

# Packaging wonder by Joe Sage

If you may have missed this one at its birth, it's understandable, as the Mazda CX-30 was introduced in late 2019 as a 2020 model—just in time for pandemic lockdowns and all the rest. Though officially a subcompact crossover, this nifty unit is slotted between the outgoing CX-3 and CX-5, the latter one of their most popular vehicles for years.

This will be the last time you ever think of the CX-30 as a subcompact, once you get inside.

You will also get used to the new double-digit alphanumeric naming scheme, the introduction of which is overlapping the departure of single-digit models. (The CX-5 is the only one remaining. Apart from that, this is now joined by a CX-50 and CX-90.) Though with a strikingly high and capable stance (featuring eight inches of ground clearance), the CX-30 also has a lower profile than the others, putting it solidly on the crossover path, leaning toward

their only current sedan and hatchback, still called the Mazda3. (The ever-popular MX-5 Miata also remains.) The double-digits first appeared on electrified models, currently used on the plug-in version of their biggest SUV, the CX-90 PHEV.

The disruptions in the world over the past few years have made much of this seem to quietly happen in background, which has probably helped the whole evolution wash over pretty transparently—successful change with continuity, as planned.

The CX-30 also arrives several years into Mazda's declared move into a more premium niche, though without pretense or expense, a fine niche indeed. As shown at right, there are five builds with a 191-hp powertrain, mostly in the \$20s, and even the two 250-hp turbos (when using optional premium fuel) are in the lower-to-mid \$30s.

Ours is the top of the two higher-horsepower

turbo trims. As it runs on regular gas, if you prefer, that power is 227 horses, not all that much more than the 191 in the rest of the series (which is a five percent increase this year), although its torque approaches double that of the non-turbo.

The CX-30 turbo has power, acceleration and shifts that are plenty satisfying, all with an equally satisfying soundtrack (ours included an engine harmonic enhancer as well as larger dual exhaust)—and all while achieving a healthy 30 mpg highway (The smaller engine is three points higher on highway and four for city and combined ratings.)

All trims have the same SKY-ACTIV-DRIVE 6-speed automatic with easy-to-switch sport and manual modes by the shifter—all, as always, well implemented in the Mazda, though this is strong and quick enough right out of the box (as things should be) that we didn't really need them.

One of our favorite details on Mazda is their manumatic control, one of the very few that you pull toward you to shift up, push away to shift

down. This is contrary to the majority, but to us is correct—the same as climbing or descending in an airplane (and we're not even pilots, but it's ergonomically logical) or akin to doing biceps curls with weights at the gym.

Though rated in the subcompact category, this small crossover has big insides—legroom is well above 40 inches up front, its other dimensions ample even for a larger vehicle. Cargo volume is even higher than we might have expected, well more than a trunk even with seats up. Its 34.8-foot turning circle (a favorite feature of ours, when we find it) is notably tight and accurate. This is a package tailor made for hustling through errands.

We had our CX-30 while the weather was still quite hot, and while the interior feels spacious and the engine powerful, they are efficient enough that the cabin was cooling off by our first corner.

Ours was nicely optioned, including side mirrors with preset-backup in reverse and 12-speaker Bose premium audio. This build runs a little more than 50 percent higher than a base trim, but even that is still just a little over \$10 grand difference.

The CX-30 uses a torsion beam rear suspen-

sion, which may seem surprising in the face of the rest of its applied technologies. However, we only noticed this in one circumstance, speedbumps, and really only a time or two even then. The plus sides presumably are generally notable weight savings and that valuable interior space.

The CX-30 is not a major off-highway vehicle, but then again—with our eye on that high ground clearance—we wonder what a custom builder might do with a one-off of one of these. About the only thing you can't do with this is tow.

Available in seven colors, including Mazda's incomparable Soul Red, ours in Snowflake White Pearl Mica maximized the effect of the black rocker panel trim, which in turns maximizes the stance from its eight-inch ground clearance. As tame as any daily driver could be, the CX-30 also looks always ready to pounce. And it is.

Our logbooks tend to be full of nitpicks of varying importance or lack thereof—just the nature of the process. This one's notes, however, included such phrases as, "man, this just does everything right"; "this one's a keeper" and "a pretty solid A-plus for performance, content and value. ■

## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY ..Salamanca, Guanajuato, Mexico  
ENGINE/TRANSMISSION .....Mexico / Japan  
PARTS CONTENT .....Mexico 65%,  
Japan 25%, US/Canada 5%

PASSENGERS .....five  
ENGINE .....Skyactiv-G 2.5 turbo 4-cylinder,  
advanced dir inj 16v VVT alum alloy

HP/TORQUE .....(prem) 250 hp / 320 lb-ft  
.....(reg) 227 hp / 310 lb-ft

COMPRESSION RATIO .....10.5:1  
TRANSMISSION .....Skyactiv-Drive 6-spd  
electronically controlled sport mode auto

DRIVETRAIN .....i-ACTIV all-wheel-drive  
SUSPENSION .....F: MacPherson strut,  
stblzr bar; R: torsion beam

STEERING .....elec power asst rack & pinion  
BRAKES .....F: 11.6 vented; R: 11.9 solid

WHEELS .....18x7J black metallic alum alloy  
TIRES .....P215/55 R18 all-season

LENGTH / WHEELBASE .....173.0 / 104.4 in  
GROUND CLEARANCE .....8.0 in

TURNING CIRCLE .....curb-to-curb 34.8 ft  
HEADROOM (F/R).....37.8 / 38.3 in

LEGROOM (F/R).....41.7 / 36.3 in  
CARGO CAPACITY .....20.2 / 45.2 cu.ft

WEIGHT .....3525 lb  
FUEL / CAPACITY .....reg or prem / 12.7 gal  
MPG .....22/30/25 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE .....\$35,400  
TURBO PREMIUM + PREMIUM PLUS: engine har-

monic enhancer, black heated reverse-tilt memory side mirrors (auto dim driver's side), turbo badge, shark fin antenna, wiper deicer, larger dual exhaust, bright finish engine start button and glove box lid knob, frameless auto dim interior rear mirror, heated steering wheel, Bose 12-speaker premium audio (w SiriusXM/Traffic trial), 360° view monitor, parking sensors front/rear, smart brake support rear, rear cross traffic braking, traffic jam assist, black wheels, adaptive headlights

.....incl  
PAINT: Snowflake White Pearl Mica.....395  
REAR BUMPER GUARD: stainless.....135

DESTINATION CHARGE .....1275  
TOTAL .....\$37,205

## 2023 MAZDA CX-30 LINEUP

SKYACTIV-G 2.5L : 191 HP / 186 LB-FT  
2.5 S .....\$22,950  
2.5 S Select .....25,400  
2.5 S Preferred .....28,220  
2.5 S Carbon Edition .....29,290  
2.5 S Premium .....31,060

SKYACTIV-G 2.5L TURBO : 250 HP / 320 LB-FT  
2.5 Turbo Premium .....33,800  
2.5 Turbo Premium Plus .....35,400

