



BMW Mini



AT A GLANCE

considering size, price and rivals

Controls/displays	☆☆☆☆○○
Handling/steering	☆☆☆☆○○
Comfort	☆☆☆☆○○
Space/practicality	☆☆☆☆○○

THE MINI RANGE

size and type 3-door supermini (mid-priced)

trim levels Mini One, Cooper, Cooper S
engines petrol: 4 cylinder/1.6 litre/90bhp (Mini One), 4/1.6/115 (Cooper), 4/1.6/163 supercharged (Cooper S) due summer 2002; diesel: none

drive front-wheel drive, 5-speed manual (Mini One and Cooper), 6-speed manual (Cooper S), Steptronic CVT automatic with Sport and 6-speed sequential modes available on Mini One/Cooper

notable features first front-wheel drive BMW, Brazilian-built engine jointly developed by BMW/Chrysler, £100 5-year/50,000-mile service plan, large central speedo echoes original, 15in, 16in or 17in wheels, black or white roof/door mirror option for Cooper, tyre pressure monitor system, all-in-one bonnet/front wings, avant-garde aluminium-look fascia; all-disc ABS with cornering brake control (CBC) standard.

VITAL STATISTICS (cm)

length x width (<i>inc mirrors</i>)	363x193
front - legroom	84-114
- headroom (<i>no sunroof</i>)	94-101
rear - typical legroom	92
- typical kneeroom	70
- headroom	94
- hiproom	93
load space (<i>all seats in use</i>)	
(<i>litres/cu ft</i>)	165/5.9
load length (<i>seats up/folded</i>)	34/120
load width	84-93
load sill height (<i>inside/outside</i>)	16/62
boot/load aperture height	53*/81
* <i>under load cover</i>	

LIKES ...

funky but functional cockpit
myriad styling cues from original Mini
bombproof BMW build quality
tyre pressure monitoring system (std)
and GRIPES
huge options list can pump up the price
front seats' backrest controls fiddly
no spare: space-saver/run-flat options
two-level load bay with seats folded

AFTER ALL THE POMP AND politics that have accompanied its reincarnation, the long-awaited, all-new BMW-built Mini has finally gone on sale – a mere 42 years after the original, Issigonis-penned icon rolled down the very same Cowley, Oxford production line.

Perhaps not surprisingly, this Mini for the new millennium is one of the most eagerly anticipated cars ever.

Reminiscent of its ancestor in so many details, the baby Beemer faces the daunting task of trying to recreate all the globe-wide fame (if not lack of fortune) amassed by its immortal forerunner.

With three variations of a 1.6-litre, 16-valve engine (co-developed with Chrysler in Brazil) under its integral, one-piece nose, the Mini comes in three distinct flavours: entry-level (although such a tag demeans potential equipment levels on offer) Mini One, then Mini Cooper and finally – a Mini to blow other swift superminis into the weeds – the racy-but-not-raucous 163bhp Mini Cooper S, due to be let off its leash around the middle of 2002.

Styling cues from the first-time-around Mini assault you from all angles – the large central speedometer, carefully recreated roof "gutters", and front-end detailing, for example.

But, apart from dead giveaways like its significantly larger size, a tailgate (yes, with wash-wipe this time) and almost over-large 15, 16 or even 17in wheels, BMW's new *Wunderkind* not only looks like a bang-up-to-date copy of its illustrious

predecessor, like the original, it also delivers class-leading dynamic delights once you slip behind the now sensibly angled wheel.

Up front, the fun-packed cabin is significantly classier and less cosy than the original's and, though it may not look it, there's more than minimal space for adults in the back – once they've conquered the palaver of the front seats' tricky backrest folding.

As to performance, Mini One's 90bhp feels no more than adequate in this far-from-featherweight supermini, but the Cooper (available with near obligatory white or black liveried roof and door mirrors, naturally) feels distinctly livelier – just as a Cooper-badged Mini should, of course.

It doesn't quite capture the pioneering, flip-it-on-a-sixpence feel of its forerunner, and it still hasn't got any boot space, but the new Mini's grown up, more sophisticated road manners are a more than acceptable trade-off.

VERDICT

It may be a baby BMW and lack the original's super-snug packaging, but this could only be a genuine Mini. Judging the newcomer impassively against other small hatches to some extent misses the point; what you're really buying here is a fashion statement – albeit one that's a bundle of fun and measures up fair and square with more traditional superminis. Watch it sell just as fast as BMW can build it.