

# CARGAZING

## A Digital Wonderland

All-New BMW X3 Has Impressive Customization Features, Smartphone Integration

By Derek Price  
CARGAZING.COM

If you're fussy about your car's settings to the point of obsession, I may have found your perfect vehicle.

Want different color mood lighting for the interior? You can change it. Want to make its lane departure warning more sensitive? Want it to warn you when you break the speed limit by a certain amount? Want the navigation screen or the gauges to look different?

All that is adjustable in the all-new 2018 X3, a vehicle that strikes me as the ultimate family car for the smartphone generation.

Granted, its myriad settings are often buried under several layers of digital sediment, requiring menus, sub-menus, sub-sub-menus and so forth before you find the right choice.

Still, the fact that it lets you customize so many facets of the driving experience in such granular detail make it perfect for picky people.

Its feel over-the-road is likewise designed for perfectionists.

While its basic mission still raises questions in my puritanical mind — most pointedly why a family vehicle



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BMW X3

BMW's popular and practical X3 gets a complete makeover for the 2018 model year. Its digital features and crisp, sports-sedan-like handling make it stand out in a jam-packed field of crossover vehicles.

should feel "sporty" at all, rather than aiming solely for practicality and comfort — I'll give BMW a pass for honing the contemporary sports

sedan in an inspiring way. This is their gig, and they do it well.

If you're OK with the idea of a sports crossover in the first place, this is the one to beat.

It rides higher than a sedan, true, but it's still fun to fling in corners. With all-wheel-drive traction, my tester felt composed and exuded confidence in aggressive driving, whether braking firmly or tackling tight turns at speed. It seems to thrive under driving conditions that make lesser crossovers wilt.

All the sensations of driving are transmitted through very firm — some would say too firm — seats. In longstanding BMW fashion, the seating feels more like hard benches than cushy living room recliners, another odd but distinctive choice for a family crossover.

Power in my tester came from a 2.0-liter, four-cylinder turbocharged engine that rumbles and pulls more like a V6. It generates 248 horsepower, a number that results in merely mediocre acceleration by BMW's high standards, clearly geared to create

smiles at the fuel pump more than at green lights.

And it does. Even with the all-wheel-drive system on my tester, it was rated for 29 mpg in highway driving. On a trip from Dallas to New Orleans, I was pleasantly surprised at the cheap fuel consumption getting close to those typically sketchy EPA numbers.

Other than its sparkling handling and predictably handsome BMW styling, the biggest reason to consider the new X3 is its brilliantly designed collection of digital toys. I've driven very few cars that come close to this combination of powerful smartphone integration, endless customization options and snazzy graphics with crisp lines, clear text and vivid colors.

If this new generation X3 was intended to appeal to people addicted to digital screens, BMW sure did the job right. It's an unusually competent mixture of fun driving dynamics, a family-friendly cabin, and Silicon Valley polish.

Pricing starts at \$41,000 and

quickly climbs higher as you check the option boxes. The six-cylinder, 355-horsepower M40i version starts at \$54,500.

### What was tested?

2018 BMW X3 xDrive30i (\$42,450). Options: Metallic paint (\$550), leather interior (\$1,700), convenience package (\$2,850), driving assistance package (\$900), dynamic handling package (\$1,400), parking assistance package (\$1,300), premium package (\$3,300), Apple CarPlay compatibility (\$300), wireless charging (\$500), Harman Kardon surround sound (\$875). Price as tested (including \$995 destination charge): \$57,470

**Wheelbase:** 112.8 in.

**Length:** 186.1 in.

**Width:** 74.7 in.

**Height:** 66 in.

**Engine:** 2.0-liter turbocharged four cylinder (248 hp, 258 lb.-ft.)

**Transmission:** Eight-speed automatic

**Fuel economy:** 22 city, 29 highway

### RATINGS

Style: 8

Performance: 7

Price: 5

Handling: 9

Ride: 6

Comfort: 6

Quality: 8

Overall: 8

### Why buy it?

It's a brilliant driving machine that keeps family-friendly practicality and contemporary digital life in mind.



Standard sport seats with adjustable side bolsters and a firm, supportive fit add to the X3's sporty character.

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### A CLOSER LOOK



## AT A GLANCE: FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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