



Detailed Report

Dear Margaret,

Thank you for purchasing Car Match's Detailed Report. We have reviewed your questionnaire and prepared the report below indicating which models best match your needs and preferences.

You indicated that you are looking for a new convertible with a manual transmission (for spirited driving). You indicated that you had a broad price range of \$25 - \$50,000 out-the-door price, but would prefer to stay under your max. You further indicated that as recent retirees, you and your husband intend to use the car primarily to transport yourselves locally and to take road trips to New England during your newfound free time. You expressed strong preferences for a quiet, smooth riding car that handles well. You further indicated that you are a shorter woman with a bad back, so you would prefer a car with good visibility and easy entry / exit. Finally, you indicated that the ability to carry two sets of golf clubs or a weekend's luggage in the trunk is a must. Based on these criteria, Car Match recommends:

1. BMW 1-series 128i Convertible
2. BMW 3-series 328i Convertible
3. Ford Mustang Convertible V-6

Your preference for a quiet and smooth convertible that also accommodates two sets of the golf clubs makes for a bit of a challenge! The quietest and smoothest convertibles have folding hardtops, which severely limit trunk space. The 128i however represents an excellent compromise that falls squarely in your price range and meets all of your needs. The 128i with manual transmission, which is selling for approximately \$35,500 (\$2,000 below MSRP), features a power cloth soft-top. This soft-top, which is lined (making it exceptionally quiet for a soft-top convertible), allows for a very roomy trunk. It will accommodate two sets of golf clubs. The 128i is one of the best handling cars in its class on account of an independent rear suspension and rear wheel drive, and because of its excellent suspension tuning and reasonably sized 17" wheels, it provides supple ride quality. It also has excellent steering feel. The 128i's two long doors with wide openings, allow for easy entry / exit and a reasonable step-in height. Finally, the upright stance of the 1-series and tidy dimensions allow for great visibility out front and to the sides, although rear visibility is limited, as with most convertibles. Recommended options for your uses are the heated front seats and steering wheel (\$690 combined), as they will make top-down driving during your road trips much more enjoyable. You should also consider the power front seats, as the memory feature will allow you and your husband to easily switch driving and quickly find your preferred seating position. In terms of options to avoid, we do not recommend the sport suspension. It will noticeably deteriorate the ride quality and the high-performance summer

tires will increase road noise, for improvements in handling that you are unlikely to appreciate above the base suspension's fine handling. Further, we do not recommend the uplevel 135i version of the 1-series, as you have not indicated a desire for more power and the 135i will significantly increase fuel and maintenance costs over the course of ownership, and will be likely less reliable than the 128i.

Additional advantages / strengths of the 128i include:

- 128i has a very stiff structure (always a question with convertibles, which lose rigidity due to not having a top), which aids handling and gives the car a solid feel
- Smooth and powerful 230-hp six cylinder engine
- Strong crash test scores based on Euro NCAP testing
- Free maintenance during first 4 years / 48,000 miles (although we recommend changing oil more often than BMW includes in its free maintenance program)

Potential disadvantages / weaknesses of the 128i include:

- Rear wheel drive, while providing sharp handling, can have limited traction in snow

As a second option, and as long as you are at the BMW dealership, we suggest the 328i. Advantages of the 328i compared to the 128i are primarily the folding hardtop, which makes it considerably quieter and also improves rearward visibility due to a larger rear window. Also, ride quality is slightly better as a result of the 328i's longer wheelbase and the 328i features improved interior materials as compared to the 128i (although you did not express any preference as to this). However, the 328i is significantly more expensive than the 128i, currently selling for approximately \$44,982 (\$4,000 below MSRP). Moreover, the 328i's folding hardtop greatly diminishes trunk space, requiring you to fold the rear seats down should you want to carry two sets of golf clubs. We also note that mechanically the 128i and 328i share a great deal of parts including powertrains and chassis components. Thus, by buying a 128i, you are getting ~90% of the 328i at a significant discount.

As a third option, we would suggest a Ford Mustang Premium V-6. The Mustang, which is currently selling for approximately \$29,000, (\$3,000 below MSRP) represents good value. It offers reasonably good handling and strong power, but the steering provides less feedback than either BMW. Also, as the Mustang rides on a cheaper, older and less sophisticated chassis than either BMW, the chassis is less stiff, leading to an occasional groan from the body structure and less buttoned-down handling as speeds increase. The cloth soft-top is lined, and while not as quiet as the BMWs, provides reasonable serenity for highway travel. The ride is also comfortable in Premium trim, as the suspension is not tuned too stiffly as on some uplevel models. The trunk can accept two sets of golf clubs without requiring the rear seats to be folded, although the high liftover height (compared to the BMWs) will require you to lift the bags higher. Finally, visibility is acceptable for a convertible, but not as good as the BMWs due to thicker windshield pillars and larger blind spots. The Mustang is a larger car externally than the BMWs, although it does not offer more interior space, making it feel slightly more cumbersome. In terms of reliability, the Mustang should be no worse than the BMWs, as it uses simpler, proven technology. In conclusion, the Mustang is a good car that meets your criteria for a lower upfront price. We note however that its resale value

diminishes more rapidly than either BMW, meaning that the total cost of ownership over several years may in fact make it as costly as the 128i.

We note that if you were willing to consider an automatic transmission, we would highly recommend the Volvo C70, which is selling for approximately \$39,000 (\$2,000 below MSRP). It excels are the criteria you deemed most important: visibility is excellent, trunk space is ample for two sets of golf clubs, entry / exit and access to the trunk are wide and open. The handling, while not on par with the BMWs, is above average and the folding hardtop offers a quiet ride. The suspension is supple.

You expressed an interest in the Mazda MX-5 Miata. While the MX-5 is an excellent, attractively priced sports car and has received very favorable reviews, it falls short on several of your key criteria. The MX-5 will not accommodate even one set of golf clubs in its trunk. Moreover, due to its small size and lightweight construction, it is loud at highway speeds and the ride can get tiresome. The MX-5 is a great short-trip car, but is not ideal for weekend getaways involving road trips.

We also considered the following cars that meet your base criteria of a convertible with a manual transmission in the \$25 – 50k price range, but dismissed them for the reasons noted alongside.

BMW Z4	Trunk cannot fit two sets of golf clubs; would exceed \$50k out-the-door
Chevy Camaro	Trunk cannot fit two sets of golf clubs; terrible visibility
Chrysler 200	Automatic transmission only; mediocre handling
Infiniti G37	Trunk cannot fit two sets of golf clubs; flaccid body structure
Lexus IS250/350	Automatic transmission only; generally lethargic handling
Mercedes SLK	Trunk cannot fit two sets of golf clubs; would exceed \$50k out-the-door
Mini Cooper	Rough ride; trunk cannot fit two sets of golf clubs
Nissan 370Z	Trunk cannot fit two sets of golf clubs; noisy, rough ride
Volkswagen Eos	Trunk cannot fit two sets of golf clubs; Dual-clutch automatic transmission only

Links to Third-Party Reviews:
(omitted for sample report)

Question Answers:
(omitted for sample report)