

LIFE & CULTURE

THE
STEERING
COLUMN

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The MGS6 EV's 77 kilowatt-hour battery delivers 530 km of range. PHOTOS: BIG FISH PUBLISHING

How to club a Sealion

The MG MGS6 EV puts a cosmopolitan spin on Chinese engineering in Category A

FOR want of something better to complain about, purists are bound to grumble that the MG MGS6 EV isn't British enough for its venerable badge. Perhaps a better way to see things is that it isn't Chinese enough for the Chinese.

The MGS6 EV is a medium electric crossover built to take down the BYD Sealion 7, a monster seller with a slightly larger footprint and sleeker roofline. It comes set up for the Category A Certificate of Entitlement, with a 148 horsepower motor driving the rear wheels, putting it in prime territory for family car buyers looking to break up with Big Oil.

MG, once a venerated British marque that gave the world sportscars like the MGB, has been in Chinese hands for nearly two decades, following its purchase by Nanjing Automobile, which was absorbed by SAIC Motor Corporation, one of China's (and the world's) largest automakers by volume.

Perhaps understandably, the Chinese didn't have much confidence in their own brands then, so acquiring a name like MG made sense. Now that China isn't playing tech catch-up, MG still has a role as SAIC's export label by lacing cutting-edge electric vehicle (EV) tech with a more international flavour.

That explains why the MGS6 still has physical switches and air-con nozzles you aim by hand, thank goodness. An MG designer told me once that the Chinese really do prefer everything on a touchscreen, but SAIC understands that no one else wants to jab the screen to tilt a wing mirror.

I can't say there's much Britishness to the MGS6's design, but it does have consistency, with the slim lamps and smooth, thrusting prow of other MG models.

Befitting the car's status as MG's flagship, the cabin has an air of quality, with soft materials on the dashboard and doors, and seats trimmed in Alcantara, the artificial suede Ferrari uses for its durability and light weight.



MG MGS6 EV Luxury
Motor power/torque
 148 hp/350 Nm
Battery type/net capacity
 Lithium nickel manganese cobalt/77 kWh
Charging time/type 7.5 hours (11 kW AC), 38 minutes (10 to 80 per cent at 144 kW DC)
Range 530 km
0-100 km/h 9.8 seconds
Top speed 200 kmh
Efficiency 16.6 kWh/100 km
Agent Eurokars EV
Price S\$193,888 with COE
Available Now

But if the MGS6 has a trump card, it's practicality. The rear seating is vast (if your kids demand more room than this, tell them to flag down a bus) and so is the boot, at 674 litres, expandable to 1,690 litres. It comes with useful touches like hooks, small compartments and a luggage cover. The trunk is rated for 86 litres but looks bigger, letting the MG swallow a piece of airplane cabin luggage like a metal pelican.

Another plus? The 77 kilowatt-hour battery delivers 530 km of range, which is laudable for the class and also doable; I returned the car at 50 per cent with exactly 260 km of predicted range remaining.

Fast charging maxes out at 144 kilowatts, which will fill the battery pack from 10 to 80 per cent in 38 minutes, though it's worth pointing out that the battery uses nickel manganese cobalt cells, which are generally preferred not to be charged to 100 per cent all the time.

To drive, I'd say the MGS6 is stately (mainly because I'm polite). Zero to 100 kmh takes 9.8 seconds, so it's not fast, but many other Category A cars are similarly languid. There's nuance here, in that there's enough torque to punt it off the line energetically, but things tail off pretty soon. So it's both slow, and not slow.

Surprisingly, the MG isn't heavy by EV standards, at roughly 1.9 tonnes. It's still too big to be agile, but it's manoeuvrable, with an 11.1-metre turning circle ensuring it can do U-turns as easily as a US president.

The steering isn't completely numb like in some Chinese EVs, and it has other virtues, such as quietness and a generally well-behaved manner over bumps. Overall, it sits somewhere between the sharpness of a Tesla Model Y and the softness of a Sealion 7.

Where you'll find fault most is in the user interface, where the graphics are dated, the controls are scattered haphazardly and things aren't customisable. The single most annoying thing about driving the MG, though, is that you have to disable the annoying speed limit warning every time you start the car.

Still, you might be tempted to turn a blind eye (or deaf ear) to some nagging about speeding, given that the MG undercuts its BYD rival in price, yet offers more boot space, more range and better acceleration.

In terms of offering what car buyers here tend to like, the MGS6 EV does tick many boxes, along with ones marked "Chinese tech" and "global flavour".

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