

Review: Mazda CX-30 Carbon Edition



By Imran Salie

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We have test driven the new Carbon Edition model of Mazda's CX-30, which is a compact crossover SUV. Now in the CX-30 lineup are four models, and the Carbon Edition slots between the Individual derivative and the Dynamic model.



With Mazda, and in particular with the CX-30, it can be difficult to differentiate the trim levels by features as they are all nearly specced the same. For example, the CX-30 has the same powertrains across the range with the same power outputs.

However, with the Carbon Edition, there are obvious exterior differences. But how well did the CX-30 fare with us?

Here we'll break it down in terms of drive performance, interior quality and design, and how the subtle aesthetic changes make a difference to the overall appearance.

What's it like to drive?

The only drive mode available is Sport, and when used the engine becomes noticeably louder, in a good way that is. In this mode, the engine also becomes peppier with better throttle response. This mode is best for quick overtakes as we found it capable of manoeuvring past traffic without a flat foot.

In its normal driving mode, the 2l naturally-aspirated engine delivers a spirited performance, but it's easy to tell that a turbocharger is non-existent. The power in this mode is moderate, and there isn't much to write home about.

The suspension is slightly on the stiffer side, but there's enough absorption from the shocks for a drive experience that is just okay.

We dodged moderate traffic on the N2 freeway with quick lane switches and acceleration, which required closer attention to handling. The steering is fairly accurate, but it could be sharper, and we encountered little body roll. When switching lanes quickly the FWD CX-30's stability and balance were good.

What is it like on the inside?

We drove the CX-30 Carbon Edition during some light and heavy showers in the Western Cape, which we used as a yardstick to judge how well the cabin insulates noise from the outside.

Splattering against the body of the car, the noise from the droplets in heavy rain can sometimes drown out the noise from the engine in normal mode and at slower speeds. The noise from the tyres is minimal but we could hear some breaking through at faster speeds.

With a decent insulated cabin and okay drive comfortability, the inside experience of the CX-30 is good.

Occupants will be welcomed by firm-feeling black cloth material seats upon entering. These seats are matched with red stitching which is found on other parts as well such as the gear lever and driver's armrest.



The dashboard and other panels of the interior feel of quality, and we are pleased to say that all around there's a sense of great build quality.

The infotainment system sits embedded into the dashboard at a good eye level for the driver, which makes it easier to keep an eye on the road when distractions from the screen creep in. It's also worth noting that a heads-up display for driving speed is available, which adds to less eye-diverting.

The user experience of the infotainment system is good because of its simplicity, it makes use of a rotary dial for navigating. The infotainment system itself, however, feels dated and in need of an upgrade.

Space-wise it can be cramped for three adults seated at the back. For the driver and front passenger, there is an adequate amount of space available.



Exterior

On the surface, the Carbon Edition model differs from its counterparts in the lineup with black wheel arches and side skirtings, black side mirrors, and black 18-inch alloys.



Adding to the black finish is a back bumper and a front lip of the same colour. The black finishes and sharp lines give it an air of sportiness.

The overall exterior is in line with Mazda’s modern design, and this is evident by its front grill and slim headlights.





Our test unit in grey nicely contrasted the dark finishes, and we think Mazda has got it right with the overall look of the CX-30.

Verdict

Mazda is a well-recognised brand in South Africa and its current portfolio in the market is a sign that the manufacturer is making a good attempt to capitalise on the trend of SUVs. Albeit well-known, there's a feeling that its popularity amongst local consumers has dwindled.

The Carbon Edition, which presents the CX-30 with a sportier look, is a good addition to the lineup and certainly bolsters Mazda's product offering of SUVs, even if it's deemed as a crossover. The Carbon Edition's strength lies in its exceptional interior build quality, exterior design, and driver experience.

Some facts and features

- Engine: four-cylinder 2l
- Transmission: six-speed automatic
- Fuel consumption: 6.6l (claimed)
- Power and torque: 121kW, 213Nm
- Price: R532, 200
- Smart keyless entry
- Passive collision signal
- Reverse camera and parking sensors
- Driver, passenger, knee (driver), curtain and side airbags

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