

MAZDA MX5



The Mazda MX5 is the world's best selling sports car ever! I quote from the UK's Daily Telegraphs motoring guru, Honest John's book on used cars "the best small, affordable sports car ever made". Even Top Gear cannot stop raving about old MX5's. The recipe for success is simple: design a beautiful convertible, use modified, tried and tested Mazda 323 mechanicals to keep development and manufacturing cost low, give it a compact size to keep weight down for better performance, give it razor-sharp handling with rear wheel drive (as a proper sports car should have) and put a 1.6 / 1.8 twin-cam 16valve engine up front, and there you have it! A reliable, cheap to maintain convertible with good ride quality that offer loads of fun to drive. Quite a number of well known celebrities all over the world owned one of these Japanese roadsters.

Prices for MX5's start at around a silly cheap £500 because there are so many of the on the UK market which helps to keep prices low. In South Africa on the other hand you will have a hard time to find an old MX5 for less than R60 000, thus making it a brilliant vehicle to export to South Africa!

The canvas roof might not be electrically operated, but you can open and close the roof by hand from the driver's seat. This means you do not have to get any electric components serviced, and no electrics that can malfunction when the roof is down and it is about to start raining. Clever! Its pop-up headlights also give it that extra special "cool" appeal as pop-up headlights are a rarity nowadays.



Because these two-seater MX5's weigh only 1030kg, you do not need a turbo charger or big V6 to make it go fast, and the MX5 will give an excellent fuel consumption figure, even when driven enthusiastically. And yes, a MX5 can do power slides!

The 1.6 DOHC 16v engine at first produced 85kW / 114 bhp and were reduced in 1995 to 65kW / 88bhp due to emission control, but once back in South Africa it is easy to bump up the power by a performance chip and catalyst removal. In 1995 Mazda also added a 1.8 engine to the MX5's line up making it even more fun to drive offering 105kW / 140bhp. The 1.8 is highly recommended over the more sedately 1.6, and the 1.8 is worth about R20 000 more than the 1.6 in South Africa due to its more sought-afterness. The MX5 1.8's prices start at about £1000 in the UK, so do the calculations and the 1.8 is a much better value for money.



Performance-wise the 1.6 will sprint from 0-100km/h in 9.4 seconds and give it a top speed of 190km/h. The much more powerful 1.8 will do the 0-100km/h run in a quick 7.7 seconds and top speed is 203km/h.

Do note that many MX5's in the UK are "grey imports" from Japan, but this is not necessarily a bad thing, because they show in kilometres on the clock and virtually all "Jap specs" are equipped with air-conditioning which was an optional extra on UK versions. The Japanese spec are usually called the MX5 Eunos, and in some other countries the Miata.



These cars (being Japanese) are very reliable and can do trouble-free high mileage, but there are a few things to look for when buying:

1. Rust is not common, but check under the wheel arches and in the sills for rust. Walk away if you see rust-spots.
2. Another thing to look for is the pop-up light's operation. Fortunately they are cheap to get hold of on ebay.co.uk.
3. Does the roof have any rips or tears? Budget £150 for a new roof from ebay.
4. Check for accident damage, remember this is a sports car.
5. Does it have service history? If the car is cheap you do not really have to worry about a full service history (FSH), but a fully stamped book is an asset when you want to sell the car one day.

Note: a coupe-like, removable hard-top roof was available as a optional extra which is very handy for the winter. If you want a hard top you can find one on ebay for around £250. To colour-code such a roof (if it does not match your colour) will cost about R1500 in South Africa. NB. These roofs are impossible to find used in South Africa, so the purchase of a hard-top roof is highly recommended.



Here are some good-buy examples found on www.autotrader.co.uk:

1996 N Reg MAZDA MX-5 1.8i



- 128,000 miles
- Manual
- Green
- Petrol
- Convertible
- 1840 cc

Full Description:

Glossary of Terms

2 Doors, Manual, Convertible, Petrol, 128,000 miles, Green, 2 Owners. Full Service History, Air conditioning, Anti theft system, Colour coding - Body, Front armrest, Head restraints, Metallic paintwork, Sports seats. Insurance Group:12A, NEEDS SUM PAINT.DRIVES VERY GOOD. £950

1995 MAZDA MX-5 1.8i 2dr Convertible



Price: £1,795

Features:

- 52,000 miles
- Manual
- Blue
- Petrol
- Convertible
- 1749 cc

Full Description:

Glossary of Terms

5 Speed manual in Navy Blue with Blue hood. E/w, P/s, A/c, 12 months MOT, 6 months tax, 3 months warranty. £1,795.