

BMW Z4 M Roadster vs. Porsche Boxster S

Competitive Reference Guide

Z4 M Roadster Comparison

Porsche Boxster S Overview

MSRP: \$55,495

Specifications:

3.2-liter flat 6-cylinder	
Engine output:	280 hp/236 lb-ft.
6-speed manual or 5-speed Tiptronic	
Mid-engine, rear-wheel drive	
Wheelbase (in.):	95.1
Headroom (in.):	37.0
Legroom (in.):	42.5
Cargo Volume (cu ft.):	9.5 (total front and rear)
Mileage (city/highway):	18/27 (auto) 19/27 (manual)

When I cross-shopped the Boxster S, this is what they told me:

The Boxster's classic lines provide a distinctive link to Porsche's past, wrapped around a fully modern, high-performance sports car. This is the quintessential mid-engine roadster; when people think about German sports cars a Porsche is what comes to mind.

Last year's redesigned front and rear provide a fresh look for the Boxster, but one that's in keeping with Porsche's mid-engine heritage. The revised headlight treatment gives the Boxster a more distinctive appearance at the front, while the taillights enhance visibility. The new retractable rear spoiler reduces lift.

The Boxster has won more comparison tests, and received more accolades than any other car in its class. It's made *Car and Driver's* 10Best list six years in a row.

The new interior includes an even higher level of material as standard, with Porsche's traditionally superlative fit and finish. As you'd expect, it befits a car of this stature.

The Boxster S puts out an incredible 280 horsepower. Equipped with the standard 6-speed manual transmission, this the quickest, fastest Boxster Porsche's ever built: 0-60 in 5.2 seconds.



Porsche Boxster S

What the automotive press says:

Criticizing the Porsche Boxster S

"... we wonder if the new Boxster is different enough to stand out to anyone other than current Boxster owners."

Automobile, November 2004

"The car feels a little downmarket," wrote one tester in the car's logbook. "It's better than it once was, but the little door covering the ashtray in the center console feels cheap, the inside door handles are noisy and the insubstantial feel of the doors themselves leaves a poor impression."

Inside Lines, May 11, 2005

"There's a tinny, hollow sound to the doors when pushed closed that doesn't send a premium message."

Motor Trend, August 2004

"These cars are still short-coupled and narrow, and efforts to carve out a bit more room for the drivers have been only modestly successful."

Automobile, February 2005 test of a Porsche Boxster and Mercedes-Benz SLK350

"... the sound system is a sea of small, tightly packed buttons, and the gear selection readout on the gauge cluster is so small it borders on useless when you're running hard."

Inside Lines, May 11, 2005

"Of course the Tiptronic makes traffic jams more tolerable, but the tradeoff is a Porsche with a laid-back disposition. It's like the Porsche that swallowed a Xanax."

Inside Lines, May 11, 2005

"Where the Boxster S falters is price. The Boxster S's base sticker of \$53,100 will keep it from entering many people's driveway...."

Road & Track, December 2004

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04.07.06



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Praising the Z4 M Roadster

"On the racetrack in Jerez, Spain, the M roadster showed itself to be a willing partner. ... Should you choose to switch off the stability control, the chassis will never surprise or commit any embarrassing faux pas."

Car and Driver, May 2006

"But this is not just another big-engine-in-a-little-car story. In addition to the powerplant, BMW engineers took anything and everything off the M3 that would make it go faster, turn quicker and stop better, and bolted it all into the Z4."

AutoWeek, March 20, 2006

What do we say?

Porsche touts the Boxster's styling as a mid-engine sports car, but the BMW's long-hood and short rear deck better fit the classic proportions of a roadster.

As a high-performance two-seater, the Z4 M Roadster boasts far more impressive credentials than the Boxster S, beginning with its 330-hp, 3.2-liter inline-6. That's an astonishing 50 horsepower more than the Porsche from the same displacement.

The Z4 M Roadster's torque output, 262 ft-lb., also dwarfs the Boxster's. With only 236 lb-ft. of torque, the Boxster S has also garnered complaints in some road tests about its difficulty to launch.

Those power advantages show in the cars' 0-60 mph times, as well. Porsche claims 5.2 seconds for the 6-speed manual Boxster S, 0.3 second behind the M Roadster's 4.9 second performance.

Although the availability of Porsche's \$3,210 automatic might seem an advantage, it's only a 5-speed and detracts noticeably from the car's performance (see *Inside Lines* quote).

The Boxster S lacks numerous items that are standard on the Z4 M Roadster. These include full Nappa Leather, automatic climate control, aluminum trim, and rain-sensing wipers. Adding these items alone would boost the Porsche's price almost \$6,000.

The Roadster's \$2,500 Premium Package adds auto-dimming mirrors, power seats with driver's memory, cruise control, Premium HiFi Package, storage package and BMW Assist. Adding the same equipment on the

Porsche would cost more than \$3,700, and wouldn't include the storage package or telematics.

BMW's standard M sport seats offer more aggressive side bolstering and adjustable thigh support. Matching these in the Boxster S would cost \$3,055.

BMW's Dynamic Stability Control now includes such features as Brake Fade Compensation, Brake Standby, Brake Drying and Start-off Assistant. Porsche's Stability Management system includes none of these features.

Typical of Porsche, the Boxster offers a dizzying array of options, colors and textures, all of them premium priced. For instance, metallic paint is an \$850 option on the Boxster S, unless it's one of Porsche's "special colors"—then the costs jumps to \$3,070.

BMW's Nappa Extended Leather adds upgraded leather to virtually any surface you touch in the M car. This includes seats, upper door panels, kneepad area, center armrest, windshield frame and sun visors. Matching this treatment in the Boxster would cost between \$3,400 and \$4,900.

BMW includes a choice of aluminum or genuine wood interior trim at no extra cost. Porsche charges as much as \$2,150 for wood trim.

The Roadster's standard equipment includes staggered, 18-inch wheels and tires, sport suspension and M Variable Differential Lock. Porsche's wheel upgrades alone start at \$2,700.

The Z4 M Roadster's 4 year/50,000 mile Free Full Maintenance Program provides additional peace of mind, and additional savings. *Edmunds.com* estimates maintenance costs for the first three years to be **\$1286**. That's an additional cost of **\$32** per month for the Boxster S.

What's not available on the Porsche Boxster S:

- Passenger lumbar adjustment
- Telematics (BMW Assist)
- Active Knee Protection
- Passenger airbag disable switch
- Adaptive Brake Lights
- Free Full Maintenance Program