



Press Information
08 October 2012

The ultimate go-kart feeling: The MINI Coupé.

In pursuit of extreme driving enjoyment – a test drive with MINI
Trophy champion Jürgen Schmarl.

Munich. In a sense, the big rear hatch is symbolic – because the MINI Coupé is big in so many other ways as well. With its flamboyant styling and ultra-sporty driving qualities, the MINI Coupé has set new standards for driving enjoyment in the premium small-car segment. It's now over a year since the two-seater made its first public appearance in the 24-hour endurance race on the Nürburgring North Loop, and since then the MINI Coupé has gone on to shine in normal road driving, too, with unbeatable agility and thrilling cornering performance. The MINI Coupé is a sports-minded individualist ready to advertise its hallmark driving character at a moment's notice, whether on the track or on the road. And nobody knows that character better than racing driver Jürgen Schmarl, newly crowned MINI Trophy 2012 champion. The Austrian driver has been in on the story right from the start. He was at the wheel of the MINI John Cooper Works Coupé Endurance in that first ever race outing through the "Green Hell" of the Nürburgring. Now the 38-year-old has been putting the top-powered production model, the MINI John Cooper Works Coupé, to the test as well.

In racing, success depends more on having the best overall package because it takes a whole range of features working together to produce that crucial extra advantage on the finishing straight. As a successful racing driver, Jürgen Schmarl is well aware how important all these details are and how each in its own way affects the driving character of the vehicle. Suspension calibration, weight balance, body structure, aerodynamics – all these factors play their part. A direct comparison between the four-seater MINI and the MINI Coupé proves the point. "On paper, there's little to choose between the classic body version and the Coupé," says Schmarl, "but when you're battling it out on the track, the difference really makes itself felt."

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It can't be anything to do with the engine, because the engine is the same in both the MINI John Cooper Works and the MINI John Cooper Works Coupé: a 1.6-litre four-cylinder 155 kW/211 hp engine with twin-scroll turbocharging, direct petrol injection and variable valve timing. Maximum torque is 260 Newton metres, which can be increased for short periods to 280 Newton metres using the overboost function. The other engine versions too – in the MINI Cooper Coupé (90 kW/122 hp), MINI Cooper S Coupé (135 kW/184 hp) and MINI Cooper SD Coupé (105 kW/143 hp) – are the same as in the corresponding four-seater MINI variants.

Despite its identical engine power, however, the two-seater model is always a nose ahead in the 0 to 100 km/h (62 mph) sprint. The MINI John Cooper Works Coupé completes the dash in 6.4 seconds (MINI John Cooper Works: 6.5 seconds). There is also a small difference in top speed, where the MINI John Cooper Works Coupé reaches 240 km/h (149 mph), as opposed to 238 km/h (148 mph) for the classic version. And what these facts and figures don't reveal is that the MINI Coupé has an altogether punchier temperament than the MINI – not only in the sprint from a standing start but also going into the first corners. With its extremely responsive steering and excellent stability, the two-seater offers the hallmark MINI go-kart feeling in its most intensive form. Even the interior contributes to the uncompromisingly sporty driving experience. The absence of rear seats, and the low roof accentuated by the oval recesses in the roof liner, create a sports car ambience which instantly triggers the desire to make good use of the MINI Coupé's potential for extreme driving enjoyment.

The measurable edge of the MINI Coupé in terms of sprinting performance and top speed is first and foremost down to reduced drag. The more sharply raked A-pillars and windscreen and the strikingly low roofline bring the MINI John Cooper Works Coupé's overall height down to just 1,385 millimetres, with a corresponding reduction in the drag area. Further contributions are made by a



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precisely configured aerodynamics concept that includes an innovatively designed roof spoiler. This spoiler is fully integrated into the styling of the helmet roof and has an opening in the centre which allows the air flow over the roof to be appropriately directed, depending on speed, either down over the rear window or to the rear spoiler. The MINI Coupé is also equipped with an active rear spoiler. Integrated in the boot lid, this spoiler pops up automatically when the MINI Coupé reaches a speed of 80 km/h (50 mph). The active rear spoiler optimises the aerodynamic balance between the front and rear axles. When travelling at top speed, it produces something like 40 kilograms of extra downforce.

The optimised aerodynamics improve high-speed traction and at the same time enhance stability during high-speed cornering. The same goes for the two-seater's specific weight balance, which is largely down to its atypical body structure. The MINI Coupé also features extra bodysheath stiffening at the rear and extra-sturdy side sills. This means that the overall torsional stiffness of the body is even higher than that of the MINI hatchback. At the same time innovative features to improve pedestrian protection and special body stiffening measures at the front of the vehicle result in a weight distribution which has major benefits for vehicle dynamics. The slight increase in front axle load rating compared with the MINI increases traction at the drive wheels, and helps to ensure that the engine power is effortlessly translated into sporty acceleration. Meanwhile, stiffening measures in the lower regions of the body, together with a reduced overall height, result in a lower centre of gravity. In conjunction with the high level of body stiffness on the MINI Coupé, this also enhances agility and ensures precise handling control.

To ensure these individual advantages work together to optimal effect, the suspension technology must be meticulously adapted to the engine power, the weight balance and the aerodynamic characteristics.



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The MINI Coupé's specific springing and damping system further enhances its extremely sporty driving qualities. Sturdier anti-roll bars at the rear also play their part. The carefully calibrated suspension reduces body roll on corners and further improves the responsiveness and precision of the Electric Power Steering.

The Dynamic Stability Control (DSC) system has likewise been specially adapted to the MINI Coupé's distinctive character. Its specific suspension technology, weight balance and aerodynamic characteristics all influence the lateral acceleration forces during hard cornering, and therefore require careful modifications to the DSC control unit. The upshot is an excellent balance between maximum driving enjoyment and top-level active safety.

The overall MINI Coupé package – comprising engine power, suspension technology, weight balance and aerodynamics – provides the most intensive expression to date of the trademark MINI go-kart feeling. Racing driver Jürgen Schmarl sees these distinctive characteristics of the two-seater as heavily inspired by motor sport. "The MINI Coupé is a natural-born sporting machine which is even more responsive, more agile and more precise in its reflexes than the MINI Hatch," he says. On a direct comparison, and particularly under sporty driving, the differences are significant. From the moment he slipped into the driving seat of the Coupé for the Nürburgring 24 Hours, Schmarl was hooked. "I've always had a very close and successful relationship with the MINI John Cooper Works Challenge, but the first time I got to drive the MINI John Cooper Works Coupé Endurance it won me over immediately. I would happily have spent the whole MINI Trophy season driving it."



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The BMW Group

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In 2011, the BMW Group sold about 1.67 million cars and more than 113,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax for the financial year 2011 was euro 7.38 billion on revenues amounting to euro 68.82 billion. At 31 December 2011, the BMW Group had a workforce of approximately 100,000 employees.

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