

2018 BMW X5

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By New Car Test Drive January 31, 2018



The BMW X5 midsize crossover SUV is able to seat seven and features the taut driving dynamics that symbolize the brand. The X5 was last redesigned for the 2014 model year. Little has changed for 2018.

Most 2018 BMW X5 models get a sport-tuned version of the 8-speed automatic transmission. Option groups have been altered, essentially serving as separate trim levels. Most individual options are available with the Premium package.

The X5 presents a broad choice of powertrains. Two turbocharged gasoline engines are offered in regular X5 models: a 3.0-liter inline six-cylinder, and a 4.4-liter twin-turbo V8. The six-cylinder makes 300 horsepower and 300 pound-feet of torque, escalating to 445 horsepower and 480 pound-feet from the V8.

A 3.0-liter turbodiesel six goes into the X5 xDrive35d, developing 255 horsepower and 413 pound-feet of torque. All-wheel drive is standard.

BMW also offers a plug-in hybrid, which combines a turbocharged 2.0-liter four-cylinder gas engine with an electric motor and 9.2-kWh lithium-ion battery pack. Combined output totals 308 horsepower and 332 pound-feet of torque.

All X5s use an 8-speed automatic transmission. Rear-wheel drive is standard on the base gas-engine model, but upper trim levels come with all-wheel drive. AWD is optional for the base version.

For all-out performance, the X5 M unleashes a 567-horsepower version of the 4.4-liter V8, producing 553 pound-feet of torque. Sport seats, strengthened steering, and a track-tuned suspension are standard.

Plenty of advanced safety technology is available, but most items are costly options. All X5s now contain a rearview camera. Surround-view cameras and a head-up display are optional. Automatic emergency braking, adaptive cruise control, and active lane control also are available.

An optional Parking Assistant can position the X5 in a parallel or perpendicular parking spot. Traffic Jam Assistant strives to keep the crossover in its lane, safely behind the vehicle ahead.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has given the X5 five stars overall, and five each for its frontal and side-impact crash. Testing by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety yielded a Good score in its moderate-overlap frontal and side-impact tests. Automatic emergency braking earned a Superior rating.

Model Lineup

X5 sDrive35i (\$56,950) includes the six-cylinder engine, rear-wheel drive, leatherette upholstery, 14-way heated power front seats, adaptive headlights, power tailgate, panoramic moonroof, and nine-speaker audio. (Prices are MSRP and do not include \$995 destination charge.) X5 xDrive35i (\$59,250) includes all-wheel drive.

X5 xDrive35d (\$60,750) has a twin-turbo diesel six-cylinder engine and all-wheel drive.

X5 xDrive40e iPerformance (\$63,500) has a hybrid powertrain with 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine, all-wheel drive, and adaptive suspension.

X5 xDrive50i (\$73,800) gets the 4.4-liter twin-turbo V8 with all-wheel drive, leather seat upholstery, 20-way power front seats, pushbutton start, and Harman Kardon audio.

X5 M (\$100,700) includes the 567-horsepower V8, M-level suspension, larger brakes, and distinctive styling elements.

An optional M Sport package features unique styling touches and a firmer suspension.

Exterior

Undeniably upscale, the X5 might fall short in automotive personality, due to relatively bland styling. Any appearance deficits tend to be offset by the X5's refined and spacious cabin, as well as its powertrain and handling capabilities.

Conspicuous up front is BMW's twin kidney grille. Subtle creases highlight the bodysides. The two-piece, power-operated tailgate can serve as a temporary seat when parked for an outdoor event.



Although it may hamper loading of larger items, it also prevents cargo from falling out when the rear hatch is opened.

Interior

BMW's conservative design principles apply to the X5's cabin as well as its body. Not only is the interior warmly appealing, it provides abundant space for five adult occupants.

Cargo space is plentiful, totaling 23 cubic feet with rear seatbacks up, expanding to 66 cubic feet when they're folded. The optional third-row seat is best suited for youngsters.

Controls are arranged in a straightforward layout, easy to reach. The driver faces a hefty, triple-spoke steering wheel.

Front seats provide ample support. Multi-contoured seats are the most inviting. Second-row seats promise satisfying space as well as an excellent view, due to the X5's low beltline.

Infotainment centers on a 10.2-inch touchscreen and BMW's newest, excellent version of iDrive, using a touchpad and control knob. Apple CarPlay is available.



Driving Impressions

Depending on model, driving an X5 can be surprisingly pleasurable, augmented by a softly comfortable ride: BMW offers several suspension possibilities. Softest-riding is the base model, which could wallow when cornering at higher speed.

Despite weighing about 4,700 pounds, the base X5 can accelerate to 60 mph in a bit more than six seconds. Not only is the six-cylinder gas engine smooth, its strong power delivery begins as soon as the gas pedal is touched. As expected, the quiet V8 version is notably quicker.

Diesel X5s might be in short supply, but the xDrive35d is powerful and refined, as well as fuel-efficient. A larger price premium (\$4,250) applies to the xDrive40e hybrid. When fully charged, it can go 14 miles on electric power alone. In automatic mode, the gas engine usually remains off at speeds below 45 mph.

For substantially greater stability when cornering, plus confidence on curvy roads, an adaptive suspension is optional. An M Sport package firms up the suspension and enhances control further yet.

Naturally, 567-horsepower X5 M is the choice for full-bore performance, coupling race-track potential with capability for daily driving. Brakes are heartier, and the suspension firmer yet.

An X5 might look ready for off-road treks, but that's not its main mission. All-wheel drive (xDrive) works nicely on snow-covered roads and milder journeys past the pavement.



Fuel economy is about as expected. The 2017 X5 xDrive35i was EPA-rated at 18/24 mpg City/Highway, or 20 mpg Combined. With rear-wheel drive, the sDrive35i edges up to 18/25/21 mpg. The diesel xDrive35d earns an impressive 23/29/25 mpg estimate.

The hybrid xDrive40e has been EPA-rated at 24 mpg combined, but 56 MPGe (equivalent), based on the amount of energy required to supply the electricity.

The xDrive50i's V8 guzzles, EPA-rated at 15/21 mpg City/Highway, or 17 mpg Combined. Even thirstier is the X5 M, rated at just 14/19/16 mpg. Each X5 has stop/start, which can shut off the engine at stoplights. Early BMW start/stop operation could be annoying, but the current version is less noticeable than some similar systems.

Final Word

The BMW X5 delivers premium surroundings, ample features, and BMW performance. Options add greatly to the purchase price.

Driving impressions by Andrew Ganz, The Car Connection. James M. Flammang contributed to this report.