

out of office

BMW

‘ A N E X P R E S S I O N O F J O Y ’

BMW called the Z4 Roadster: ‘An Expression of Joy’, and while driving this magnificent beauty the following song came to mind – Joy to the World... Joy to you and me, Joy to the fish.....!!!!



*Carl Wepener,
CE: Corporate Services*





M A G N I F I C E N T L O O K I N G R O A D S T E R

When I announced I would be joining BMW for the launch of its Z4 Roadster with a retractable hardtop, one of my colleagues commented: “A Roadster with a retractable hardtop? From BMW? Really?”

Hard to believe, but yes to all those questions. The new model is the successor to both the BMW Z4 Roadster and the BMW Z4 Coupé. BMW describes the new Z4 as: “...a unique driving experience combining outstanding pleasure with supreme sportiness.”

The vehicle is a magnificent looking roadster with an extra-long bonnet, large wheel arches, long wheelbase and small overhangs. A low-slung front end, a striking shoulder line and the rear-end accentuates the sheer beauty, contours and lines of the car. BMW has successfully retained a low-slung rear-end design reflecting the traditional proportions of a roadster as well as a large luggage compartment (180 – 310 litres).

Looking at its side from afar, the Z4 looks really sleek and almost as though it is on the move. If you mistake it for a Porsche Boxster from behind you will be forgiven. Don't try to find out though, as you won't easily catch up with this mean machine.

Again, our fair Cape was host to the launch and except for SAA having cancelled our flight and for the fact that it was raining (again at a cabriolet launch) we got into the Z4s and started our trip from the Airport towards Paarl and then followed the quieter roads towards Wellington and on to Worcester. Yes, we did lower the roof, yes we did get wet when we had to stop at a traffic light, yes the two piece electric roof can be put up in 20 very short but very wet seconds, no we did not stop when we traveled at speeds of 100kph to raise the roof as, at that speed, the rain went straight over the cabin.

Although the weather conditions were not inclined towards open top driving, the roads did give us a chance to really test both the 3.0 and 3.5 litre motors – and both these models were not found to be wanting in any area of performance.

The jewel

The jewel of the lot is really the BMW Z4 sDrive 35i which gives a much sportier ride and feel with the seven-speed sports automatic and double clutch (as an option on the BMW Z4 sDrive35i).

The low seating position near the rear axle guarantees an emotional driving experience, especially when you corner that long bonnet hard under high speed and you move sideways with the axle. You become part of that initial exhilarating movement.

Shifting gears is done without the slightest traction interruption; and the double clutch effect on the engine sound is really superb. Control and handling is excellent at all times and the feedback is great. Although speed is a factor that needs to be watched as you only realise you're speeding when you enter turns in Du Toits Kloof Pass and the Z4 wants to push out its back. Although easy to control, our roads are not the place to try this. The new Z4's ride quality, even in Sports + mode, is much more refined than in previous models and this was evident on rough roads traveling to Franschhoek where we had a magnificent lunch at *Vrede and Lust Wine Estate*.

As with the Z4, the lunch experience was really something and any traveler needs to go and try the Estate's restaurant's Goat's Cheese Terrine with Marsala Figs, Hazelnuts, Basil Pesto and the tastiest fresh bread. That was only one of the starters. Main course ranged from Char Grilled Artichoke Nicoise Salad to Jalapeno Tiger Prawns to Dukkah Crested Beef Fillet with Fondant Potatoes, Oyster Mushroom Ragout and Balsamic reduction. The choices were many, the tastes exquisite and the longing for the other dishes ever lasting. The baked Berry Cheesecake with Chantilly Cream and Red Wine reduction ended off the meal and left a number of journalists really looking and feeling like Vrede and Lust.

The afternoon took us onto the N1 towards Cape Town and we enjoyed a easy-going drive in great comfort at a

leisurely pace listening to the surround-sound system entertaining us – the music being of pure sound and clarity.

We ended our trip at the Cape Grace hotel where we enjoyed not only their hospitality but also the history portrayed and fine cuisine. My overall impression, while driving, was one of comfort and the feeling of space – and, I believe, BMW has achieved a standard quite unique in this segment. Head and elbow room as well as the degree of comfort in entering the car has improved greatly and even the more mature gentlemen, like myself, don't find it an effort to get in or out or to get acquainted with the various driving aids.

Storage options are much improved with storage package and through-loading including a transport bag for bulky items, such as skis or a golf bag, ensuring even greater variability.

It is the first time that the BMW iDrive control system is used in the BMW Roadster and is similar to that of the BMW 7 Series. The enhanced navigation system with an even wider range of functions is spot on and provides very clear instructions.

Engines & safety

To propel the Roadsters there is a choice of three magnificent straight-six power units ranging in output from 150kW to 225kW. BMW Efficient Dynamics is featured as standard and all engine variants fulfil the future EU 5 emission standard. A six-speed sports automatic with optimised gearshift dynamics, is available as an option on the BMW Z4 sDrive30i and BMW Z4 sDrive23i. All sports automatic transmissions come with gearshift paddles on the steering wheel.



SHIFTING GEARS IS DONE WITHOUT THE SLIGHTEST TRACTION INTERRUPTION





M E A N M A C H I N E

Comprehensive safety concepts are part of the package with extremely stiff body structures, head/thorax airbags integrated at the front and at the side in the seat backrests. Massively reinforced A-pillars and roll bars behind the headrests ensure roll-over safety while run-flat tyres and a Tyre Pressure Monitor ensure you do not have to stop in an emergency on unsafe roads. These are fitted as standard. Although not tested, but known from experience (see my article on p136 of the April 2009 issue), the dual headlights with Xenon light technology is also fitted as standard equipment.

2009 World Class leading engines:

BMW Z4 sDrive35i: straight-six petrol engine with Twin Turbo and direct fuel injection. Capacity: 2,979cc, max output: 225kW at 5 800rpm; max torque: 400Nm from 1 300rpm – 5 000rpm; Acceleration [0 – 100km/h]: 5.2sec, (seven-speed sports automatic with double clutch: 5.1sec); Top speed: 250km/h.

BMW Z4 sDrive30i: straight-six petrol engine VALVETRONIC and double-VANOS; Capacity: 2,996cc,

max output: 190kW at 6 600rpm; max torque: 310Nm at 2 750rpm; Acceleration [0 – 100km/h]: 5.8sec (sports automatic: 6.1sec); Top speed: 250km/h.

BMW Z4 sDrive23i: straight-six petrol engine Capacity: 2 497cc; max output: 150kW at 6 200rpm; max torque: 250Nm at 2 950rpm; Acceleration [0–100km/h]: 6.6sec (sports automatic: 7.3sec); Top speed: 242km/h (239km/h).

A winning formula

Congratulations to BMW for again winning *Engine of the Year Award 2009* in the world's most significant engine contest. The V8 power unit featured in the BMW M3, the straight-six with Twin Turbo Technology to be admired, among other models in the BMW 3 Series, the BMW 1 Series and the BMW X6, as well as the four-cylinder twin-scroll turbocharged engine in the MINI Cooper S, all scored triumphant victories in their respective classes.

The BMW Z4 Roadster is another great product by BMW that is added to the Sport vehicle playing field making for an interesting choice between ever improving players, dynamic performance and driving enjoyment. □

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