



How Would You Like To Drive A 4-Door 600HP BMW M8? Steve Did

Let's say you want a super high-performance Bimmer coupe; you know, one with over 600hp steeped in exclusivity. But your more practical side is calling for 4-doors and long-trip comfort. What do you do? Well, BMW has stretched the 8 Series and attached an M to its name.

This is the all new M8 Gran Coupe Competition.

Available as a traditional 2-door coupe, convertible or this coupe-styled 4-door each with full-on M variants, the 8 is the pinnacle of BMW's gas-powered sports car range. With a starting price of nearly \$90,000 and a 0-to-60mph time as quick as 3.0-seconds flat this is the final destination for paramount performance and luxury in BMW's lineup.

This M8 Gran Coupe is the latest addition to the 8 Series menu, offering its financially-blessed drivers the fastest 4-door experience they'll likely ever have. And then taking the M thrills even further, BMW offers most of this exclusive range in an even higher level Competition trim. And that's what I have here. With more rigid engine mounts, a firmer suspension, M Sport exhaust and a horsepower bump, this is the virtuoso M8 Gran Coupe, faster in a sprint by 1/10th of a second by boasting 617 horses and a more reactive 553 pound-feet of torque. As equipped with the optional M Driver's Package, top speed is 190 mph.

The M8 is really something else but not at all what I thought it would be. When there are Ms and Competitions involved I immediately conjured up a raucous, super-firm, streetable track car. But this Gran Coupe isn't that. It's a luxury missile with one of the most impressive engines I've ever driven. This car is

beyond fast. It's silly how immediately it pulls and how deep the power reserve is. But the soundtrack is muted; the cabin quiet and any juvenile antics have to be summoned deep within the drive modes. It's a brilliant big 4-door with a dark side just waiting to be unleashed.

Big ticket items such as the \$8,000 carbon ceramic brakes, \$5,400 Carbon Exterior Package and \$3,400 Bowers & Wilkins Diamond Surround Sound System balloon the price of this example to over \$167,000. But at this price cars can do crazy things and this M8 provides one of the widest dynamic ranges I've ever driven. In its default, most sedate settings the M8 gives little indication as to its capabilities. Even with the Sound Control button in its wide open mode, this car starts up less conspicuously than you would imagine and proceeds to mimic a BMW luxury sedan in around the town driving.

Yes, the wide Michelin Sport 4 Ss generate some noise and the massive carbon ceramic discs bite noticeably harder, but by in large the M8 goes about routine business with exceptional grace. And then there are subtle but substantive changes as you elevate the multitude of drive modes. Sport settings tip toe into the M waters but by the time you get to Sport Plus with the 8-speed's Drivelogic button tapped 2 times, the M8 is on full alert with reactions so instantaneous that each press of the gas pedal will leave you marveled. You'd never know this is a twin-turbo V8 because it leaves you waiting for nothing. And revving high at 4.4 -liters, there's just power for days. It runs hot though so the cooling fan remains on long after the drive is over.

Adding nearly 8" to the Coupe's wheelbase, the Gran Coupe is over 9" longer while also standing taller and wider. But this car has only gained 185 pounds and so the handling feels incredibly sinewy and precise, especially for a car of this size. The non-run flat Michelins in conjunction with rear-biased all-wheel drive system and a locking rear differential do an outstanding job of confidently adhering this car to the road, putting the prodigious power down in an authoritative manner. And when you're in a controlled environment, there's a 2-wheel drive setting that permits all kinds of tail wagging fun though in all honesty, this car feels too mature for such low brow maneuvers. Launch control triggers the best step off and it is a mind warp once your foot comes off the brake. The weakest link in the driver controls is the steering - it's not off-putting but its artificial nature is just a tad out of step with the precision of the other mechanicals. Because it returns only 17mpg, there's a \$1,000 gas guzzler tax added to the price.

The cabin is beautifully adorned and feels very much the nearly \$170k asking price. But sometimes the Germans just can't get out of their own way when it comes to electronics integration and the M8 has its fair share of overwrought controls. For example, choosing your drive settings is about 3 times harder than it needs to be.

Press the Setup button and your choices pop up on the big screen but each setting is controlled individually so it's kind of busy. Ditto for the M Mode button which controls driver assistance settings, instrument cluster and the heads-up display. And you're not done; the transmission is a separate selection on the unusual gear shifter; a lot to do just to get the car set to where you want it. Which is why you'd have to program these M1 and M2 switches so as to avoid all of this. That way your tailored modes are only a thumb push away.

At night, the M8 is absolutely stunning. These clips don't do it justice. The ambient lighting choices are spectacular. And there's no doubt about it - this is a luxury car. The quilted seats with the light up M8

logos, the metal speaker grilles, the carbon fiber...it is gorgeous, fully stocked and long-trip comfortable. The seats are a bit on the firm side but they include adjustable side bolsters for a snug fit. The touchscreen is relatively easy to maneuver through though finding exactly what you want can take some time. But I love the wireless CarPlay and the selectable moods are the kind of thing I'm a sucker for. Heated armrests and center console, automatic everything and great welcome lighting – it's a beautiful place to be and quieter than you'd ever imagine.

Now, it's called a 5-seater but it's really just for 4 and there's way more legroom back here than you'd think. It does not feel claustrophobic and includes separate climate controls and deeply positioned sculpted seats to hold you in place. The trunk is also decently sized at 11 cubic feet and includes a foot activated tailgate and drop down rear seats. The only disappointment in here for me is the big bucks audio system that fails to live up to its billing.

You'll never see many of these on the road – it's a rare, exclusive car for a very specific kind of owner which to me makes it all the more attractive. **By TestDriveNow Auto Critic Steve Hammes for SouthFloridaReporter.com, May 15, 2020**

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