger. They hug the sides of the vehicle when open, and create a wide opening for easy entry and exit to the rear seats – even for the third row of passengers. The opening is 27.5 inches wide and 42.6 inches high. This not only provides far superior access compared with conventional front-hinged doors, it also is a boon in tight parking spaces because they require little side clearance when open.

Furthermore, the tailgate is easy to use. Its two-stage opening mechanism has its first stop at a height most can easily reach. The second fully open stop is three inches higher to accommodate taller people. The low sill height makes for easy loading.

Such large side openings, and the large tailgate, could have compromised structural rigidity - a key quality on any car designed to satisfy sporty drivers. Mazda has avoided this problem by developing an immensely strong all-steel unibody construction. Unibody construction is typical on sedans and sports cars – but not on SUVs, nor some minivans. The stiff bodyshell has enormous benefits for the vehicle's handling, crash safety, refinement and noise, vibration and harshness (NVH). It contributes to the vehicle's quietness, which reduces driver and passenger fatigue.

The stiff body is mated to a suspension specially designed to resist body roll. It also provides a fine balance between precise road feedback for maximum driving fun, and the cushioned stability needed for a comfortable ride with up to six people on board.

The MacPherson strut front suspension and rear multi-link system give superior road holding and also cope superbly with the broad range in weights of passengers and luggage that will be possible in the six-seat MAZDA5.

The advanced electro-hydraulic power steering also helps the car's dynamic qualities and ease of driving. The hydraulic steering pump is driven electrically, rather than by the engine.

Mazda engineers have chosen this set-up over pure hydraulic power steering because it uses less energy and is more fuel efficient.

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The precision engineering of the vehicle is obvious from the superiority of the hardware, such as the door handles. This is a car that speaks quality, wherever you look or touch.

But while carrying capacity and ease-of-use may be impressive, the MAZDA5 also is built very much around the driver. A sporty three-dial instrument cluster faces you. Visibility is excellent, and controls are all within easy reach. They envelop you, providing a cockpit-feel more than a mere cabin. The center console is raised to position the controls, including the manual or automatic shift lever, as close as possible to the driver, to improve visibility and operation.

WELL EQUIPPED, AS YOU'D EXPECT FROM MAZDA

The MAZDA5 comes very well equipped. All models get 17-inch alloy wheels, body colored grille, power remote door mirrors and rear wiper with washer. Standard interior fittings include air conditioning with pollen filter, power door locks and windows, second row under-seat storage, and remote keyless entry. Cruise control also is standard, and the controls are steering wheel-mounted for superior ergonomics. Also standard are steering wheel-mounted supplemental audio controls, which regulate the standard AM/FM/CD stereo with four speakers.

The top-range Touring model adds a leather-wrapped steering wheel, an in-dash six-disc CD changer with six speakers, a tilt-and-slide electric moonroof, body-color door mirrors, fog lamps, automatic climate control, a rear liftgate spoiler and side sill extensions. Optional in the Touring model is the latest in limited voice-command DVD satellite navigation.

Accessories include MP3 CD changer, cargo net, all-weather floor mats and a moonroof wind deflector.

Available body colors include Platinum Silver Metallic, Stellar Green Silver Metallic, Carbon Gray, Whitewater Pearl, Brilliant Black Clearcoat, Strato Blue, Phantom Blue and Cardinal Red.

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Mazda North American Operations is responsible for the sales and marketing, customer parts and service support of Mazda vehicles in the United States. Headquartered in Irvine, Calif., MNAO has more than 700 dealerships nationwide.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: For more information on Mazda vehicles, visit the online Mazda media center at www.mazdausamedia.com.