

HYBRIDS WORTH WAITING FOR (OR BUYING TODAY)



BMW X1

Revised exterior design and new plug-in hybrid version add to the allure of BMW's family SUV
On sale Now **Price from** £29,450. BMW X1 xDrive 25e Plug-In Hybrid from £38,200

FLYING COLOURS
 The side skirts, wheel arches, lower bumpers and body cladding are painted in the body colour if you go for range-topping M Sport trim.



Not so long ago, hybrids only made sense if you were a company car driver or someone living or working in London's Congestion Charge zone. However, the best are now brilliant all-rounders that offer diesel-beating fuel economy in real-world conditions. So, which should you consider now, and what are the most exciting models coming soon?

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EVEN THE BEST trendsetters take a bit of time to perfect their formula. The BMW X1 was one of the first smaller SUVs to wear a premium badge, arriving well before this kind of car enjoyed a boom in popularity. Its jacked-up, chunky looks proved a hit, but it wasn't until the second-generation model arrived that BMW refined the offering and made it a genuinely good, big-selling car.

However, we've since seen new arrivals in the shape of the Volvo XC40 and the new Range Rover Evoque, both of which have set higher standards in the class. So, the time has come for some cosmetic tweaks to the X1, along with the introduction of an entirely new variant.

The exterior changes aren't substantial. BMW's trademark 'kidney grille' has been enlarged (a common recent theme, but they're still some way from the colossal scale

of the X7's nostrils) and the front bumper redesigned. There are also new-look LED tail-lights, while the exhaust tailpipes have swelled slightly.

Other new features include an LED projection of 'X1' from the door mirror to the ground when you unlock the car (on xLine and M Sport models), along with three new shades of metallic paint to choose from.

But the headline news is the introduction of BMW X1 plug-in hybrid to the range.

Badged xDrive25e, it uses a 1.5-litre three-cylinder petrol engine to drive the front wheels and an electric motor, fed by a 9.7kWh battery, to drive the rears. BMW says the xDrive25e will be able to cover more than 34 miles on electric power alone.

Combined outputs of 217bhp and 284lb ft of torque mean it can dispatch 0-62mph in 7.0sec (making it the fastest version of the X1) and reach a top speed of 119mph. Meanwhile, it officially emits as little as 40g/km of CO₂ >>



BUYER'S FILE
BMW X1 xDrive 25e xLine PHEV

Price	£39,200
Engine	3cyl, 1499cc, petrol
Power	217bhp @ 4600rpm
Torque	220Nm @ 1500rpm
Gearbox	6-speed automatic
0-62mph	6.9sec
Top speed	119mph
Economy	148.7-156.9mpg combined (WLTP)
CO ₂ , tax band	43-40g/km, 16% (WLTP)



(WLTP), thanks to a combined fuel economy figure of 156.9mpg. You'll have to do mostly short journeys and charge after each one to achieve that (otherwise it just becomes an overweight petrol), but you'll benefit from very low company car tax bills even if you don't.

We've had a look around the xDrive25e, and there's little to tell it apart visually. Stuffing a battery under the rear seats has resulted in a slight compromise on rear seat space, though, so tall adults will find their heads brushing the roof where they wouldn't in a petrol or diesel X1. Some underfloor boot space is taken up, too, but this isn't noticeable, because it's where the spare wheel sits in other models.

Anyway, deliveries of the xDrive25e won't start until later next year and pricing hasn't been announced yet, so let's focus on what you can have now.

Inside, the standard 6.5in display has been ditched in favour of an 8.8in touchscreen, and this can be upgraded to a new 10.3in item. BMW's iDrive continues to be the very finest infotainment system available, being packed with features and brilliantly simple to use, because you can use the dial

controller and shortcut buttons mounted between the front seats instead of prodding the screen.

The interior remains fantastically executed, with first-class build quality, and there are now more ambient lighting options. The driving position is what you'd hope for from a family SUV: high enough while still providing plenty of adjustability and good visibility.

On top of that, the X1 remains one of the most spacious and practical family SUVs, with lots of space for passengers and luggage.

And to drive? Well, we could get our hands only on the xDrive25i, which won't be coming to the UK, but with no mechanical changes from the pre-facelift model, the X1 remains great to drive. Its steering is weighty and precise and its handling is pleasingly agile. The ride is firm as a consequence, especially around town, but you could easily live with it, and it smooths out on the motorway.

Refinement is a weakness of the X1 at all speeds, however; there's a fair bit of road roar and the engine stop-start system could be a smoother operator.

In the UK, there will be front-wheel drive (sDrive) and four-wheel drive (xDrive) on offer, but our experiences suggest sDrive is all you need unless you live up a snow-capped mountain. And the choice of petrol and diesel engines is carried over, so the 148bhp sDrive18d will most likely remain the pick of the range, having more grunt than the sDrive18i and sDrive20i turbocharged petrols but lower running costs than the 187bhp xDrive20d.

Evidently, this facelift is more of a subtle reinvigoration for the X1 rather than a comprehensive reworking. The Evoque and XC40 continue to lead the way in the class as brilliant all-rounders, but the X1's practicality and excellent interior mean it's still well worth your consideration, while the new plug-in hybrid version should help it stand out further.

WHATCAR? SAYS

Not much has changed, but that means the X1 remains a plush and practical family SUV

