

Five star build quality



BMW Gran Turismo M Sport

BMW's 5 Series Gran Turismo hatchback is a curious mix of luxury saloon, 4x4 and estate. It has an assertive stance, a coupe-like roofline, and an eye-catching 'face'.

According to BMW, lots of motorists like the high driving position of an off-roader, but don't fancy a fully-fledged 4x4. This is what initially sparked the idea for the GT. The German car maker also wanted to produce something that had the splendour of a 7 Series, but delivered something a little less conventional than an executive saloon.

Inside the GT, the dashboard is similar to the 7 Series' and includes BMW's iDrive system. The high class hatchback has ultra-plush leather upholstery, compartments everywhere and it reeks of five star build quality. There is ample room for rear seat passengers and a vast panoramic roof provides them with a window to the stars. The big BMW has the same interior headroom as the X5 and there's an ingenious split tailgate that can open as a saloon or a full hatchback, giving a generous, flexible load area.

For late 2011 and 2012 all BMW 5 Series Gran Turismo models come generously equipped with BMW Professional Navigation System, BMW assist, electrically adjustable front seats with driver memory, voice

control, xenon headlights with headlight wash and remote tailgate operation as standard.

But that's not all: very recently, the M Sport model for the GT was launched. The powerful car now incorporates a host of additional equipment as standard, including: nineteen-inch light alloy M V-spoke wheels, front sports seats, door-sill finishers with M designation, M aerodynamic body styling, M Sport multi-function leather steering wheel, M Sport suspension, high-gloss shadowline exterior trim, dark chrome tailpipes and anthracite headlining.

On the road, the 5 GT M Sport is creamy smooth with a fantastic eight-speed automatic gearbox fitted as standard. The 530d M Sport I test drove was capable of 0-60 mph in 6.9 seconds and, under test track conditions, the car can go on to reach 149mph. That is seriously striking performance from a car that weighs over two tonnes (2035 kg). Also impressive is the factory-fitted dynamic drive control, which not only influences the gearshift dynamics, but also the accelerator pedal and steering assistance control map. This makes the car a doddle to drive.

Indeed, BMW has produced a model with a lot of character. That means it is different – and its looks have divided opinion among BMW aficionados. That said, the GT is undoubtedly a bold, upmarket car, with oodles of gadgetry and it is appealing to drive too. However, I reckon that being a passenger in the GT is a more remarkable experience and that is where BMW will score points with high-end fleet buyers. Sitting in the Gran Turismo's limousine-like rear seats is utter luxury and, in my opinion, the best place to be in the 5 GT if you're a go-getter who can afford to be chauffeured to your business engagements.

Tim Barnes-Clay

FACTS AND FIGURES

- Max speed: 149 mph
- 0-60 mph: 6.9 secs
- Combined mpg: 43.5
- Engine: 2993 cc 6 cylinder turbodiesel
- Max. power (bhp): 241 at 4000 rpm
- Max. torque (lb/ft): 398
- CO2: 173 g/km
- Price: £48,880

