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2015 Mazda MX-5 Miata Review

By Jeff Ross on [Autoevolution](#)

Our test car specification:

2015 Mazda MX-5 Miata Grand Touring

Unless you've been living under a rock lately, you already know that one of the most highly anticipated cars coming out this year is the all-new 2016 Mazda MX-5 Miata. Between all of the high-powered sports cars and the high-volume utility vehicles making their way into the headlines, the Miata holds its own and probably deserves all the hype surrounding it. And what's not to look forward to when sexy looks, a modern powertrain and a lower curb weight are all promised?

Before we're able to usher in the next generation of open-top, track-slaying goodness, though, Mazda gave us one last chance to say goodbye to the current "NC" Miata by dropping it off in our driveway for a week. A send off for what has been the best enthusiast car – dollar for dollar – on the market since 2006. Sadly, what will likely be our last encounter with a NC Miata involved no track time or twisty South California roads, but it did come during a week of perfect Florida winter that provided plenty of top-down weather and lots of wide-open-throttle enjoyment.

Currently celebrating its 25th birthday, the Mazda Miata hasn't really changed all that much since 1989. It is still a small, open-top two-seat roadster that can be used interchangeably as a tossable track car or a daily driver. Right off the showroom floor, the Mazda Miata can go out onto just about any road course and embarrass cars that cost more and have extra power, and it does so relying on an almost evenly balanced weight distribution and perfectly tuned suspension. Balance is what the Miata does best.

"On paper, the 2015 Mazda Miata might be easy to criticize for some with its low-powered engine, small brakes and few, if any, creature comforts, but the key to its success is the low curb weight."

Tipping the scales in at 2,511 pounds (1,138 kg), the Miata just doesn't need much power to motivate its mass. As such, the 2.0-liter DOHC inline four-cylinder does an excellent job with an output of 167 hp (125 kW) and 140 lb-ft (190 Nm). Pull out a stop watch and the Miata's 0-60 is in the mid-six-second range (far from groundbreaking in today's terms), but being so low to the ground with the top down and the wind in your face renders the heavy acceleration feeling phenomenal.

One key area where we are looking forward to the next Miata is fuel economy. The 2015 model year comes with EPA estimates of 21 mpg city, 28 mpg highway and 24 mpg in combined driving. Short gearing ends up with sixth gear coming at about 45 mph, which resulted in a pretty impressive in-town fuel economy for us at just under 22 mpg city, but we also noticed that the gearing can also bring excessive shifts in stop-and-go driving. On the highway, there's no doubt the Miata

MX-5 Review continued.....

is capable of hitting its 28-mpg estimate, but with the wide-open road ahead of us, the top down and the sun out, we were a little more enthusiastic on the throttle returning closer to 26 mpg highway. In an age when the **Porsche 911** and **Chevrolet Corvette** also have fuel economy estimates in this vicinity, there's no reason to see why the next-gen Miata won't be able to hit highway numbers well into the 30-mpg range.

If there's one word that could describe driving the Miata, it would be direct. Every aspect of the Miata is the perfect marriage of car and driver. The seats might not be the most advanced or the most comfortable, but they are supportive and give a good feel of the road. The 2015 MX-5 Miata still uses hydraulic power steering, so feedback is plentiful and the overall steering is very responsive. The same can also be said for the Miata's brakes. Even though the brake rotors are small (just 11.4 inches up front and 11 inches at the rear), the Mazda Miata is definitely built for the track with brakes that can stop this car in surprisingly short order.

Perhaps the most direct thing about the Miata is its transmission. The Miata also offers a five-speed manual and a six-speed automatic, but the six-speed manual is by far the best way to go. As equipped on our Grand Touring tester, this six-speed gearbox has a short throw and excellent gates. Save for maybe the Honda Civic Si, the Miata's six-speed might be one of the most entertaining transmissions to shift among affordable sports cars.

As awesome as this transmission is, the clutch is still light enough that it works just fine as an everyday driver. There is some delay in the clutch engagement, but knowing that many Miata drivers split time at the track and on the street, we're sure Mazda doesn't get too many complaints about this.

There aren't many fun twisting sections of tarmac in Florida, but that didn't stop us from bombing around along the back roads with the top down and a huge smile on our face. This starts with the low seating position, which might be more like a go-kart than any of today's cars, with your butt sitting just inches above the asphalt. Combine that with the low beltline and the small windshield frame, and the Miata continues to offer one of the best open-air experiences short of a motorcycle.

Of course, there's also a reason why the Miata is also so popular amongst road racers. The balanced weight distribution is a great start, and Miata tops that off with a perfectly tuned chassis. All Miata Grand

Touring trim levels come standard with the Suspension Package that brings a sport-tuned setup with Bilstein shocks and a limited slip differential, but even so, the Miata doesn't beat you up while you're driving. Despite its short wheelbase and low-slung, sport suspension, the 2015 Mazda Miata feels just as confident carving up corners as it does on a leisurely drive to run errands. We can only hope the next-gen Miata exhibits the same dual-purpose traits.

"With the exception of the bug-eyed retractable headlights, the Mazda Miata's styling still has the same recognizable cutesiness as the original."

After doing away with the overtly smiley face found on the early third-gen Miatas, the current car looks about as athletic as this model can get, but the 2016 Miata is going to be a stark departure in terms of styling bringing a breath of fresh air to the sports car segment. As much as we tend to like the new KODO-inspired Miata, we're definitely going to miss the current car's widely flared fender arches, oval taillights and rounded rump.

Filling in the wheel wells were 17-inch aluminum V-spoke wheels wrapped in Bridgestone high-performance summer tires, but the most eye-catching visual cue that stood out on this car was its convertible top. True to form (and a fitting model with which to bid farewell to the Miata), this tester was equipped with the manually operated soft cloth top dressed up in Spicy Mocha, which perfectly accented the Meteor Gray paint job. The manual cloth top is hassle free in that it can be raised and lowered with one hand and done so while seated in the driver's seat. Release the latch at the top of the windshield header, and you can practically throw the top all the way back. Another latch holds the top in place while folded. Yes, the optional power retractable hard top is cool and all, but it adds weight, cost and takes much longer to close. It might be a viable option in colder areas, but the cloth top does a great job on its own of keeping the interior fairly quiet when it is raised.

The biggest area where the 2015 Mazda Miata shows its age, it is the interior. The cabin design was far from cutting-edge when the NC Miata debuted, and while it is still simple and practical, there is none of the cool tech or gadgets that are found in sporty cars. There's no navigation system, no push-button start, the cabin is surrounded by hard plastic and the trunk is small. At the same time, it might be a little refreshing that Mazda has kept the Miata's interior so basic at a time where entry-level compact cars can now come with navigation and

MX-5 Review continued.....

fancy backup cameras. The Miata's backup camera is putting the top down and looking over your shoulder.

Being the Grand Touring, this Miata did come with standard tech included in the Premium Package such as HID headlights, keyless entry and starting, Bluetooth capability. Other than that, the only thing really to write home about in regards to the little roadster's interior is the leather seats and the faux leather on the door panels – both in the same Spicy Mocha as the cloth top. The GT also gets a leather-wrapped parking brake lever, steering wheel and shift knob.

As is the case with any sports car, there are obviously plenty of compromises one must make when driving a Miata. For starters, the trunk offers just 5.3 cubic feet (150 liters) of cargo space, but Mazda has least provided a larger than expected opening meaning you can easily access and use almost all of the available space. You can fit a couple overnight bags back there or several grocery bags or even a large bag of dog food (trust us, we did it!). Interior cargo is decent, however, with a storage compartment between the seats and a good-sized glovebox (both lockable) to keep your stuff safe and secure.

There's also the issue of the cup holders, which are essentially rendered useless on Miata models equipped with the manual transmission. With anything larger than a pop can in these cup holders, it is difficult to comfortably reach the shifter, but even so, doing so removes the padded arm rest that makes shifting even more of a pleasure. In all honesty, if you really need your Miata to offer you cup holders, you might want to consider opting for the automatic.

“Driving enjoyment and track domination might be the cornerstones of the Mazda Miata, but the ideals behind this little roadster revolve around value.”

It's still amazing that for the same price as a typical mid-size sedan, you can park a brand-new Mazda Miata in your driveway. Sure, it doesn't have the practicality of a sedan or crossover, but in the sports car arena, you just can't argue with a base price of \$23,970. Even in the loaded-up Grand Touring trim level, the Miata is still priced reasonably at \$30,385. In this market of small, fun cars, perhaps only the Scion FR-S, **Fiat 500 Abarth**, **Ford Fiesta ST** and

Volkswagen Golf GTI can come close to the level of fun exhibited by the Miata – the Scion can match the Miata's rear-drive layout while the Fiat comes closest to offering a convertible top with its retracting cloth roof panel. The Miata may not have a Boxer engine, an incredible exhaust note or the added useable space of a hatchback, but it is in a class of its own when it comes to pure driving enjoyment.

Now, it is still possible that Miata drivers will be heckled by the guy driving a coal-rolling Super Duty or shunned by the Corvette and Porsche 911 owners at the track, but few cars can provide this kind of smile-inducing whimsical fun. Besides, anyone who makes fun of and/or knocks the Miata (past or present) has obviously never driven one. As for the future of fun, there is still some time before the fourth-gen (ND) Mazda Miata hits the streets, but things are looking good with a curb weight estimated at closer to 2,200 pounds and newer Skyactiv engines under the hood.

As much fun as it is to look forward to the Miata's future, our time with this 2015 Mazda MX-5 showed us how much this car still has to offer. After 25 years, the Miata still has what it takes to earn respect and admiration from car enthusiasts around the world. When it comes to the age-old question of “which car would you buy for \$100,000?,” the Miata is still at or near the top of our list. New or used, it doesn't matter, pick up a roadster and then spend the rest of the money you saved on a membership at a country club race track. We can only hope the next-gen Miata will carry that torch.



**Buckeye Miata Club
Monthly Meeting Minutes
March 5, 2015 6:30 PM**

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>I. Guests or New Members Intro – 34 members in attendance</p> <p>II. New Paid Members Since November Meeting – Mike or Brenda Fisher – Jim Miles – 95 white</p> <p>III. Miata Quiz – Buckeye Miata club became a full independent club in 2001</p> <p>IV. After Meeting Dinner tonight – Ruby Tuesday's - Powell</p> <p>V. Treasurer's report – Kincer – report was read and accepted, See secure page on website for details</p> <p>VI. Old Business and Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. BMC Car Talk and Coffee – Rhodes – Sat. Feb 21 – cancelled due to bad weather b. DOTM – Gahanna Grill – Riner/Lester – Tuesday – Feb 24 – 20 members showed up c. Chicago Auto Show– Calhoun – 1 new miata no info d. Valentine's Day Brunch – Polaris Grill February 15- Calhoun – about 20 members <p>VII. New Business and Upcoming Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. BMC Car Talk and Coffee March 7 everyone welcome – Rhodes b. DOTM – Gill – Sat Mar 14 - McDorman Museum / Shades - details will be published on website c. Game Night – Sat Mar 21 – Nieman – details to follow d. Columbus International Auto Show – March 19-22 e. Performance Auto Spa – Open House and Detailing Seminar – Saturday, April 18th – open house for general public f. "Cruise Hocking" car enthusiasts event – K. Claus – May 29, 30, 31 – details to follow | <p>VIII 2015 Autocross update – B. Claus – 11 events this year</p> <p>IX Guest Speaker for April – Chuck Ashton and Susan Jones – Eric Jones Memorial River Run</p> <p>X Next Meeting Date – Thursday, April 2, 2015</p> <p>XI Restaurant Selection Next Meeting – DeBella's on Tuttle Crossing</p> <p>XII Open Discussion</p> <p>X. 50/50 Drawing – Total \$61.00 – \$30.50 to Cal Bardon</p> |
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2015 Buckeye Miata Club Officers

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>President:</i> | Kevin Rhodes |
| <i>Treasurer:</i> | Bob Kincer |
| <i>Secretary:</i> | Dusty Rhoades |
| <i>Social Chairperson:</i> | Bill Koch |
| <i>Membership:</i> | Mike & Brenda Fisher |
| <i>Historian:</i> | Kate Koch |
| <i>Newsletter Editor:</i> | Chris Riner |
| <i>Competition:</i> | Brian Claus |
| <i>Insurance:</i> | Kevin Claus |
| <i>Webmaster:</i> | Jim Hayter |
| <i>Photographer:</i> | John Ness |

BMC 2015 Calendar of Events

March

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| 14 th | Thurs | McDorman Museum / Shades DOTM | Gill |
| 19 th -22 nd | Thur-Sun | Columbus Internat'l Auto Show | |
| 21 st | Sat | Game Night | Nieman |

April

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------|---|---------------------|
| 2 nd | Thurs | Monthly Meeting | |
| 5 th | Sun | Easter Sunday | |
| ? 11 th | Sat | Spring Road Rally | Johnson |
| 18 th | Sat | Performance Auto Spa BMC Detailing Day | Rhodes |
| 23 rd | Thur | DOTM-Flanagan's | Riner/Lester |
| 25 th | Sat | Rob Young Clifton Mill Run (rain Date – May 2 nd) | Cooper |

May

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------|---|-------------------------|
| 2 nd | Sat | Rain Date Clifton Mill | |
| 7 st | Thurs | Monthly Meeting | |
| 9 th | Sat | BMC 25 th Anniversary Celebration Burr Oak | Gill/Koch/Fisher |
| 10 th | Sun | Mother's Day | |
| ? 16 th | Sat | Test and Tune Autocross Circleville | |
| ? 17 th | Sun | Test and Tune Autocross Circleville – BACK UP DATE | |
| ? 17 th | Sun | British Car Show–Quaker Steak & Lube | |
| 23 rd | Sat | Eric Jones Memorial River Run | Koch |
| 24 th | Sun | Indy 500 Party | Johnson |
| 24 th | Sun | Autocross Event 1 | |
| (counterclockwise) | | may change due to Indy 500 | |
| 25 th | Mon | Memorial Day | |

May continued

| | | | |
|--------------------|-----|---|-----------------|
| 30 th | Sat | Hocking Weekend Car enthusiasts meet up | K. Claus |
| ? 30 th | Sat | Autocross Driver's school | Claus |
| ? 31 st | Sun | Autocross Driver's school (backup) | |
| TBD | TBD | DOTM- Dusty Pints | Edwards |

June

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------|---|-----------------|
| 4 th | Thurs | Monthly Meeting | |
| ? 6 th | Sat | Indian Lake Drive and Party | Nieman |
| ? 7 th | Sun | Autocross Event 2 | Claus |
| 13 th | Sat | Fairfield County Fun Rally | Fisher |
| 21 st | Sun | Father's Day | |
| ? 20 th -22 nd | Fri-Sun | Marietta Madness | |
| 27 th | Sat | Cobra's In London | |
| 27 th | Sat | Outing at Avery's after Cobra's in London | Avery |
| 28 th | Sun | Cobra Autocross | |
| 25 th -28 th | Fri-Sun | Mid Ohio Vintage Gran Prix | |
| TBD | TBD | DOTM | Jennings |

July

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|--|----------------|
| 2 nd | Thurs | Monthly Meeting | |
| 3 rd | Fri | America Celebration In Upper Sandusky | Bardon |
| 4 th | Thurs | July 4 th Holiday | |
| 10 th | Fri | Arthritis Auto Show Rolling Legends Tour | |
| 10 th | Fri | Arthritis Auto Show Cruise In | Langley |
| 11 th | Sat | Arthritis Auto Show | Langley |
| ? 12 th | Sun | Autocross Event 3 | Claus |
| 18 th | Sat | Kincer's Pool Party | Kincer |
| 18 th | Sat | Pittsburg Car Show & British Car day | |
| 19 th | Sun | Pittsburg Vintage Car Race Day | |
| 20 th | Mon | DOTM Waldo G&R | Koch |
| 25 th | Sat | West liberty Ice Cream Run | Peyton |
| TBD | TBD | Soine Vineyards Night | Peyton |
| 31 st -Aug 2 nd | Fri- Sun | Mid-Ohio Honda Indy 200 | |

August

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|--|---------|--|-----------------|
| 1 st or 2 nd | Thurs | Corn Picking Clemmons Farm | Clemmons |
| 6 th | Thurs | Monthly Meeting | |
| ? 8 th | Sat | Hocking Hills Drive then cookout at K Claus Residence | K Claus |
| ? 15 th | Sat | Stockport Drive | Clemmons |
| ? 16 th | Sun | Autocross Event 4 | Claus |
| 16 th | Sun | DOTM Pioneer Mill Tiffin | LeBlanc |
| 22 nd | Sat | Meet in the middle Mohican State Park event with North Coast Miata | Rhodes |
| ? 30 th | Sun | Italian Car Gathering Dublin | |
| 31 st –Sept 2 nd | Mon-Wed | Put-In-Bay Vintage Road Race Reunion | |

2015 Calendar of events is continued on the next page!

BMC 2015 Calendar of Events

continued

September

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|----------------|
| 3 rd | Thurs | Monthly Meeting | |
| 5 th | Sat | Picnic Blendon Woods Metro Park | Calhoun |
| 6 th | Sat | All Horse Parade and Cookout | Billow |
| 7 th | <i>Mon</i> | <i>Labor Day</i> | |
| ? 12 th | Sat | Stebelton Collection | Calhoun |
| ? 13 th | Sun | Autocross Event 5 | Claus |
| 19 th | Sat | Millies Pie Run | Fisher |
| 24 th -27 th | Thur- Sun | Fall Getaway NC Trip | Nieman |
| 27 th | Sun | Makeup or Fun Event | Claus |
| TBD | | DOTM | Gill |

October

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------|--|---------------|
| 1 st | Thurs | Monthly Meeting | |
| 10 th | Sat | Road Apple Tour (Charm Day) | Kahle |
| 17 th | | Marblehead Lighthouse Festival | OPEN |
| ? 25 th | Sun | Autocross Awards Dinner Hocking Hills | Claus |
| TBD | | Byers Appreciation Lunch/Dinner | Rhodes |
| TBD | | DOTM | Cooper |

November

| | | | |
|------------------|-------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 5 th | Thurs | Monthly Meeting | |
| 14 th | Sat | Car Talk | Rhodes |
| 26 th | <i>Thur</i> | <i>Thanksgiving</i> | |
| TBD | | DOTM | Billow |

December

| | | | |
|------------------|------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 3 rd | Thurs | Christmas Party | Peyton |
| 5 th | Sat | Big 10 Championship Party | Johnson |
| 8 th | Mon | BMC 2016 Planning Meeting | New President |
| 19 th | Sat | Caroling Party | Nieman |
| 25 th | <i>Fri</i> | <i>Christmas Day</i> | |

Please Note: Events in italics are for your information
Names in bold are the individuals who are taking the
lead in the event!

Game Night 2015

Date: Saturday, March 21, 2015

Time: Arrive 7:00 PM - Games begin at 7:30 pm

Place: Jerry and Jane Nieman's Home

What to bring:

- Snack or dessert to share (be creative)
- Drink of choice
- \$3.00 for prizes
- Be ready to have fun and lots of laughs

What is Game Night: If you like to play games, you will love this event. The games are easy and fun and no skill is needed.

If you would like to come and not play, you are more than welcome. Spectators are needed to cheer for the teams.

IMPORTANT!!! We need you to RSVP by Thursday, March 19. Either call us at 614-794-9605 or e-mail. To properly plan for this event we need to know the exact number of participants so the games can be set up and the game charts made. We need at least 16 game players but 20 is best.

If you have come in the past, you know how much fun it is. If you have never participated, give it a try, you may just have fun.

Jane and Jerry

DOTM Shades on the Canal

19 S. High St
Canal Winchester, Ohio 43110
(614) 837-9873

and

Bob McDorman Automobile Museum

45 E Waterloo St
Canal Winchester, Ohio 43110
(614) 837-8388

Come to Shades or McDorman or BOTH

DOTM Shades on the Canal

When: March 14, 2015

Time: 11:30am (No reservations accepted but they said they would try to hold the room to the right. They open at 11:00am on Saturday)

Cost: See menu at shadesrestaurant.com

Short walk to Bob McDorman Automobile Museum (from Shades turn right on E. Waterloo St.)

Please e-mail Sheila or Jerry if you are coming to Shades **BEFORE FRIDAY 3/13/2015** as we would like to give Shades an approximate head count. shmgill2@yahoo.com or jagill2@juno.com

Bob McDorman Automobile Museum

Time: 1:00 to 1:15 (everyone will be on there own, arrive and leave whenever)

Cost: Adult \$10:00
Senior \$7.00

Saturday hours 1:00 – 5:00 No need to e-mail if **ONLY** coming to McDorman's

Web site: bobmcdormanautomuseum.com

Parking for both Shades and McDorman's can be found on the street or in the city lot to the rear of both locations.

Directions: From Columbus take RT 33 toward Lancaster (first street after Gender Rd.) turn right on N. High St. toward Canal Winchester, cross Waterloo St. Shades is on the left, 19 S. High St. If you are meeting the group at McDorman's turn left at E. Waterloo St., McDorman's is on the right, 45 E. Waterloo St.

Miata Services by Scott

- **30K Tune-Up Service (\$325)** new plugs, timing & synth. fluids
- **Basic timing belt Service (\$325)** incl. new Mazda belt & spring
- **60K Full Service (\$675)** incl. 30K service + Std. Timing Belt Service PLUS
 - all drivetrain fluids, brake and clutch fluids, filters, gaskets, checks and lubrications called for by Mazda
 - Add **Water Pump Replacement** to any timing belt service (\$150) new pump, gaskets and coolant
- **Other mechanical work and Accessory Installation** – call for quote (\$35 per hr.)
- **Detailing by Appt**, call for details - can include:
 - Exterior - Paint polishing, swirl removal, touch-ups, wax and more
 - Interiors – carpets steamed, seats cleaned, leather & vinyl treated and more

I'd be glad to discuss any work you may want or need. If you have questions about what I can provide or just about your Miata in general, I'll be glad to help!

(614) 633-7419

8081 Bowfin Rd
Blacklick, OH 43004