



2006 Mazdaspeed 6 by Rick Trawick

For those looking for the kind of turbocharged performance offered by the likes of the Subaru WRX or the Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution but are turned off by the



massive wings and hood scoops, then Mazda would like to talk to you. The Mazdaspeed 6 packs the punch of a turbocharged, intercooled engine and an all-wheel-drive chassis.

Starting with the already excellent Mazda 6 platform, engineers have lowered the suspension and increased the sway bar diameters and spring rates. The cornering is crisp and sharp without the bone-jarring ride some sports sedans exhibit. The real key to the impressive performance lies with the engine. At only 2.3 liters, the all-aluminum 4 cylinder still pumps out 274 horsepower. The 280 lbs-ft of torque peaks at a low 3,000 rpm giving a V8-like surge of power. To eliminate the lag usually associated with turbocharged engines, Mazda has used direct fuel injection to pump up the low-end response. Combined with a quick-response turbocharger and a 15.6 psi maximum



boost pressure, power is available at lower rpm's while at the same time reducing emissions and boosting fuel economy. The EPA mileage estimates for the Mazdaspeed 6 are 19 city and 25 highway.

All of that power is transmitted to the ground through a crisp shifting, 6-speed gearbox. The ratios are well spaced to keep the revs in the proper range during spirited driving. The full-time all-wheel-drive system uses what Mazda terms an Active Torque Split system to automatically direct power to the four wheels. The system can divide the power anywhere



from 100:0 front/rear to 50:50. Depending on road conditions, the system will operate in one of three modes, Normal, Sport or Snow (slippery). In practice, this gives tremendous launches without tire-smoking drama and eliminates the torque steer common to powerful

front-wheel-drive only cars. During its stay with us we encountered a tremendous downpour and even in the wet, the car felt glued to the road.

Being the top of the Mazda 6 lineup, the Mazdaspeed 6 is equipped with most up-market amenities. The tasteful, two-toned leather seats are comfortable and electrically adjustable. The automatic temperature controlled HVAC system was quiet and efficient, even at the highest speed setting the fan was not overbearing. Nice touches include, keyless entry and ignition (just keep the keyfob in your pocket) and one-touch control for all four windows. Our test car was equipped with the optional Bose sound system that was well tuned to the cars' interior. However, we would like to see an auxiliary input for iPod or other MP3 style players.



It takes a sharp eye to pick out the Mazdaspeed 6 from a standard Mazda 6, that is, until you know what to look for. Most pronounced is the raised hood which incorporates trick ductwork to direct air from the grill area through the air-to-air intercooler to boost power. Other details to look for are the small lip spoiler on the trunklid, larger fender flares and Mazdaspeed nameplates.

Packing plenty of power in a compact sedan, without the telltale boy racer scoops and spoilers, the Mazdaspeed 6 is the perfect stealth performance car. And for today's gas prices, you can still get great fuel mileage without giving up an ounce of performance. Our test car was priced at \$31,265. See the Mazdaspeed 6 and the rest of the Mazda lineup at www.mazdausa.com.

Finally, a Contest Everyone Can Win!

Have you wished you were just a little faster with the email on our last few contests? Then here is the contest for you! We are looking to make a significant increase in our readership. I know all of our faithful reader have told friends about the website, but sometimes they forget to sign up, or they loose the address or something. So to encourage everyone to talk us up and get their friends to subscribe, we are having a subscription contest. Here's how it works:

Every reader who gets two of their friends to sign up will get a free, one-year subscription to our print magazine when it is introduced. Yes, we are going to really have a print magazine you can hold in your hand, and when we do, you will receive the first year free! But don't stop there, sign up 5 or more people and you will get an official Cars & Places travel mug. And the top prize will go to the one person who signs up the most people, that special person will receive an embroidered Cars & Places jacket!

We have added a space on the subscription form called "How did you hear about us?", so make sure your friends put your name in that space! And no fair signing up your "other" email addresses!

Let's get started and spread the word! We will run the contest from now until the end of May so get going!

Places to Be!

For sailing fans, Annapolis, Maryland is a great place to view and participate in your sport. And on May 4, the Volvo Ocean Race will be making a stopover at the historic port city. A spectacular Parade of Sail will start in Baltimore and is expected to conclude at the famous Annapolis City Dock between 4:00 and 4:30 p.m. This event will kick-off the Maryland Maritime Heritage Festival (MMHF). National sailing legend Gary Jobson will serve as master of ceremonies as city and county elected officials and business leaders officially welcome the crews to Maryland's capital city during a 5:00 p.m. dockside ceremony. Visitor will have a chance to see the Volvo 70's tied at the City Dock until Sunday, May 7th to begin the 6th leg of the 9 leg race which is due to finish in Gothenburg, Sweden on June 15th. Festivities will also include include live daily concerts featuring the United States Naval Academy Band, Them Eastport Oyster Boys, local talents, Stereopool, and others. For complete details visit www.visitannapolis.org.



And for the dog lovers out there, on May 26-29, 2006, the Hampton Roads Convention Center will welcome over 2,000 canine friends to The Virginia Memorial Day Cluster. Hosted by the Langley and Gloucester Kennel Clubs, in conjunction with the Merrimac Dog Training Club, this annual event is expecting to draw over 4,000 spectators within a four day period. This year's cluster will include four American Kennel Club (AKC) All-Breed Conformation shows drawing some of the top dogs in the country. Other highlights include: four days of Obedience Trials; four days worth of AKC Rally® (a special obedience trial segment and AKC's fastest growing sport); reduced-fee microchip clinic on Friday May 26 and Saturday May 27; a chiropractic seminar and clinic on Saturday May 27; a canine freestyle demonstration entitled "Dancing with Doggies" at Noon on Friday May 26; and cameo and dog-sniffing demonstration by "Drake", the Newport News Fire Department's bomb-sniffing dog at Noon on Saturday May 27. The event will also feature over 30 vendors offering unique pet merchandise not generally available in the Hampton Roads region. For directions and a complete schedule see www.langleykennelclub.org or www.hamptoncvb.com.

That's all for this week!

So until next time, enjoy your drive!

Rick Trauwick

Publisher

Any comments or questions you may have are welcome. Please email them to info@carsandplaces.com. If you would like to see your event mentioned, send it to the same address.

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