

# CHICAGO AUTO SHOW

## Mini: Best marque at expo

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Fifty-five years ago, Mini was first dreamt up, responding to a fuel shortage at the time. The goal was to create a compact four-person car that was economic and fuel efficient, but what they got was so much more. The go-kart handling from its wide wheelbase, its iconic look, as well as its passenger space and efficiency skyrocketed it to fame. But it did not stop there. Redesigned by John Cooper, the new Mini was now more powerful than its predecessors, going on to win three Monte Carlo Rally races. After hitting some financial trouble, BMW bought Mini and rejuvenated the iconic car design. Today, their lineup of cars has expanded from the classic Mini Cooper to larger and smaller variants. These stylistic cars were featured at the Chicago Auto Show last week. This article will provide a rundown of the Mini variants and the brand in general.

The original Mini Cooper is the standard model. It is small and fast, infinitely customizable, and maintains the look that their entire lineup follows. The wheels spread out to

each corner of the body, giving it the low go-kart look. The windows form a box on the top, almost completely hiding the bars that connect the roof to the rest of the body. A double sunroof is a common feature on this model and many others. Plus, there is a convertible option for those who enjoy the wind through their hair. On the inside, a large speedometer sits right in the center of the dashboard, with the radio and controls below featuring a row of switches, a throwback to classic British cars.

The Clubman is exactly like the Cooper with an additional 10 inches to the back. This gives the back seat passengers more room and well as more storage space. The car sports a unique three doors, one on the right and two on the left, creating easy access to the back seats. Another variation is the Countryman, an even bigger option, but still keeping with the small sporty look. It resembles more of a SUV but only features two rows of seats. Unlike other Minis, this is the only one that offers four doors. A major option on this car is the four-wheel drive, giving it some off-roading capabilities, but don't expect anything like a Jeep. This certainly offers the most room in a Mini, and plenty of accessories to haul sporting

equipment when needed. The Paceman is a derivative of the Countryman, crossover four seats with two doors instead of four. The main change is the lowered and slanted roof, giving the car a streamlined look while also bringing the center of gravity lower. The disadvantage is that there is less room in the back seat for the passengers. To compensate, Mini installed individual back seats instead of the traditional bench style, giving each passenger their own "lounge" space and seemingly more room.

The last Mini variant is the Coupe. Sportiness and speed are emphasized in this one, making it much smaller than any of the other Minis. Deviating from the traditional look, this car is much more rounded on the front and the back, but the interior retains the entire classic Mini style. Although storage space is not something traditionally sought after when buying a sports car, the Coupe offers trunk space better than other competing sports cars, as well as offering a compartment door so extra-long items in the trunk can stick farther forward if needed. One interesting feature of this car is the automatic spoiler that deploys when traveling faster than 50 mph, a nice touch to highlight the sportiness. This one is also available in a

convertible version also known as a Roadster.

Just as the Mini lineup has expanded to many different options, so have the features and technology. One major upgrade is the John Cooper works package, featuring a more powerful engine and higher quality parts than standard. While these engines might not stack up to other sports car engines, the lightweight car bodies give them the edge they need to keep preforming. Having the smaller engine also means that the fuel economy is great on all Mine vehicles, offering around 30 mpg. Also offered is and electric Mini, although only available by special order or in certain areas, as electric cars start to grow in popularity, the Mini E will become more widely available.

Minis are an overall amazing car and have an interesting style that makes them stand out from the crowd. While they are great there are two big drawbacks, their size and price. Small size should be expected, after all their name is "Mini." Their base price is not too bad but it is in all the options that their price starts to soar.

For a sporty car with a unique look and an exciting driving experience, Mini is a great option.

