

# To thine own self be true

**Purity of concept endures** BY JOE SAGE

**M**azda Miata has been around for quite awhile—since 1989, some 35 years, but it feels like longer—during which they’ve toyed with the basic concept very little. In its original and purest form, it’s a little two-seat soft-top ragtop (with a manual transmission available), a formula proven by European classics of prior decades. Not intended to be

a supercar competitor nor powerhouse performer, Miata is affordable top-down fun.

There was a brief time when they tried to go pure alphanumeric, simply “MX-5,” but everybody still called it Miata, and Mazda quickly relented. They’ve added a retractable hardtops and fastbacks to the lineup (appealing to some for security, durability and so on), but the ragtop endures—and in fact dominates.

You can’t go wrong. If you want to call it a Miata, MX-5 or both, you can. If you want a soft top, you can, or if you want a retractable hardtop (currently the RF retractable fast-back), you can. If you want to shift for yourself, you can. If you want an automatic, you can. Whichever way you go, you still get to open up that top, hit the open road and enjoy

—at prices starting in the \$20s.

There are three trim levels (Sport, Club, Grand Touring), all as soft tops and two also as retractable hardtops (Club, Grand Touring), all with manual transmissions, or with automatic optional on Grand Touring, all with the same 181-hp SKYACTIV-G 2.0L four-cylinder.

Our sample arrived at a great time, as temperatures were just dropping below 100 degrees, which in our upside-down climate signals the approach of convertible season. This is the top-trim Grand Touring, but still thousands less than if it had an automatic or hardtop—a win-win-win for the purist.

We drove it all we could, heading right out to some of our favorite desert and mountain two-lanes as soon as it arrived, and top down

even with the temperature still 99 degrees.

Though definitely a small car, Miata feels secure even in big traffic. You’re settled in, it’s smooth and steady, holds its line with spot-on accuracy and handles superbly. This does not imply limo-like luxury—you’ll have hands actively on the wheel and shifter, as Miata is lively, engaging and all yours to control.

Did we say small? Out on the open road, it feels as big as you want it to be. You might quickly decide you could drive all day and all night, for hundreds, or thousands, of miles. Nobody would really want to take this back to the garage. And while great even when enjoying just the sound of the engine and the wind, Miata also has surprisingly good audio for an open car. Fun, fun, fun.

We don’t hypermile—far from it—but had a readout of over 27 mpg for a combination of metro grid and aggressive open road. Not bad.

Legroom is statistically generous, just over 43 inches. As with most two-seaters, a tall person may feel maxed out at first, yet soon comfortable for the duration. Along with height may come big feet, requiring extra precision with placement—pedals are smallish and tight together. Again, you get acclimated. Driving shoes could be good.

Cabin storage is minimal, or at least very efficient, but you quickly get creative. Soft top operation is manual—nothing faster than that (and windows are one-touch down, although not up). Mazda points out the tight pedals as a great motivation to master heel-and-toe.

We can parse such details as much as you want, but ultimately none of that matters. It’s best just to fire it up, drop the top, shut up and drive. And enjoy. They say MIATA stands for “*Miata Is Always The Answer.*” And this six-speed manual-shift ragtop backs that up. ■

*One colleague, whose opinion we value, suggests Miata may be overdue for a restyling, with this generation pushing 10 years. We hadn’t thought about it until then, generally happy that they don’t often mess with a good thing. But we’ve realized we do favor its rear styling over its front. Mazda has refreshed or replaced most of their lineup in the past couple of years. They’re likely working on this, too.*



## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY .....	Hiroshima, Japan
BODY TYPE .....	monocoque unibody w backbone frame, front/rear suspension
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD .....	Japan / Japan
PARTS CONTENT .....	Japan 85% / US/Can 0%
ENGINE .....	SKYACTIV-G 2.0L w chain-driven DOHC 16v w variable intake valve timing, electronic fuel injection, alum/alum
HP/TORQUE .....	181 hp / 151 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO .....	13:1
TRANSMISSION .....	6-spd manual
DRIVETRAIN .....	RWD; asymmetric torque-sensing limited-slip diff (6MT)
SUSPENSION .....	F: dbl wishbone; R: multi-link; monotube Bilstein shocks (6MT)
STEERING .....	dbl pinion elec pwr assist rack & pinion
BRAKES .....	F: 11-in vented w single piston; R: 11-in solid w single-piston alum calipers
WHEELS .....	17x7 aluminum
TIRES .....	Bridgestone P205/45 R17 hi-po sumr
LENGTH / WHEELBASE .....	154.1 / 90.9 in
HEADROOM .....	(soft top) 37.4 in
LEGROOM .....	43.1 in
GROUND CLEARANCE .....	(17-in wheels) 5.32 in
TURNING CIRCLE .....	(curb/wall) 30.8 / 32.9 ft
CARGO CAPACITY .....	(soft top) 4.59 cu.ft
WEIGHT .....	(6MT soft top) 2368 lb
WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION .....	(6MT soft top) 52:48
FUEL / CAPACITY .....	min 87 rec 91 / 11.89 gal
MPG .....	(6MT) 26/34/29 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE (2024) .....	\$34,285
PAINT: Snowflake White Pearl .....	450
INTERIOR: Tan Nappa Leather .....	300
DESTINATION CHARGE .....	1165
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>\$36,200</b>

## 2024 MAZDA MX-5 MIATA LINEUP

.....	SOFT TOP	.....RF
Sport 6MT .....	\$28,985	---
Club 6MT .....	32,485	---
CLUB: BREMBO-BBS-RECARO .....	37,285	\$40,210
Grand Touring 6MT .....	34,285	37,010
Grand Touring 6AT .....	35,205	37,980

