

# CARGAZING

## Muddying the Waters

### Adventurous CX-50 Continues Selling Alongside Mazda's Similar CX-5

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

From what I can tell, Mazda is intentionally trying to confuse people with its newest small crossover.

It calls its creation the CX-50, not to be mixed up with the CX-5, which dealers still peddle alongside the CX-50 in the same showrooms for roughly the same price.

A better name would be the Befuddle or the Confound. And its name — which implies its replacement will eventually move the decimal again to create the CX-500, followed someday by names that use scientific notation — is only part of the confusion.

For some background, Mazda has spent decades building cars chiefly around one goal: being fun to drive. They're reliable, sure, and a good value, but the thing that really sets Mazdas apart from the pack is the way they feel to people who love driving.

That's why I've long recommended buyers make their first stop at the Mazda store when they want something both emotionally rewarding and logical, sort of like a BMW that doesn't break so often. It's also why I continue to spend a small fortune maintaining and restoring my first-generation Miata, the best car ever made.



The Meridian Edition is designed for people who want to take their Mazda CX-50 off-roading. It comes with all-terrain tires, hood graphics and the ability to add outdoor accessories.

Instead of doubling down on its horse-and-rider “Jinba-ittai” philosophy, though, Mazda is positioning the CX-50 as something ‘Mericans will take off-roading. It uses phrases such as “rugged and capable” and “active lifestyles” to, I suppose, sway Jeep people into the Mazda fold.

I'm not sure that's going to work, though. It's the equivalent of Jeep releasing a sports car they tested at Fuji Speedway and hoping we

Miata people will jump ship.

That's how I find myself in the highly improbable position of testing a Mazda that looks like a Hot Wheels safari truck, complete with paint the color of Sahara sand and a giant roof rack on top.

My tester is called the CX-50 Meridian Edition, and it comes with 18-inch all-terrain tires and flashy graphics on the hood. You also can fit it with a long list of outdoor accessories, including a giant roof platform (\$899)

that can attach bikes, kayaks, skis and surfboards but also adds hurricane-like wind noise at highway speed.

Other options for the rooftop include a tent for camping (\$1,899), an attachment to carry a bike (\$310), cargo box (\$750), kayak carrier (\$350), luggage basket (\$500), ski carrier (\$350) and surfboard carrier (\$200).

The Meridian Edition's chunky all-terrain tires offer great traction on dirt but, not surprisingly, come at the

expense of on-pavement handling. They make the CX-50's firm, sporty suspension feel even firmer and add a bit of road noise, which isn't an unusual tradeoff in an off-road vehicle.

Its interior looks and feels spectacular, especially on high-end trim levels with their premium materials and pretty stitching.

A 10.3-inch screen is mounted in the perfect place for safety and easy visibility, up high on the center of the dash. It can operate by touch when using Apple CarPlay or Android Auto, but I found it easier to use Mazda's rotary selector down low, where the driver's hand naturally rests.

The base engine makes 187 horsepower, which is in line with most of its slow competitors and is designed for good fuel efficiency ratings of 24 mpg in the city and 30 on the highway.

My tester came with the upgraded turbocharged engine that makes an ample 256 horsepower while somewhat miraculously only knocking 1 mpg off the base car's fuel economy.

Pricing for the 2024 Muddle — I'm sorry, CX-50 — starts at \$30,300, or \$1,000 more than its similarly sized CX-5 cousin. The more powerful Turbo version starts at \$38,000, while the Turbo Premium Plus tops the lineup at \$43,300.

#### AT A GLANCE

**What was tested?** 2024 Mazda CX-50 Turbo Meridian Edition (\$40,800). Options: Premium paint (\$450), apex package (\$1,235). Price as tested (including \$1,375 destination charge): \$43,860

#### By The Numbers

Wheelbase: 110.8 in.  
Length: 185.8 in.  
Width: 75.6 in.  
Height: 63.9 in.  
Engine: 2.5-liter turbocharged four cylinder (256 hp, 320 lbs.-ft.)  
Transmission: Six-speed automatic  
Fuel economy: 23 city, 29 highway

#### RATINGS

Style: 9  
Performance: 5  
Price: 6  
Handling: 5  
Ride: 4  
Comfort: 4  
Quality: 8  
Overall: 6

**Why buy it?** The CX-50 is designed for people who want Mazda's sporty driving characteristics with a bit more off-road capability.



# CARGAZING



The Meridian Edition is designed for people who want to take their Mazda CX-5 off-roading. It comes with all-terrain tires, hood graphics and the ability to add outdoor accessories.

## Muddying the Waters

### Adventurous CX-50 Continues Selling Alongside Mazda's Similar CX-5

By **Derek Price**  
CARGAZING.COM

From what I can tell, Mazda is intentionally trying to confuse people with its newest small crossover.

It calls its creation the CX-50, not to be mixed up with the CX-5, which dealers still peddle alongside the CX-50 in the same showrooms for roughly the same price.

A better name would be the Befuddle or the Confound. And its name — which implies its replacement will eventually move the decimal again to create the CX-500, followed someday by names that use scientific notation — is only part of the confusion.

For some background, Mazda has spent decades building cars chiefly around one goal: being fun to drive. They're reliable, sure, and a good value, but the thing that really sets Mazdas apart from the pack is the way they feel to people who love driving.

That's why I've long recommended buyers make their first stop at the Mazda store when they want something both emotionally rewarding and logical, sort of like a BMW that doesn't break so often. It's also why I continue to spend a small fortune maintaining and restoring my first-generation Miata, the best car ever made.

Instead of doubling down on its horse-and-rider "Jinba-ittai" philosophy, though, Mazda is positioning the CX-50 as something 'Mericans



A 10.3-inch touchscreen in the CX-50 has good visibility but is easiest to operate from Mazda's rotary selector on the center console.

will take off-roading. It uses phrases such as "rugged and capable" and "active lifestyles" to, I suppose, sway Jeep people into the Mazda fold.

I'm not sure that's going to work, though. It's the equivalent of Jeep releasing a sports car they tested at Fuji Speedway and hoping we Miata people will jump ship.

That's how I find myself in the

highly improbable position of testing a Mazda that looks like a Hot Wheels safari truck, complete with paint the color of Sahara sand and a giant roof rack on top.

My tester is called the CX-50 Meridian Edition, and it comes with 18-inch all-terrain tires and flashy graphics on the hood. You also can fit it with a long list of outdoor accessories, including a giant

roof platform (\$899) that can attach bikes, kayaks, skis and surfboards but also adds hurricane-like wind noise at highway speed.

Other options for the rooftop include a tent for camping (\$1,899), an attachment to carry a bike (\$310), cargo box (\$750), kayak carrier (\$350), luggage basket (\$500), ski carrier (\$350) and surfboard carrier (\$200).

The Meridian Edition's chunky all-terrain tires offer great traction on dirt but, not surprisingly, come at the expense of on-pavement handling. They make the CX-50's firm, sporty suspension feel even firmer and add a bit of road noise, which isn't an unusual tradeoff in an off-road vehicle.

Its interior looks and feels spectacular, especially on high-end trim levels with their premium materials and pretty stitching.

A 10.3-inch screen is mounted in the perfect place for safety and easy visibility, up high on the center of the dash. It can operate by touch when using Apple CarPlay or Android Auto, but I found it easier to use Mazda's rotary selector down low, where the driver's hand naturally rests.

The base engine makes 187 horsepower, which is in line with most of its slow competitors and is designed for good fuel efficiency ratings of 24 mpg in the city and 30 on the highway.

My tester came with the upgraded turbocharged engine that makes an ample 256 horsepower while somewhat miraculously only knocking 1 mpg off the base car's fuel economy.

Pricing for the 2024 Muddle — I'm sorry, CX-50 — starts at \$30,300, or \$1,000 more than its similarly sized CX-5 cousin. The more powerful Turbo version starts at \$38,000, while the Turbo Premium Plus tops the lineup at \$43,300.

#### A CLOSER LOOK



#### AT A GLANCE

FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

**What was tested?** 2024 Mazda CX-50 Turbo Meridian Edition (\$40,800). Options: Premium paint (\$450), apex package (\$1,235). Price as tested (including \$1,375 destination charge): \$43,860

#### By The Numbers

Wheelbase: 110.8 in.  
Length: 185.8 in.  
Width: 75.6 in.  
Height: 63.9 in.  
Engine: 2.5-liter turbocharged four cylinder (256 hp, 320 lbs.-ft.)  
Transmission: Six-speed automatic  
Fuel economy: 23 city, 29 highway

#### RATINGS

Style: 9  
Performance: 5  
Price: 6  
Handling: 5  
Ride: 4  
Comfort: 4  
Quality: 8  
Overall: 6

#### Why buy it?

The CX-50 is designed for people who want Mazda's sporty driving characteristics with a bit more off-road capability.