



2017-18 MAZDA CX-5 GRAND TOURING AWD

*Sophistication &
Satisfaction at a
Surprising Price*

When you drive a Mazda CX-5, you realize two things: First, they're pretty popular, at least in New England. And then, after a few days, you begin to wonder why there aren't even more of them. The answer may be that because from 2015—which was the last time I drove one—to 2017, Mazda has improved this vehicle in a lot of small ways. For 2018, the process continues: active safety equipment is now standard, two of the engine's four cylinders go to sleep on the highway for fuel economy, etc.

This is a midsize sport-ute, which is about the hottest niche in the car market, and the competition for sales is ferocious. On paper the Mazda doesn't stand out: It's a same-old, same-old two-row, five-seat crossover with a four-cylinder engine—this one cranks out 187 horsepower and 185 pound-feet of torque—and a 6-speed automatic transmission that can also be shifted manually. As it happens, the CX-5 isn't the fastest or the cushiest or the cheapest or the most expensive or even the most fuel-efficient in its price class—but it just might be the best one.

Our road-tester was a top-of-the-line CX-5 Grand Touring version with all-wheel drive and the optional Premium Package. This means it had the new safety systems—like emergency braking and lane-keeping—plus

an unusually nice interior, radar cruise control, a power tailgate and e-brake, and all the digital doodads that our kids love.

Even a head-up display, which shows the vehicle's speed and the local speed limit as well as satnav directions. Not only that, but everything is in the right place and everything looks and feels way above average.

So what's average? The average price for a new car sold in the US today is \$34,000 and change. By that yardstick, our CX-5 should cost at least \$38,000, or even more. But an AWD Grand Touring model starts at less than \$32,000, including delivery, and with options ours still stickers for only \$34,085. That's value.

I can't find anything to complain about here. I also can't point to any one or two things that really stand out—but this because everything stands out. It feels like Mazda's engineers made a thousand smart decisions that resulted in a thousand subtle details that all together add up to an outstanding vehicle.

Mazda has two other SUVs too: The CX-3, which is smaller, and a bigger, three-row model called the CX-9. If these other



**MSRP \$30,945;
as driven \$34,755
(2017)**

Two other trim levels (Sport, Touring, with FWD or AWD) from \$24,150 to \$27,515 + \$1,095 delivery

PLUS: Lively, confident handling and serene comfort; near-luxury content & cabin (especially for the price); tremendous value and satisfaction

MINUS: Would an 8-speed transmission improve gas MPG still more?

two are as good as this one, I don't know why Mazda isn't the size of Toyota.

Well, I do know why. Compared to Toyota, Mazda is almost a boutique brand; if they were European, they would've been Saab, and look what happened to Saab. So listen, Mazda: Stay independent. Don't let the bean-counters take over. And keep doing what you're doing.



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