

Motoring focus

Mazda's 4x4 hits the high road

FIRST DRIVE

MAZDA CX-7, £23,960

Mazda's CX-7 is a sporty new off-roader that hopes to steal a march on the Honda CR-V and Toyota RAV4 – as well as some more expensive 4x4s.

Unusually, it's being sold in only one specification, with a 256bhp 2.3-litre petrol engine and plenty of standard equipment, including heated leather seats and electronic stability control. There's no automatic option and Mazda has decided not to produce a diesel.

What you get for your £24,000 is a roomy 'soft-roader' with tasteful, coupé-style curves. Interior practicality isn't limited by the compact design, though – there's space to seat five adults in relative comfort. The 455-litre boot is a good size and shape,



Choose any specification you like – as long as it's this one

and with the back seats laid flat (a process made commendably easy in the CX-7) it becomes large enough to take a couple of bicycles or several sets of golf clubs.

On the road, we found the CX-7 delivers plenty of power and a very pleasant drive. It feels confident and precise through the

corners, while the sporty drive doesn't compromise the generally comfortable ride.

The CX-7 isn't a 4x4 for serious off-road duty – this is a lifestyle car primarily for use on tarmac. As is common in soft-roaders, the four-wheel drive is 'intelligent', with the rear wheels stepping in only when the car detects a loss of grip – this should save on fuel during normal driving.

That said, the CX-7's main drawback is fuel economy. Mazda claims it will return 27.7mpg combined, which can't match diesel rivals, for example. And if you're a company-car driver, CO₂ emissions of 243g/km will spell bad news for your annual tax bill.

VERDICT The CX-7 looks good and drives very well, but we think likely buyers will lament the lack of a more fuel-efficient diesel option.

Five stars for Fiat and Ford

CRASH TESTS

Already popular with UK buyers, Ford's Mondeo has been awarded high marks in the latest batch of Euro NCAP tests. The Mondeo achieved an adult occupant protection (AOP) score of five stars. The child occupant protection (COP) score of four stars is also respectable, but the Mondeo's pedestrian protection rating of two stars shows Ford still has work to do.

Fiat's eagerly awaited 500 city car (pictured below and right) is based on the Panda, and it managed a full complement of five stars for AOP (the Panda scores three). But Renault's Twingo, which uses many components from the previous-generation Clio, scored only four stars. This blots Renault's copybook, since the majority of its current

car range has achieved five stars.

Kia's medium hatchback, the Cee'd, also scored the maximum five stars for AOP. Surprisingly, its sister model, the Hyundai i30, managed only four – testers were concerned about stiff structures in the dashboard that could cause lower leg injuries. Both cars are built in eastern Europe and share engines and transmissions, so it's a surprise their scores differ. Peugeot's rival, the 308 (opposite), achieves five stars for AOP, and is also more pedestrian-friendly.

Volkswagen's new 4x4, the Tiguan, arrives in January and has been awarded five stars for AOP, and four and two stars for COP and pedestrian protection, respectively. All Tiguans will come with electronic stability control.

Fiat's retro-looking 500 is very safe for a car of its size



MODEL	CLASS	EURO NCAP SAFETY SCORE		
		ADULT OCCUPANT PROTECTION (OUT OF FIVE)	CHILD OCCUPANT PROTECTION (OUT OF FIVE)	PEDESTRIAN PROTECTION (OUT OF FOUR)
FIAT 500	Supermini	★★★★★	★★★	★★
RENAULT Twingo	Supermini	★★★★	n/a	★★
SMART ForTwo	Supermini	★★★★	n/a	★★
PEUGEOT 308	Medium car	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
KIA Cee'd	Medium car	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★
HYUNDAI i30	Medium car	★★★★	★★★	★★
FORD Mondeo	Large car	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★
VW Tiguan	Off-roader	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★



0
fatal road accidents in
20mph zones in 2006
DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT



370
fatal road accidents in
30mph zones in 2006
DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT

Can this all-new hatch shake off the 307's tarnished image?

Pricey Peugeot

FIRST DRIVE

PEUGEOT 308
£11,855 to £20,020

Peugeot's all-new 308 replaces the 307 – the fifth-best-selling car in its class last year, behind the Ford Focus, Vauxhall Astra, Renault Mégane and VW Golf. The 307 clocked up sales despite its reputation for patchy reliability and poor owner satisfaction – as shown in our 2007 *Which? Car* survey.

With so many quality rivals, the 308 needs to impress buyers and compete on price. We drove two – a VTi 120 petrol and an HDi 110 diesel – to find out whether it does.

The first thing you notice is that the 308 is bigger and more bulbous than the 307 but still looks similar. Inside, the seats are firm and comfy, with plenty of legroom up front. The rear is more confined, so taller passengers should try them for size.

The retro-look dials are clear and the brushed aluminium trim looks smart. Controls are intuitive, but we're not keen on the electronic indicator stalk, which doesn't have a positive 'click' when you use it.



Bigger, better and safer than the 307 – but costlier, too

Forward visibility is good and the panoramic glass roof (SE and GT models only) creates a real feeling of space and light. But thick back pillars noticeably obscure rearward vision, although the large door mirrors help to compensate.

The 1.6 petrol we drove offers slightly more get up and go than the 1.6 diesel, but it also sounded quite thrashy when accelerating away from the lights. Peugeot says it will return 42.2mpg (combined) and the 1.6 diesel a very frugal 60.1mpg. We'll check how realistic these are during our full road tests.

Tyre noise was evident with the optional (£100) 17-inch alloy wheels and low-profile tyres, but the steering felt direct and the car clung on to corners with ease. With standard tyres on 16-inch wheels the ride was quieter but the steering felt less precise.

Electronic stability control is fitted to Sport and SE versions but costs £300 on lower-spec cars – we think it should be standard.

VERDICT A competent car but at nearly £18,000 (with options) for each of the cars we drove, it will need discounts to compete.

In brief

'Fuel-saving' tyre

Michelin's new Energy Saver tyre could shave up to 4 per cent off fuel bills, due to its low rolling resistance. It's fitted to some new Peugeot 308s (left) but will be sold more widely in the new year. We'll test it for March's tyre report.



Bosch servicing update

In August we reported that Motormaster of Leatherhead, a garage operating to the OFT-approved Bosch code of practice, missed all the faults on our test car ('Secret services', *Which?*, August, p13). We're pleased that Bosch Car Service has since carried out its own mystery shop and formal audit. Bosch told us follow-up checks on the garage's standards were due as we went to press.



Worth waiting for?

BMW 1 Series Coupé (small coupé, on sale now, from £21,585); Mazda 6 (large car, now, £TBC); Subaru Impreza (medium car, now, from £12,495); Mini Clubman – pictured (supermini, now, from £14,120); Fiat 500 (city car, Jan 08, £TBC); Renault Grand Modus (mini MPV, Feb 08, £TBC); Skoda Fabia Estate (small estate, Feb 08, £TBC); Jaguar XF (luxury car, March 08, from £33,790).



1,000 garages rated

Which? Local, the trader recommendation website we launched nationwide in October, now features more than 1,000 different garages. To find a garage rated by other *Which?* members – and to avoid the cowboys – log on to www.which-local.co.uk and enter your postcode.



Automatic for the people?

FIRST DRIVE



MITSUBISHI i-CAR, £9,084

The i-Car is a quirky new city car from the streets of Japan. It seems pricey, but comes with an auto gear-box, climate control, electric windows, alloy wheels and remote locking.

The rear-mounted engine (which sits below the boot) is turbocharged, but it's a tiny three-cylinder 659cc

unit delivering just 57bhp. It's quite noisy, while the four-speed auto box is smooth, if a little slow to respond.

Our fuel economy of 37.6mpg was well short of the claimed 54.2mpg.

VERDICT Surprisingly spacious for four adults, but the i-Car's safety is unknown. At this price, we'd rather have a Toyota Aygo.