

## BMW X4 blends coupe look and SUV practicality

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Brain games have become our latest weapon against cognitive decline.

Publishers, both in digital and print, have been cashing in on our desire to stay sharp with a bevy of books and computer games to exercise our grey matter.

But before pulling out the credit card, consider that BMW offers a free mental workout.

Try memorizing their product lineup.

Encompassing sedans, coupes, gran coupes, gran turismos, cabriolets, wagons, sports activity vehicles, and sports activity coupes – all spread across multiple “Series” and powertrains, the choices are vast.

And that doesn't even take in the less mainstream Z4 roadster, i3 and i8 electric vehicles, three ActiveHybrids and eight categories of high-performance “M” variants.

Pack all that into your cerebral cortex, and before long your synapses will be firing like Stephen Hawking.

But let's drill down and focus on one of the automaker's latest offerings – a fusion of SUV and coupe, combining the benefits and limitations of each.

This summer, the BMW X4 xDrive joined the ranks of a relatively new segment, already plumbéd by its larger and polarizing X6 sibling.

Such vehicles have been criticized for their bulky size and lack of usable space. Fair comment, and when you consider offerings like the ungainly Honda Crosstour, or the more premium (and now defunct) Acura ZDX, their lack of practicality has translated to less than stellar sales.

Which leads me to price. The X6 Sport



Part coupe, part SUV, the 2015 BMW X4 offers a sleek profile and car-like driving dynamics in a more commodious, all-wheel-drive vehicle.

Activity Coupe which starts at \$67,300 and can climb to \$100K or more illustrates how one seems to be paying more for even less.

But the X4, like the others and even some less ‘coupey’ offerings like Lincoln MKC and Range Rover Evoque, is really a niche vehicle. After all, not everybody needs to haul 5,000-pound trailers or heaps of hockey bags. Sometimes it's more about hauling you-know-what.

And on that note, the X4 is in its element.

The base engine is a turbocharged 2.0-litre four cylinder that delivers 241 hp and 258 lb/ft of torque, propelling the X4 xDrive 28i from zero to 100 km/h in 6.4 seconds.

That's pretty quick by any standard.

My tester came with the potent 3.0-litre inline six, also with a twin-scroll turbo, pushing out 300 hp and 300 lb/ft of torque from

a low 1,200 to 1,500 rpm.

Both engines are mated to a rapid-firing eight-speed Steptronic automatic transmission.

I've driven the turbo four in other vehicles, and have found it a willing performer when pushed hard. The turbo six, however, really delivers the goods and in the case of the bulky X4, is rated at 5.5 seconds for the 0-100 km/h sprint.

I didn't perform my own stop watch test, but found acceleration surprisingly brisk for a vehicle that tips the scales at 1,932 kg or 4,259 lbs. There's precious little turbo lag when you plant the pedal, and power builds quickly to near redline when in Sport mode.

Giving the X4 at least some SUV cred is BMW's proven xDrive all-wheel-drive system. And it's good for more than just winter

weather.

Working with Performance Control, standard on the X4, this system uses dynamic stability control to route power to the outside rear wheel, improving traction and directional stability in the turns. With the dynamic damper control set to Sport, this vehicle is adept at carving corners, with minimal body roll.

But that doesn't mean ride is harsh. The X4 is firmer than some of its less performance oriented competitors, but in Comfort mode was quite civilized over rough pavement.

I'm not convinced fuel efficiency is top of mind when purchasing this type of vehicle, but BMW is on the job anyway.

Choose the Eco Pro setting (rather than Sport or Comfort) for a little less fun and up to 20 per cent better fuel economy.

The usual things happen, like softer throttle response and earlier shifting, but Eco Pro also includes a coasting function, which disconnects the drivetrain when you lift off the pedal. And with Navigation System Professional installed, you get additional petrol-saving perks.

Route Ahead Assistant recognizes curves, urban areas, exits and speed limits and advises when to stop accelerating. Eco Pro Route displays the most efficient way there, based on traffic and driver behaviour.

As for the look, not everybody appreciates a bulked-up coupe or slimmed-down SUV – depending on your viewpoint – but this BMW wears it well.

The X4, compared to its X3 SAV stablemate, is longer (14 mm) and lower (37 mm) with muscular shoulders and powerful

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